An Overview of the SAFIRE Project: A Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators and Responses to Radicalisation

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ABSTRACT

Project SAFIRE (Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators and Responses to Radicalisation) is a three-year research project that started in 2010. It consists out of a consortium of ten partners in six EU countries. Its objectives are to improve the understanding of the process of radicalisation from moderation to (violent) extremism and to use this knowledge to design and provide theoretical argumentation and empirical evidence for the implementation of practical interventions and related means to prevent, halt, or reverse the process of violent radicalisation in Europe. The SAFIRE project is broad in its scope, examining radicalisation from its theoretical and conceptual underpinnings, to identifying observable indicators of radicalisation and making recommendations for counter-and de-radicalisation programmes, to modelling the process of radicalisation and collecting new empirical data on radicalisation. One of the main conclusions is that the process of radicalisation should not be investigated only from a security perspective. Instead, the research suggests the importance of focusing prevention programmes on identity formation in young adults, as well as creating positive experiences regarding citizenship while reducing negative emotions. With regard to counter- and de-radicalisation programmes it is necessary to establish trust between practitioners and participants.

SAFIRE: A Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators and Responses to Radicalisation

The objective of the present paper is to provide an overview of the SAFIRE project, a three-year investigation of the process of violent radicalisation. The SAFIRE project, which started in 2010, provides a comprehensive contribution to the understanding of radicalisation, as well as practical implications for interventions on radicalisation. The project is conducted by an international consortium of ten academic and private organisations coming from six European countries. In this article we aim to explain and communicate the SAFIRE work. We explain the objectives of SAFIRE, provide an overview of who may benefit from the project, and present a general overview of our outcomes and how these are related to these audiences. Therefore, it should be seen as a generalised but comprehensive presentation of the findings of the research, rather than as a critical analysis. Before describing the aims of SAFIRE, we first present some conceptual definitions with regard to what we understand to be terrorism and radicalisation.

Conceptualisation of radicalisation and terrorism

First, it is important to note that radicalisation not necessarily results into violence and that many radicalised individuals remain non-violent. Furthermore, there exists an important distinction between radicalisation and terrorism. Radicalisation is situated at the attitudinal/emotional level whereas terrorism is at the behavioural level. The process of radicalisation can nonetheless result in a pool of likeminded individuals who become at risk of turning to violence and terrorism (e.g., Hoffman, 2006). In defining radicalisation we found the following description useful: "violent radicalisation" is the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism (European Council, 2002). Terrorism, in turn, is difficult to define at a conceptual level as noted by Laqueur (2000, p. 46):

... Terrorism has been defined in many different ways, and little can be said about it with certainty except that it is the use of violence by a group for political ends,

usually directed against a government, but at times also against another ethnic group, class, race, religion, or political movement.

According to Laqueur (2000, p. 46; see also Crenshaw, 1981), it is the diversity of terrorism which makes defining the phenomenon challenging:

> Any attempt to be more specific is bound to fail, for the simple reason that there is not one but many different terrorisms. Traditional terrorism appeared in various forms: in conjunction with a civil war or guerrilla warfare, in the framework of a political campaign, and also in "pure" form. It has been waged by religious and secular groups, by the left and the right, by nationalist and internationalist movements, and by governments who engage in state-sponsored terrorism. Terrorists have seldom, if ever, seized power, in contrast to guerrilla movements. But they have on occasion brought about political change, inasmuch as they have helped to bring down democratic governments that were replaced by military dictatorships. They have also on occasion helped to trigger war... In a few cases, terrorism has had an effect on world history, but it has not always been the one the terrorists intended.

As already became evident in the description of the concepts above, radicalisation and the development of an ideology almost always occurs in the context of a social group: the terrorist group is a structured group of more than two persons, established over a period of time and acting in concert to commit terrorist offences (Kruglanski, 2013; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2004). As a series of authors have pointed out, there seems to be no single personality, typology, or specific process that leads to violent radicalisation (i.e., Bjørgo, 1997, 2011; Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006; Linden, 2009; Möller & Schumacher, 2007; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010). Rather, radicalisation can be seen as a complex phenomenon, a combination of factors at different stages that lead people to become involved in extremist groups.

