RETHINKING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Countering Violent Extremism

Making Gender Matter

Elizabeth Pearson · Emily Winterbotham
Katherine E. Brown

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Rethinking Political Violence

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Foreword

All too often these days, the inclusion of 'gender' with regard to counter-terrorism is seen as a 'box-ticking' exercise, one that is formulaic and representative of a generic approach to counter-terrorism or preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) meetings or documents. However, it is important to remember that just a few short years ago, this 'box' did not even exist and there was little debate within the United Nations (UN)—among states or counter-terrorism and P/CVE experts—on the issue. Prior to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2242, there was little in the framework adopted by the Council—which provides the legal and policy framework for the work of UN entities and their relationship with governments and civil society—calling on states to integrate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and counter-terrorism agendas. UNSCR 2242 helped ensure that, on paper, the issue of gender was considered as a cross-cutting issue throughout counter-terrorism and P/CVE efforts.

Since 2001, the Security Council has taken an increasingly active role in shaping the domestic and international legal and policy framework on counter-terrorism. It has adopted binding resolutions, developed a robust monitoring mechanism and reflected the geopolitical and operational terrorism and counter-terrorism landscape. As such, the integration of gender into this framework was a key development. It built on the efforts of several states, civil society organisations and experts to ensure the integration of gender into the General Assembly's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism.

Why does any of this matter? I have spent well over 15 years working with governments, the UN and civil society actors in many regions to develop policy and programmes focused on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism. These have highlighted the important range of roles played by women and girls—perpetrator, ideologue, victim, preventer—and the frequency with which these are overlooked. Analyses about the threat or risk, partners or opponents, successes and failures, will be incomplete if they do not account for the experiences of women and girls, or of gendered dynamics. Lessons are not learned from innovations made by civil society organisations in complex circumstances if women cannot come to the table, and their exclusion from the design and development of measures will lead to uncertain outcomes. So, while gender has often been considered a secondary or peripheral issue in relation to counter-terrorism or P/CVE, it should be far more central.

However, while progress has been made in policy documents (which can be essential to creating the legal and political space to conduct activities), they can be limited in their effectiveness when they don't reflect a robust evidence base or realities on the ground. This book therefore comes at an important time, when efforts to integrate gender risk stagnation as governments grapple with a global pandemic, overstretched resources and a refocusing of efforts on immediate crises rather than long-term strategies.

This book makes an important contribution to current debates about gender and CVE by presenting original research on gender and the power dynamics in diverse forms of violent extremism. As the authors conducted research in 2015–2016, Daesh was itself conducting a powerful global recruitment campaign; right-wing populist groups learned lessons and gained momentum. As the current threat landscape continues to evolve, it is therefore critical to better understand the dynamics and perceptions which shape it. Above all, this book's central thesis is not to argue that gender matters—we know that it does—but to argue why and to evidence how through the concept of gendered radicalisation.

This innovative research reflects the views of people most affected by violent extremism and CVE in grassroots communities. This was achieved through focus group and interview research with some 250 participants in Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. The milieu method adopted by the research teams engaged with communities as knowledgeable in their own right and seeks to learn from their experiences and their beliefs, while acknowledging that communities are not immune

to false assumptions or misperceptions, and do not always have an inherently fully formed view of radicalisation. But communities are often at the frontline of prevention efforts, and listening to their views is therefore vital.

Both terrorism and counter-terrorism may look different as the effects of COVID-19 evolve and as fighters and communities grapple with the evolution of Daesh, returning fighters and rehabilitating communities. Terrorist groups have often proved adept at exploiting conflicts, crises and grievances to embellish their narratives and drum up support. Many of the underlying conditions which create an enabling environment for recruitment may be exacerbated by the global pandemic; the locus of activity may shift. This makes it more urgent that our understanding of the threat and the responses required is informed by closer attention to gendered dynamics and impacts. Ultimately, this book will prove valuable for those who want to better understand how terrorist groups can mobilise recruits, support and resources, whatever the ideology, and ensure we are better positioned to prevent them.

Naureen C. Fink is writing in a personal capacity. She is Executive Director at The Soufan Center and was formerly a Senior Policy Adviser at the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York. Naureen has over a decade of experience on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE), including a specialised focus on gender, in think tanks and NGOs, the UN and government.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the work of many people in the creation of this book, based on an original report on the gender dynamics of violent extremism and countering violent extremism (CVE). Firstly, Brett Kubicek and Public Safety Canada, who patiently supported the research and who remain open-minded in attempts to understand the important issues currently at stake. The research also relied on the efforts of independent teams in Canada, France and the Netherlands, as well as the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) researchers in Canada, Germany and the UK. The independent teams included Dr Milena Uhlmann, Ayaan Abukar, Dr Ghayda Hassan, and Rim-Sarah Alouane. Jan Raudszus and Dr Aurélie Sicard also provided invaluable research input and support. The leaders of mosques, community centres—many of whom were promised anonymity and so remain nameless—counter-radicalisation and deradicalisation programmes, the police in Canada and in the UK and women's groups in all of the countries studied were also of assistance to us.

Thanks are also due to Raffaello Pantucci and Dr Andrew Glazzard at RUSI for support in establishing and implementing the research and for their valuable insights into the analysis and writing. Other thanks go to members of the RUSI team who provided support and input into the research at various points, including Ellie Fields, Harriet Allan, Natia Seskuria, Farangiz Atamuradova, Claudia Wallner and Tom Hands. We also want to thank those who gave their time to review and discuss with us the ideas and drafts of this book—Naureen C. Fink, Dr Nelly Lahoud, Sara Zeiger, Elizabeth Coulter, Dr Élisabeth Marteu, Géraldine Casutt, Dr Jessica White, Jessica Davis, Jan Raudszus, Ashley Mattheis and

Rhydian Morgan. We are hugely grateful to them for showing us what we missed. We also thank the editing team at Palgrave and Professor Roger Mac Ginty for their patience and assistance. Nevertheless, all gaps, errors, inconsistencies or inaccuracies remain ours alone. We know there is always more work to be done.

The most important people involved in this research, however, were the people who gave up their time to meet and talk with us, even when they did not believe that any more talking would help. The work is the result of a nine-month research project in five countries: Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. In this time, we were privileged to hear stories from the lives of more than 250 people across many different communities. Sometimes we heard the same stories, from different people, in different languages. These narratives form the backbone of this book, and frequent citations illustrate the key points and themes. We can only hope we have done justice to the opinions and thoughts expressed by these participants, and they find themselves accurately represented here.

About the Book

This book presents original research on gender and the dynamics of diverse forms of violent extremism and efforts to counter them. Based on focus group and interview research with some 250 participants in Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK in 2015 and 2016, it offers insights from communities affected by radicalisation and violent extremism. It introduces the concept of gendered radicalisation, exploring how the multiple factors of paths to violent extremist groups—social, local, individual and global—can differ for both men and women, and why. This book also offers a critical analysis of gender and terrorism; a summary of current policy in the five countries of study and some of the core gendered assumptions prevalent in interventions to prevent violent extremism; a comparison of jihadist extremism and the far right; and a chapter of recommendations. This book is of use to academics, policymakers, students and the general reader interested in better understanding a phenomenon defining our times.

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Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative für Deutschland
AQ	Al-Qaida
BF	Britain First
BH	Boko Haram
BNP	British National Party
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CT	Counter-Terrorism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
Daesh	Daesh is a term derived from the acronym in Arabic for the Islamic State group, *ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq wa-ah-Sham,* which means the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (post-conflict)
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EC	European Commission
EDL	English Defence League
ERG	Extremism Risk Guidelines
EU	European Union
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected States
FCO	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FN	Front National
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighter
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
GTI	Global Terrorism Index
IS	Islamic State (Daesh)
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Daesh)
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Daesh)
ISWAP	Islamic State West Africa Province

LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MENA	The Middle East and North Africa
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
POA	Plan of Action
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network
RN	Rassemblement National, formerly Front National
RUSI	The Royal United Services Institute
TOC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCTED	United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNOCT	United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	Violent Extremism
WOT	War on Terror
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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PART I

Theory

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.
(UNESCO Constitution (1945))

Violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. No country or region is immune from its impacts.
(United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, Report of the Secretary-General (2015) (A/70/674))

How to end violent extremism? Ours is seemingly an age of extremism. An age in which an anti-Islam terrorist attack on a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, in which 51 people are to die can be streamed live on social media. In which, despite its apparent decline in Syria and Iraq, the violent jihadist group Daesh can coordinate a series of deadly attacks in churches in Sri Lanka. In which, in the United Kingdom (UK), concrete barriers line some of London's most famous bridges in case an attacker chooses to drive into pedestrians to make a political point.