The observation that the radicalisation process can be divided in several stages is not new. There now exist a series of theories describing radicalisation leading towards violence focusing in particular on the social and psychological processes (i.e., Bjørgo, 1997, 2011; Borum, 2003; Buijs, Demant, & Hamdy (2006); Hoffman, 2006, 2010; Kruglanski, 2013; Kruglanski, & Fishman, 2006; Linden, 2009; Moghaddam, 2005; Möller & Schumacher, 2007; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Sageman 2008; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010; Wiktorowicz 2004; see for a review King & Taylor, 2011). For example, Moghaddam (2005) uses the metaphor of a staircase to describe the process of radicalisation leading to terrorism. In a statement to the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs ("Violent Islamist Extremism in Global Context") he explains it as follows, taking violent radicalisation among Muslims as an example:

Consider a multi-story building with a winding staircase at its centre. People are located on different floors of the building, but everyone begins on the ground floor; where there are about 1.2 billion Muslims. Thought and action on each floor is characterized by particular psychological processes. On the ground floor, the most important psychological processes influencing behaviour are subjective interpretations of material conditions, perceptions of fairness, and adequacy of identity. Hundreds of millions of Muslims suffer collective (fraternal) relative deprivation and lack of adequate identity; they feel that they are not being treated fairly and are not receiving adequate material rewards. They feel dissatisfied with the way they are depicted by the international media and, most importantly, they do not want to become second-class copies of Western ideals.

Also Kruglanski (2013) and Sageman (2008) emphasize that social processes lead individuals into terrorism and political violence. Sageman hereby emphasizes the possibility of independent terrorist cells that can operate almost independently of a larger organization, a so-called "leaderless Jihad" or the "bunch of guys". In contrast, Hoffman argues that in countering terrorism, a focus should exist on the strong capacity of terrorist organizations to

"engage in the continued radicalisation of a new cadre" (2010, p. 27). He hereby focuses on recruitment tactics of al-Quaeda. It should be added that the psychological processes involved in violent radicalisation are considered to be present independent of ideology. That is, the processes and group influences are also expected to be present in, for example, radicalisation based on a right-wing extremist ideology or left-wing extremist ideology. Importantly, as argued by Kruglanski (2013, p. 4), it is through social networks that individuals are influenced and persuaded to accept the world view of the specific network as well as measures to reach his or her ideals. In the next section we explain further the scope of the SAFIRE project and progress beyond the state-of-the-art with regard to radicalisation research.

The SAFIRE approach towards conceptualisation of radicalisation

SAFIRE addresses the conceptual process of radicalisation from moderation to (violent) extremism and intervention principles in order to halt, reverse or prevent radicalisation. At the start of the project in 2010 our objectives were defined as having provided insight into questions such as:

- What does the process of radicalisation look like in terms of the increasing radicalisation of a group of people and the individuals belonging to this group?
- What kinds of radical groups are there and how do they 'match' with the process of radicalisation?
- What is the role of national culture in radicalisation?
- What intervention principles can we define to prevent, halt or reverse the radicalisation process?
- What makes an intervention effective?

The goals of SAFIRE were obtained by means of the following activities:

- Creating an inventory of radical groups;

- Evaluation by experts (i.e., social workers) of interventions for dealing with radicalised individuals;

- Developing principles for the implementation of interventions;

- Developing conceptual models of the process of radicalisation, using a network approach and typologies of radical groups;

- Testing the model and principles in an empirical field study;

- Examining the implications of our work for science, policy making, dealing with radical individuals in the field and public security in the future.

Key of the SAFIRE approach is that we do not consider the process of radicalisation to be linear – as has often been the case in radicalisation research up until now (see for example the staircase model of Moghaddam, 2005)– but rather to be non-linear and dynamic, consistent with theories of social dynamics (see e.g. Weidlich, 1997). In other words, in this view radicalisation cannot be accurately represented simply as the sum of its parts. Rather it is a complex and dynamic process in which the key to understanding it lies in examining when the system of the radical group will stay the same or change as a result of stimuli both inherent in it (e.g. key events like death of an important group member) and external to it (e.g. change in resources allocated by a government to combat terrorism). In the next section we provide an overview of the possible end-users of the SAFIRE project.