The term violent extremism might be new, but the phenomenon is not. The question of how to end terrorism and political violence has occupied rulers for centuries. While Daesh is the terrorist organisation dominating western media headlines, modern terrorist actors have been active for

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more than a hundred years. From the Russian anarchists and revolutionary groups such as Narodnaya Volya to the Irish republican Fenian movement, the far left Red Army Faction or white supremacist Ku Klux Klan, actors have used extremist violence to further political objectives (Laqueur 2004; Silke 2014). Preventing and/or countering violent extremism entails tackling a range of issues and ideologies. It also means a holistic response, not one motivated primarily by headlines, or specific events, as they happen.

Ending violent extremism of all kinds is about understanding gender. When Daesh began to recruit women, many in governments were surprised. Historically, women had frequently been left out of the counter-terrorism picture, assumed to be passive and peaceful, and only rarely engaged in supporting terrorist groups. But cursory glances at the historical record and contemporary examples show otherwise. Consequently, much of our understanding and policy response have in fact been not an understanding of terrorism, or of how to end it, but an understanding of men's terrorism. This book asks: what are the gender dynamics of violent extremism, and what are the gender dynamics of countering violent extremism? It offers a new and yet overlooked approach: that of gendered radicalisation, gendered violent extremism and gendered countering violent extremism (CVE) methods to counter them. Gender might begin with women, but it does not end there. It is also about power and identity. Throughout this book we understand gender as contextually dependent beliefs, which determine expectations of men's and women's behaviour. This book therefore not only concerns women, it reappraises the gender dynamics of men's engagement with violent extremism.

This book is intended as both a guide to the reader on the current understanding of gender dynamics in violent extremism and countering it and a source of original research. Its authors have worked with policymakers, in the field, and in research on these issues in countries including Afghanistan, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan, as well as the countries discussed here. Most importantly though, this book uses the milieu method (see Chap. 4) to offer insights from communities affected by radicalisation and violent extremism in order to emphasise the importance of a key concept introduced in the text: gendered radicalisation. This book highlights and explores the multiple pathways to violent extremist groups—social, local, individual and global—and how they differ for both men and women, and why. It highlights some of the core gendered assumptions prevalent in interventions to prevent violent extremism. It also explores how much communities want and need those interventions and makes suggestions for how

to improve policy. This book also offers insight into current definitions of violent extremism, a critical analysis of gender and terrorism, a summary of current policy in the five countries of study, a comparison of jihadist extremism and the far right and a chapter of recommendations.

The research presented here matters because CVE matters. That much is clear from conversations with people in communities affected by violent extremism or government policies to counter it. Thinking about CVE and radicalisation means thinking about gender. It is important to make this thinking count, and that is one of this book's aims.

Countering Violent Extremism and Gender

Countering violent extremism is the policy focus of this book because, as the numbers of civil society initiatives to prevent radicalisation proliferate across the globe and CVE becomes the policy option of choice for many governments, it is ever more important to get CVE right. This means seeing and including gender perspectives in all CVE initiatives. In 2015, a new United Nations Security Council Resolution, UNSCR 2242, set out the need for a gendered approach to countering violent extremism interventions. Addressing the political, social and economic drivers of violent extremism was enshrined as one of the four pillars of the 2006 UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. However, it was not until the February 2015 White House CVE Summit, followed by the 2016 UN Secretary-General Plan of Action (POA) on Preventing Violent Extremism that preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) started receiving heightened attention from policymakers and security officials around the world. By this point in time, CVE was already well established in a variety of countries, as a means to use community grassroots initiatives to stop terrorist violence. International recommendations on how to implement CVE came long after local civil society organisations and some governments were already delivering interventions to communities.

To confuse matters, the CVE approach has been challenged in recent years with the emergence of a new terminology known as 'Preventing Violent Extremism' or PVE (as articulated in the 2016 UN Plan of Action cited above). Some development organisations, practitioners and scholars prefer the term 'preventing violent extremism', others prefer 'countering violent extremism' and yet others use them interchangeably. Within the UN system, for example, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED) and the United Nations Office for

Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) use the terms CVE and PVE, respectively, despite both agencies sharing a relatively synonymous understanding of the steps necessary to diminish the threat of violent extremism. While initially there was little difference in the objectives and actions on the ground, over time practical differences have emerged. This has led to a situation where some development actors insist on only engaging in PVE, emphasising the broad preventive nature of their work and dismissing CVE as too strongly associated with security-led approaches. In this book, the majority of the cases and examples we use concern CVE; most of those we interviewed and those who participated in our focus groups related to the concept of 'countering violent extremism' or 'counter-terrorism', so we primarily refer to CVE. However, where there is overlap or non-differentiation on the part of our sources, we refer to P/CVE; we also discuss PVE in the cases where participants explicitly reference this. We explore the supporting academic literature on CVE and PVE in more detail in Chap. 2.

CVE has always been political. The concept of grassroots community engagement to prevent violence emerged during the Malayan Emergency from 1948 to 1960, when the British first used the phrase 'hearts and minds' to describe attempts to win over civilians and curtail support for the insurgency (Dixon 2009; Smith 2001). After 2001 the United States (US) President George W. Bush enshrined the idea of CVE as a 'hearts and minds' approach in counter-insurgency tactics in Iraq and Afghanistan. This strategy was widely adopted, including by President Obama and by the British Prime Minister at the time of the 9/11 attacks, Tony Blair (Beng 2006; Kidwai and Kidwai 2010). By the mid-2000s, the rhetoric had shifted from the 'Global War on Terror' to talk of a 'global struggle against violent extremism', which broadened the concept of CVE beyond the military dimensions of a state's power. It should be noted, however, that the Trump administration seemingly reversed much of this understanding at least domestically: the 2018 US national counter-terrorism framework eschews the term CVE, preferring instead to speak about 'terrorism prevention' (US Government 2018b). The US, despite increased funding to law enforcement, also seems to have downgraded its commitment to CVE at the policy level (Patel et al. 2018). This is partly due to a domestic backlash against the term CVE, especially among Muslim communities, leading to a need to rebrand or reduce the visibility of this element. In the UK, the Prevent Strategy, introduced in 2006 as one pillar of the counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST is widely acknowledged as the

first programme to tackle home-grown radicalisation using grassroots soft measures. This too is subject to domestic criticism, with some calling the Prevent brand 'toxic' (Halliday and Dodd 2015). Other countries have since followed the UK's lead. Australia, Canada, EU member states and the EU are among the countries and institutions adopting community approaches to radicalisation, complementing wider counter-terrorism measures (Frazer 2015).

From its origins as a western approach to primarily jihadist terrorism, countries worldwide, including Muslim majority countries, have developed their own national and regional CVE strategies. There are more than 30 plans in place globally, and numerous more under development; some stand-alone and others linked to a wider counter-terrorism strategy (Feve and Elshimi 2018). The UN Plan of Action has also had a normative influence on the understanding of a 'whole of society' approach to countering violent extremism, one that extends beyond national governments and security actors and recognises that local authorities, communities and civil society are critical partners in identifying and addressing underlying factors of violent extremism and crafting more effective and sustainable responses. Donors have increased their investments in CVE. Even though there is an absence of funds for domestic P/CVE efforts in the Trump administration budget, the most recent State Department and USAID budget apportions some $230 million (the highest US figure to date) to international P/CVE efforts (US Government 2018a; Rosand et al. 2018).

Meanwhile, by the end of 2017, the EU was funding ongoing projects in CT and P/CVE totalling €274 million—a twofold increase over a two-year period. Glazzard and Reed (2018) note that by 2018, there was a changing priority of P/CVE over CT funding. Moreover, CVE became a strategic priority in more than a half-dozen different EU regional and thematic funding instruments.[1] The EU is specifically focused on the