Envisaged end-users

We will present the outcomes of SAFIRE with the goal of informing different end-user communities: 1) researchers and academics, 2) front-line practitioners, 3) security and legal professionals and 4) political authorities. These end-user communities are characterized by their activity levels: a) strategic/macro-level, b) intermediate or tactical-level, c) field-level or micro-level. The end-users of the SAFIRE project are different communities that were also represented in the project namely the educational sector, national and local politicians, police, justice, social workers, as well as the media and public in general. Below, we address each of the identified end-user groups.

Researchers and academics. The end-user community of researchers and academics, like the SAFIRE scientific team, is composed of many disciplines. Research on radicalisation is found in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science, cultural and anthropological sciences, and security science. These separate fields each have their own distinctive, and sometimes competing and contradictory approaches to conceptualising radicalisation and elaborating on de-radicalisation. Consequently, approaches to radicalisation are often limited to a single academic outlook. For instance, a socio-economic explanation of radicalisation identifies key macro-economic variables, such as poverty or unemployment, but does not usually take other dimensions into account. This runs the risk of 'over-explaining' reality by economic concerns– classifying the market as the main influential factor in society – thereby ignoring or reducing the role of other factors..

Practitioners of social programmes and education. As a result of the accelerating globalisation and its influence on social developments, social policy, and social work, there is a growing awareness that social work is a profession with shares great similarities across nations. Social workers all around the world are confronted with comparable developments, seek the same types of solutions, use similar forms of intervention, and play a similar role in society. Social workers and related professionals have professional practices, challenges, and 'terra incognita' that are sometimes very similar to interventions potentially appropriate for countering radicalisation. For example, social programmes often focus on the social community including schools and parents to prevent home-grown radicalization (i.e., Weine, Horgan, Robertson, Loue, Mohamed, & Noor, 2009). Front-line workers face some of the daily symptoms of radicalisation, and practitioners involved in de-radicalisation programmes act according to a similar philosophy as found in social work. For this community, detecting and dealing with radicalisation may be at the forefront: How to recognise radicalisation? How to deal with verbal or physical violence? We consider the theoretical and practical findings of SAFIRE to be of interest for this broad and heterogeneous category of field practitioners. De-radicalisation practitioners have or should have, where possible, a global awareness of existing practices, and SAFIRE helps provide this awareness by bringing together a broad scope of knowledge.

Security and legal professions. These professionals, including lawyers, security and other law enforcement personnel, have characteristics, roles and interests different from those regularly associated with social practitioners. The problems of detection and maintaining a secure environment (e.g., how to detect and remove dangerous radicals from public spaces) seem to be crucial to this broad community. Some concerns inherent to this community appear similar to those faced by social front-liners: disengagement of individuals from violence or radicalisation, which can decisively contribute to re-integrating individuals previously identified as dangerous or violent.

At the community level, however, this focus on detection might be questionable, since there is no counter-terrorist police in Europe able, willing, or authorized to monitor a whole community. In reality, counter-terrorist activities must operate on a much smaller scale focusing on radicalisation processes on both the individual as well as the group level. The typologies and indicators tailored by SAFIRE coincide largely with this type of approach.

Political authorities. The EU, national and local governments have a strong interest in organizations and actors responsible for defining the public debate and the political and social agendas. One of the main SAFIRE findings is that a great diversity of approaches toward radicalisation exist on a EU-, national-, and local level. This implies that conclusions that can be drawn from a multi-nation research project about radicalisation are modest: States do not necessarily have identical views on the definition of radicalisation and the degree to which it may be acknowledged as a threat differs across countries. Therefore, similar agendas, solutions or best practices may be challenging: the experiences in the SAFIRE project suggest that whereas harmonisation of policy towards countering violent radicalization is desirable, it is often not possible.

Levels and prevalence of end-users

The end-users defined in the previous section interact in and with society at different levels. We therefore add a distinction based on levels of activity or focus, in which the differences between end-user groups are represented. Such a 'multilevel' approach refers to a structure of people within organisational groups. Some of the SAFIRE results are

potentially tailored to or 'made for' security, social or educational front-liners (*micro-level*); other results seem more useful for managers (*meso-level*), and others are useful for high-level political decision makers (macro-level). The micro-, meso- and macro-levels should be seen as a continuum, rather than clear-cut and strictly delineated. One way to think about the three levels is that the field level carries out daily, operational processes; the tactical level designs and changes the processes; and the strategic level decides which processes to perform. In terms of their day-to-day implementation, strategic decisions are most rare and operational decisions are most prevalent. The three levels are described in more detail below.