[1] An estimated 26 per cent of the €478 million budget of the Instrument Contributing to Security and Peace for the period 2014–2020 was earmarked for counter-terrorism and P/CVE-related actions; the €30.5 billion European Development Fund, which supports the implementation of the EU Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015–2020 and the EU Horn of Africa Regional Action Plan 2015–2020, includes P/CVE as a strategic objective to be implemented through projects contributing to peace and security, and good governance, the rule of law, justice reform, economic integration and resilience; some €10 million was allocated by the EU through its European Neighbourhood Instrument in 2015 to support action on counter-radicalisation and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in its Southern Neighbourhood, including by supporting civil society; and the €1.8 billion EU Emergency

Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Western Balkans, Turkey, Sahel and the Horn of Africa in its CVE and counter-terrorism programming and has supported over 40 countries in what are labelled high-risk areas. Other donors active in this space, often using a mix of counter-terrorism/security and development assistance, include Australia (focused primarily on the Asia-Pacific region), Canada (primarily in Africa), Denmark (primarily in MENA), Japan (primarily through its support to UNDP, UNESCO and other UN-led P/CVE actors), the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Switzerland (focused on fragile and conflict-affected states), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the UK, funding a variety of global, regional, national and/or local initiatives, including ones focused on civil society or other local actors (Rosand et al. 2018). In a database based largely on public information compiled by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), there are currently over 1200 initiatives, in some 100 countries (Rosand et al. 2018). The United Nations' normative and programmatic role has also expanded in recent years. UNSCR 2242 requires that all interventions incorporate a gendered dimension. Specifically, it advocates the inclusion of the goals of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into counter-terrorism and CVE approaches, based on: consultation with women; gender-sensitive data collection; and an emphasis on the goals of women's participation, empowerment and leadership, as consistent with UNSCR 1325 (United Nations 2015, paras. 11–3). UNSCR 2242 offers a gendered path for CVE in a global context.

The central underlying idea of P/CVE projects, in contrast to counter-terrorism, is that they constitute a preventative and non-coercive 'soft' approach, designed to work in partnership with communities to prevent or mitigate violent extremism (Khalil and Zeuthen 2016). Many governments recognise that to counter terrorism and violent extremism effectively requires balancing kinetic and non-kinetic tools involving governments, civil society and the private sector and, perhaps most fundamentally, protecting the basic rights and freedoms of citizens (Albright and Jomaa 2017). In western countries CVE programmes are aimed primarily at two perceived security threats: jihadist, or what is sometimes termed Islamist, extremism and, more recently in most countries, the far right. Countries differ in approach, some aim at preventing *violent* jihadist extremism, others, such as the UK, address non-violent extremism too.

Trust Fund for Africa includes support for P/CVE activities (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office 2016).

Clearly the range and remit of CVE interventions has become vast, making it an ever more important area of study. This is especially vital, given the important critiques of CVE programming, including the ways in which it approaches gender. Increasingly scholars suggest CVE has instrumentalised the Women, Peace and Security agenda, which is intended to assert women's rights, their participation, empowerment, leadership and their protection towards state-centric goals. Additionally, it has essentialised the women (and men) it encounters and framed women in need of protection from risky men (Ní Aoláin and Huckerby 2018). Violent extremism and radicalisation have proved problematic frameworks for interpreting conflict-related violence and gender and frequently have ignored the interaction between the two. We explore these challenges to CVE in Chap. 2. A second damaging critique is conceptual: if violent extremism is not easily defined, how can CVE programmes hope to tackle it? Third, it is not clear that countering violent extremism initiatives always help, or even 'do no harm', a key prerequisite. The field lacks evidence, and evaluation, and it is anyway difficult to prove the efficacy of an intervention aimed at preventing violence, essentially preventing a negative.

This book uses a gender framework to contribute to these debates and this discussion. It includes the opinions and perceptions of men and women of a variety of ages in communities partnered or targeted by interventions—depending on your viewpoint—to better understand what violent extremism is, and how to counter it, using a gendered approach. That does not mean this book is just for women, or just discusses women. It is for anyone interested in the challenge of violent extremism.

Chapter 2 makes clear that there is much excellent gendered CVE work, which in general terms has often focused on the inclusion of women. It has however in some contexts and in some regards been on 'auto-pilot'. While a gendered approach is perhaps now assumed in CVE, it cannot be taken for granted and it is often still absent from programming. Gendered CVE that does exist is often ill-evidenced and intuitive. The challenge now is to understand when and how CVE including both gender and women works well, and to improve, evolve and amend those approaches that are less effective, or indeed may cause harm. Radicalisation to a variety of extreme groups is a problem for societies worldwide. If CVE is to continue, and it seems that it is, then it is essential that the gendered dynamics of violent extremism are considered. This should include women, but must not be limited to discussion of women; and it must be less of a 'tick-box' exercise. It also needs to be based on evidence, which is contextually

specific, and responsive to local dynamics. This will mean recognition of differences between countries, and approaches, particularly in the Global North and Global South. For instance, our recommendations on countering jihadist extremism are focused on research with Muslim communities living as minorities in Europe and Canada. One would not imagine the findings could be replicated in a Muslim country in the Global South. Even as many of the complaints about CVE were echoed across each of the five countries of this research, it is important to remember, there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Violent Extremism and Gender

As noted, one of the key gendered assumptions of programmes to counter violent extremism is that women are less likely to be involved in violent extremism, either in committing physical violence or in supporting the violence of men. This assumption has proven to be problematic. We know that there is no reason to assume women naturally oppose violent extremism. They have long participated in terrorist-designated organisations, fighting in some, such as the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—some against Daesh—or as 'Black Widow' suicide attackers and hostage takers in Chechnya (Alison 2003; Bloom 2011; Cunningham 2003; Jacques and Taylor 2009; Brown 2017; Tuysuz and Watson 2014). Women were an important resource to al-Qaida, even if they were not actively involved in violent jihad (Lahoud 2014; Von Knop 2007). Despite this, research on terrorism still tends to neglect the participation of women in violent groups; this has led to a situation where strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism also neglect women and gender, or engage with women only as non-violent actors (Sjoberg 2013; Tickner 1992; OSCE 2011; Brown 2013, 2020; Winterbotham 2020).

Certainly, it is true that men have more often been the perpetrators of physical violence in terrorist and violent extremist organisations (Sjoberg 2013; Sageman 2008; Simcox et al. 2011). However, it is not enough to leave the reasons for this unscrutinised, as this book seeks to explain. Whether a group engages men or women, and in what roles, depends on more than biology alone. It depends on group ideology, culture, local social cultures, individuals and family dynamics. It depends on the expression of local patriarchy. It depends on what is practically possible. Women who could not take leadership roles in groups with highly conservative

agendas have frequently involved themselves in non-violent, support roles, as spies, sympathisers and, sometimes, 'dominant forces', which is to say they provide leadership, ideology, strategy or motivation (Mahan and Griset 2013). Some governments have not prioritised such non-violent action in counter-terrorism, and, where women have not been arrested, their roles are not represented in official data. It is also difficult to access women to learn about what they do, given their minority status in the formal structures and organisational roles of many terrorist groups (Gonzalez-Perez 2008; Cunningham 2003).

The emergence of Daesh has drawn attention to women but has not necessarily resulted in a more sophisticated interrogation of the complex function of gender in determining support or action for a group. Therefore, while there is recognition of the need to find out how many women (and men) become involved in a particular activity or have membership of a group (i.e. seeing sex as a variable), there is often less recognition of the need to consider how being men or women (their gender) influences their actions, roles and value to violent extremist groups. Often the debate is stuck on questions of women's agency, with activists and scholars promoting a move from not seeing women, to assuming they always have agency in movements. Daesh is an interesting case, because thousands of women took part in a migration, or so-called *hijrah*, to Syria and Iraq. While the majority have travelled from North Africa and elsewhere in the Middle East, with 700 from Tunisia alone by 2015, western policymakers have focused on those hundreds who have joined Daesh from Europe, the US, Australia and Canada (Cook and Vale 2018, 2019; Barrett 2015). Once in its so-called Caliphate of global fighters, families and women were expected to contribute to the function of a prototype 'Islamic State' (Perešin 2015; Winter 2015; Lehane et al. 2018; Brown 2018). For some in the West, this migration of mainly teenage girls (but also older women) to Daesh was hard to comprehend, and a dominant media narrative therefore suggested these 'naïve' 'jihadi brides' had been 'groomed' by men (Cook and Vale 2018; Rubin and Breeden 2016; Pearson and Winterbotham 2017).