The macro- or strategic-level. This level generally traces the outcomes of interactions, such as economic or other resource-transfer interactions, over a large population. It also traces the roots of a social object. Relatedly, a strategic management or strategic focus entails specifying an organizations' mission, vision and objectives, developing policies and plans, often in terms of projects and programmes, which are designed to achieve these objectives, and then allocating resources to implement the policies and plans, projects and programmes.

The meso- or tactical-level. This level of analysis falls between the micro- and the macro-level. However, tactical-level also refers to analyses that are specifically designed to reveal connections between micro- and macro-levels, for instance field-level implications with a management- oriented focus. For SAFIRE, the mid-range managerial level focuses on specific end-users, for example, the director of an intervention programme, the civil-servant responsible for managing a relationship with intervention producers, etc. The SAFIRE radicalisation analysis may also be interesting for counter-terrorism team leaders, regional police authority, local political authority, etc.

The micro- or field-level. This is the everyday action level as encountered in the field. Its actors are directly confronted with radicalised groups and individuals. Furthermore, individuals on this level are in contact with higher-level individuals responsible for the policy with regard to radicalisation. In the next part, we will present the outcomes of the SAFIRE project based on themes that emerged during our work.

Ethical aspects of radicalisation research

The advancement of research on radicalisation and other forms of violent behaviour has been hampered by a lack of suitable guidelines for performing this research in an ethical way. Most notably, in a way that protects the identity of research participants and prevents them from being either directly or indirectly identified, which may otherwise lead to stigmatisation or loss of basic civil liberties. SAFIRE provides ethical and research innovations regarding the protection of research participants from negative consequences.

Interviews for research projects regarding sensitive topics, such as having radical ideas, could have serious consequences for the interviewees if their names were linked with the research project. Within SAFIRE a procedure has been developed that meets all basic ethical requirements underlying informed consent without having interviewees give their name to the research consortium. This was possible through cooperation with EXIT Deutschland. The exact procedure is described in a FOCUS document by Van Gorp and Feddes (2013). In short, in the interview study former right-wing extremists (drop-outs) were interviewed about their experiences. The EU standard for informed consent was to have participants sign an ethical consent form declaring that they are aware of the purposes of the study and could stop their participation in the study at any time without consequences. This, of course, implied the former right-wing extremists to sign the informed consent forms themselves. Both Exit-Germany and the SAFIRE consortium agreed that drop-outs should not be linked to SAFIRE in anyway. Instead, as an alternative the procedure was changed. A procedure was designed in which the Drop-outs would get all the information they needed to decide to participate or not in the interviews without the SAFIRE consortium requiring them to personally sign the informed consent forms. EXIT- Germany, instead, served as the mediating link between Drop-outs and the SAFIRE consortium. This procedure is not informed consent in a strict interpretation because no contract is signed between the Drop-out and researchers from the SAFIRE consortium. All requirements on informed consent are, however, met.

This example illustrates that the 'translation' of radicalisation research findings into impacts or recommendations can face significant difficulties due to the ethical sensitivity of

the topic. At all times, citizens' basic rights and liberties must be at the forefront of the process. This situation has concrete consequences for public social policies and programmes, especially regarding the highly sensitive issues of profiling and dealing with non-violent radical groups and individuals. Consider, for example, the involvement of the state in addressing radicalisation in its early stages, before any violent act has been committed. This is perfectly acceptable in some EU countries, such as the Netherlands or Germany. Alternatively, in France and Portugal, non- violent radicals may not be targeted in any way, as this is seen as an infringement on the right to free thought and free speech. Hence, in these countries, it is only appropriate – and legal – to intervene in the radicalisation process once an illegal act has been committed. In SAFIRE we successfully worked together with organisations and knowledge institutes from countries with different approaches to countering violent radicalisation. SAFIRE therefore provided a positive contribution to this debate by showing that differences in research ethics and standards can be overcome.

Radicalisation as a normal process

SAFIRE finds there is a necessity to question and debate the concept of violent radicalisation at the theoretical level and at the empirical level. Studies on political violence and radicalisation often suffer from conceptual defaults and methodological imprecision that can lead to an inappropriate use of their results. In particular, the use of a single methodology or focus on a particular single factor or typology is recommended against. Such an approach can exploit a given social movement by reducing it to its repertoire of violence, rather than taking a more holistic view of the phenomenon. Similarly, oversimplified explanations of radicalisation and political violence seem to suffer from the same limitations: a too limited and predominantly linear view of an inherently complex and multi-facetted phenomenon. Single theory explanations and one-dimensional approaches to radicalisation are inadequate, inaccurate and can be misleading.

The results of SAFIRE indicate that radicalisation is a specific manifestation of a normal developmental process. In contrast, violent extremism is seen as a consequence of a radicalisation process gone awry. However, this process can be very diverse and always has

multiple determinants and processes occurring simultaneously. Radicalisation is, in our view, not an abnormal process, confined only to certain vulnerable types of individuals. Instead, it is a normal process in the sense that every person can radicalise, given the required specific circumstances, life events, support and encouragement from influential others. This means that any policy to prevent and counter radicalisation should target 'normal' processes, like supporting youngsters in forming their identity, and helping them come to terms with difficult situations. The most important people to play a role in these processes can be, for example, parents, teachers and youth workers.

As mentioned previously, the results from SAFIRE demonstrated that there is not any single 'terrorism factor' or a single, predetermined pathway from moderation to radicalisation to terrorism. In order to study the dynamics of radicalisation, a promising line of enquiry is to determine what combination of factors is important in this process. Individuals should not be labelled 'radical' or 'radicalising' based on one-off, static observations. Observable behaviours can reveal manifestations of the process of radicalisation, but in order to validly interpret them as such, there must be an element of change over time in those behaviours. For example, if an adolescent has a normal school attendance record, and then begins frequently skipping school, that behavioural change may be indicative of other developments in his or her life, and may be worth looking into. However, if the adolescent has always had a poor school attendance record, then the behaviour is likely to be a much less significant observation.

Factors linked to radicalisation

SAFIRE reaffirms the need to adopt a comprehensive approach in order to understand and counter violent radicalisation. In its effort to develop a model of the radicalisation process, the SAFIRE project explored three complementary approaches to describe the determinants and characteristics of radicalisation.

Three models of radicalisation. The first approach focuses on representing the complexity of the radicalisation process by developing a methodology that combines and analyses the different causes and characteristics of radicals as well as adequate types of

interventions. This approach resulted in a framework consisting of three types of factors that influence the progression of non-violent radicalisation to violent radicalisation and terrorism.

1. **Background factors:** Factors contributing to a period in which an individual may have already been radicalised, but in which there is a lack of observable factors indicating criminal behaviour and/or radicalisation;

2. **Proximate factors:** factors influencing an individual's consideration to engage in violence or terrorism to further their radical objectives;

3. **Immediate factors:** factors influencing an individual who is ready to commit a violent or terrorist act.

With regard to efforts that could be undertaken by people working in the educational sector of social front-line practitioners, it was concluded that main efforts should concentrate on identifying proximate factors and assessing implications of these. With regard to policy makers and security forces, main efforts should concentrate on identifying immediate factors and assessing implications.

The second approach aimed at developing a 'reverse methodology' of violent radical groups and individuals, by focusing on their operational and organisational aspects and thus providing insights into possible end results of the radicalisation process. Whereas the first approach focuses on factors that influence radicalisation, this approach focuses on characteristics of radical groups and individuals. Importantly, this second approach explicitly looks at radical groups from a perspective that does not include the group's ideology. This is in order to ascertain if it is possible to cluster groups and individuals on dimensions unrelated to ideology, such as leadership structure or capabilities. The work indicates that other dimensions, such as command and control structure, may be equally meaningful as ideology when it comes to characterising and intervening in (violent) radicalisation. This is a bottom-up approach that may have various consequences for research protocols at various levels. With regard to strategic-, tactical, and field impacts, counterstrategies can be developed to stop radical groups by focusing on group functioning. Based on the interviews

held in SAFIRE with former right-wing extremists, bad group functioning and disappointment in its members were shown to be the most important factors motivating members to leave the group.