In 2019, a lawyer for Safaa Boular, convicted the previous year for her part in an 'all-women' Daesh-inspired cell plotting terror attacks in London, successfully argued that she had been groomed by an older male Daesh fighter. Her sentence was reduced (Williams 2019). While lawyers can plead insanity in order to make the best possible argument for the benefit of their clients, it is important that in this case it was accepted by Lord Justice Holroyde that insufficient allowance was given in the original

ruling for the damaging upbringing and grooming she had undergone—thereby arguably accepting the idea that radicalisation is something that 'happens to' women, making in this case, Safaa Boular a passive party in the process.

The argument here is not that women can never be 'groomed'. Grooming is about power, and men in terrorist organisations are often placed in gendered hierarchies that give them power over women. The argument is that we must be better at understanding the ways in which gender and power are entwined. Irrespective of the numbers of women drawn to Daesh in recent years, these women remain largely neglected both programmatically and legislatively, because of a failure to engage with gender in a meaningful way. In particular, infantilised and sexualised views of women in terrorist groups often ignore the complex reasons behind the recruitment of women and girls. This can translate into more lenient and unjust sentencing, and inadequate rehabilitation, disengagement and deradicalisation programmes. This also perpetuates the narrative that women's primary role in conflict is that of the victim (Henshaw 2017).

Moreover, these women have occupied a problematic area in the UN definition of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), which initially emphasised persons who travel to participate in terrorist training and violent acts. In 2017, UNSCR 2396 also noted that women may also have perpetrated terrorist acts and required special consideration in terms of rehabilitation. Still, women have not always been considered extensively in efforts to manage returning FTFs (Cook and Vale 2018; Coolsaet and Renard 2018; Pearson 2019). Underlying assumptions that women are peaceful and lack agency have permeated legal and policy responses including in rehabilitation, reintegration and resocialisation processes. One consequence, for example, has been that while men appear to be automatically investigated upon returning from a conflict zone, the evidential threshold for women returning can be much higher. Up until 2017, in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany there was a clear tendency to give violent extremist women offenders shorter sentences than men (Heinke and Raudszus 2018; Coolsaet and Renard 2018; Pearson 2019). We are not however suggesting that violence and non-violence in extremist groups should be equated in either sentencing or rehabilitation. The case of Shamima Begum, a British teenager who travelled to join Daesh aged 15, is instructive. When a pregnant Begum requested readmission to the UK without any apparent regret for her actions, the British Home Secretary Sajid Javid revoked her citizenship (Swann and Yusuf 2019). Here her radicalisation was

exceptionalised, apparently for political reasons, and although she was legally a minor when travelling to join Daesh. It is clear that for disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration, a gendered approach is of the utmost importance. Yet, the field has only just begun to grapple with this subject; Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives and deradicalisation and disengagement programmes have not tended to overtly focus on women, because they have been aimed at those involved in violence (Brown 2020).

Nor has there been much research on gender or women in the full range of ideologies represented in extremism. In a seminal study, Jacques and Taylor (2009) note that women have been present in a variety of roles for various ideologies including European left-wing groups, the LTTE, domestic and international Latin American groups, the IRA, the American right-wing, the Spanish separatists ETA, Palestinian factions, Chechen rebel factions, Irish loyalist groups and jihadists such as al-Qaida. Some of these groups are locally focused, others have a transnational agenda.

For the countries of interest in this book it is jihadist groups that are the key government priority, and far right groups a secondary issue, and this fact guides our research. Again, women have been less in evidence in both support and violence for the far right. As with jihadist organisations, far right and nationalist violence is predominantly male, as is the demographic supporting political parties on the broader right, such as populist, anti-Islam(ist) and white nationalist parties (Copsey 2010; Goodwin 2013; Treadwell and Garland 2011; Ford and Goodwin 2010; Harteveld and Ivarsflaten 2016; Arzheimer and Carter 2006). Discussion of gender in far right white nationalism has for some time focused on the importance of masculinities in radicalisation. Michael Kimmel has long written of the ways in which men involved in white supremacist groups employ masculinities as a resource, compensating for feelings of emasculation and linked with broad themes such as globalisation, as well as personal grievances (Kimmel 2003, 2007, 2018). In the UK, Goodwin and Ford note the ability of the anti-Islam(ist) street movement the EDL in the UK to attract, "mainly young, working-class and poorly educated men" (Ford and Goodwin 2014, 79). Nationalist groups have also mobilised around conservative gender norms, in particular regarding women's sexual purity as a matter of racial honour, and extolling the virtues of women as mothers, and reproducers of race (Yuval-Davis 1996; Sarnoff 2012). Gender and the far right is discussed in greater detail in Chap. 7.