The third approach is focused on radicalisation from a social network perspective. In this network model more than 200 factors have been identified to play a role in the radicalisation process. These factors were derived from previous research focused on motives for people to radicalise and join extremist groups (e.g., Bjørgo, 1997, 2011; Bongar, Brown, Beutler, Breckenridge, & Zimbardo, 2006; Buijs, Demant, & Hamdy, 2006; Doosje, Loseman, & Van den Bos, 2013; Doosje, Van den Bos, Loseman, Feddes, & Mann, 2012; Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007; Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006; Linden, 2009; McCauley, 2002; Moghaddam, 2005, 2009; Silke, 2008; Möller & Schumacher, 2007; Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010; De Wolf & Doosje, 2010). By studying combinations of factors at different stages in the process (i.e., the phase before joining an extremist group versus the phase of leaving the group), a dynamic, non-linear approach is taken. The relationships between the various factors were defined in order to gain better insight into (1) how the various factors influence each other in the larger picture of radicalisation and (2) which factors can be actively influenced to counter the radicalisation process at any of the three levels (individual, group or society). These factors are referred to as actionable. The resulting network model is not meant to present one coherent picture of radicalisation, but rather can be used to better understand specific elements of radicalisation as needed – for instance, the relationship between an individual's psychological state and socio-economic status on one hand, and positive attitudes towards the use of violence to reach one's ideals.

It was concluded from the network analysis that some factors are actionable while others are not. Successful radicalisation policy depends on recognising and utilising the most promising actionable factor in a particular context. Furthermore, a social network model including different factors and associations between factors can be extended and modified by including new factors and associations based on further research. This improves our

understanding of the radicalisation process both at the conceptual level and at the practical level for use in the field.

These three complementary research approaches underline the extreme complexity of undertaking a comprehensive analysis of violent radicalisation. By taking a multimodal and holistic approach to radicalisation, in which the different modes partly rely on complementary debated views or assumptions, the findings of SAFIRE gain in robustness. It also illustrates that, even on a fundamental research level, underlying assumptions, cultural background or diverging security perceptions can have strong consequences for the way research protocols are defined.

Individuals as members of radical groups

Whereas factors influencing radicalisation may differ according to ideology, there are aspects that seem to play an important role for all radicalising individuals. For example, self-esteem and the need to belong to a group. SAFIRE finds that taking into account an individual's perspective when studying radicalisation is a sensitive but necessary issue. In the developmental process of adolescents, for instance, SAFIRE found that the relationship between the adolescent and significant others undergoes changes: new relationships are established and both existing and new relationships need to be made sense of. Individuals necessarily rely on others in this sense-making process. When the sense-making efforts of involving significant others are perceived to be divergent, conflicting or incoherent and cannot be synthesized, the individual becomes vulnerable to 'alternatives' (in this case, the rhetoric and propaganda from potentially violent or radicalised groups). It is considered vital, therefore, to identify and promote non-conflicting relationships with 'non-violent' others (e.g. non-radicalised individuals).

Consistently, becoming and remaining a member of a radical group is dependent on the individual's need to belong to a group and the perception of shared values with that group. If a member of a radical group does not experience shared values or does not experience equity in ties with the members of the group, leaving the group becomes an attractive alternative. In other words, a key factor of becoming and staying engaged in a

radical group is attractiveness of the group (friendships, a shared identity, boosting self-esteem, shared ideology, the development of a 'collective-self'). If the group disappoints the individual, the individual can become motivated to leave the group, perhaps even to start a new group. With regard to interventions, therefore, it is considered important to provide where possible alternative groups with attractive values and relationships.

Intervention programmes.

Two field studies were conducted in the SAFIRE project to 1) empirically test a set of variables that predict violent radicalisation according to the social network model described earlier and 2) compare the predicted effectiveness of interventions with judgements made by experts (e.g. first line social workers, police experts). The first field study longitudinally investigated effectiveness of a resilience training. This study meets the demand for more empirically based research on interventions to counter violent radicalisation (Lub, 2013). Following Steiner (2005), a combination of both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (surveys) methods was used as this has been proposed to be an effective approach when studying radicalisation processes. By comparing factors over time, the relative importance of these factors at different stages could be examined. For the second study, in-depth semi-structured interviews were held with a small group of former right wing extremists from Germany and the Netherlands. The focus was on the role of psychological and socialisation factors before-, during, and after group membership.