Book Structure

This book offers much for those interested in women's *and* men's radicalisation, and in two movements: violent jihadism and the far right. It is based on research in five Muslim-minority countries in the Global North: Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. It uses an innovative milieu-based qualitative methodology, with interviews and focus groups conducted in communities that have experienced cases of radicalisation, including those with direct experience of family members travelling to Syria/Iraq to join Daesh. It is supplemented by interviews with professionals and experts engaged in P/CVE within the five countries as well. Conceptually this methodology puts the experiences of people affected by violent extremism and policies to combat this at the heart of the research, and much of what you will read here are transcripts from interviews, in order to convey a sense of the field. However, this book goes beyond these stories, to discuss CVE as it is enacted now, in a post-Daesh world of a rising far right, radical right and right-wing populism. Understanding how to go forward means understanding the past, recent and not-so-recent. This book uses this snapshot in time to make broad recommendations for policy in the future and addressing two ideological movements: violent jihadism and the far right. It draws on themes that were shared across countries; yet it notes differences where they matter, with a comparative approach.

More than 250 people contributed to the study, which took place between October 2015 and February 2016. As such, the findings here represent an important moment politically given this was the period immediately preceding several decisive political events globally. These included the British vote to leave the European Union (June 2016); the election of President Trump in the US on a nationalist agenda (November 2016); the success of Marine Le Pen for the *Front National* (FN, now renamed the *Rassemblement National*) in the first round of the French presidential elections, leading to a choice between Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron (May 2017); the rising popularity of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands; and the rise of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) party in Germany, running on an anti-migrant and also anti-Islam platform. This was also a period of ongoing travel to join Daesh of FTFs from Europe and North America.

Indeed, one reason for the choice of the two ideologies of the far right and violent jihadism for the discussions in this book is their relevance to policy at the current time. We were concerned to understand how current CVE interventions relating to these movements impact communities and how people felt gender was present within them. Inevitably terminology was an important consideration and a key issue within the research itself. Different governments define their priorities using different terminologies. Generally, however, in recent years in Europe and North America, there has been a shift to include narratives about engaging communities as part of broader counter-terrorism efforts. In response to the newest threat posed by (returning) foreign fighters, governments have simultaneously passed new penetrating legislation while imposing additional 'responsibilities' on communities in order to maximise their counter-terrorism efforts. Policy documents in the UK, the US, Australia and other liberal democratic societies put communities at the centre of efforts to prevent terrorism. For example, the UK's latest CONTEST Strategy emphasises the role of communities and civil society organisations in building 'resilience' (Home Office 2018). In the US, campaigns such as 'If you see something, say something' (the UK's latest version is, 'See it. Say it. Sorted.') and the Empowering Local Partners strategy have placed significant onus on communities' abilities and duties to thwart terrorism. As Spalek and Weeks (2017) highlight, a cynical way of viewing this shift in the UK context is that the government is realising that "despite fifteen years of adopting increasingly invasive and controversial counter-terrorism laws it has been unable to legislate or police its way out of the problem of Islamist extremism" (p. 992).

Many participants challenged the language we used as researchers, feeling it perpetuated assumptions about their communities, which they resisted. In terms of terminology, many Muslims object to use of the term 'violent Islamism' in relation to violent extremism and the violent political pursuit of Islam. They do not believe terrorism has anything to do with Islam. Islamist is therefore a sensitive and often misused word. It broadly refers to a vision in which the political and social order runs in accordance with Islamic law. The terms Islamism and Islamist in and of themselves do not denote belief in violence. In this book we prefer the term jihadism as a shortened form of Salafi-jihadism, the violent struggle to impose a form of Islamic *Shariah* law seen at the time of the Prophet (Wiktorowicz 2006). This term is also problematic, given the word jihad is a Qur'anic concept, denoting simply struggle. This can be a spiritual and personal