A detailed description of the results can be found in the SAFIRE report on the empirical studies (Feddes, Mann, & Doosje, 2013). In short, the studies provided a rich dataset including both qualitative and quantitative data on factors that the social network model showed to be important in the radicalisation process. The social network model proved to be effective in studying factors that are related to violent radicalisation and identifying possible target factors for interventions. The data on these factors that were collected in the field study and interview study can be added to the social network model to validate and strengthen (or to disconfirm) existing associations between factors. It also led to the inclusion of factors that had not been included beforehand. More insight can be

obtained in (de-)radicalisation processes by comparing factors (i.e., self-esteem) over time. We could confirm the importance of focusing on strengthening identity (i.e., increase self-esteem), reducing negative emotions, and reducing social disconnectedness when developing preventive interventions. This is in line with the assessment study of interventions by experts that also was part of SAFIRE. With regard to restorative interventions, based on the interviews with former right-wing extremists, it was concluded that the focus should be on the individual by determining his or her needs. An independent organisation or professional worker could implement the intervention. This person or organisation should have sufficient legitimacy and be able to create trust. Peers and family of the individual could mediate in this process.

SAFIRE showed that a range of programmes can be developed for countering radicalisation, de-radicalisation/disengagement and even prevention. It also demonstrates a robust relationship between mainstream social work and radicalisation intervention programmes, which often use similar techniques and practices. Intervention programmes geared towards counter- or de-radicalisation often share characteristics with programmes designed to address other issues, for example: integration of migrants in society; social and cultural development; health interventions; juvenile legal protection; and judiciary interventions. It is, therefore, not necessary to reinvent the wheel. Other types of intervention programmes may be useful for developing specific de-radicalisation/disengagement interventions.

SAFIRE highlights the need for more explicit attention to the evaluation of any intervention. High-impact publications on de-radicalisation/disengagement interventions are still relatively few in number, although recently some significant contributions have been published, mostly in Northern Europe and the United States. However, extreme fragmentation of data, security classification, small sample sizes, plus confidentiality, security and ethical concerns all create specific challenges to finding valid and reliable information on interventions. SAFIRE highlights the need for empirically-based intervention programmes.

As discussed, preventive and disengagement programmes are similar to regular social work and should be governed by the norms and values of social work. The individuals in a programme and the possibilities that exist to find their place in society should be the focus. Preventing their involvement in a radical group can be supported by means of social work that focuses on creating resilience within young adults and stimulating their connection to society, based on trust and acceptance.

Conclusions

SAFIRE provides a comprehensive and coherent approach to the examination of the complex phenomenon of radicalisation. It also seeks to give advice and guidance in the difficult task of preventing individuals becoming radicalised to a point where they may feel compelled to undertake violent acts that could include terrorism. SAFIRE has potentially a great impact at the theoretical level (complexity of designed analytical tools, variety of indicators and actionable variables) as well as at the operational level (field-findings on detection and interventions). The key messages of SAFIRE based on the review above can be summarised as follows:

- We need to stop looking at radicalisation (only) from a security perspective;
- Radicalisation is a complex and dynamic process in which the key to understanding it lies in examining when the system of the radical group will stay the same or change as a result of stimuli both inherent in it (e.g. key events like death of an important group member) and external to it (e.g. change in resources allocated by a government to combat terrorism);
- There is not any single 'terrorism factor' or a single, predetermined pathway from moderation to radicalisation to terrorism. In order to study the dynamics of radicalisation, a promising line of enquiry is to determine what combination of factors is important in this process;

- When security is the primary goal (and not social prevention), concrete and organizational aspects of recruitment and group operations should be targeted as a priority (disrupting group functioning);

- SAFIRE demonstrated a robust relationship between mainstream social work and radicalisation intervention programmes, which often use similar techniques and practices (i.e., developing self-esteem and a positive strong identity).

- The longitudinal evaluation study of an intervention aimed at making young adults resilient against violent radicalisation showed how quantitative and qualitative measures can be successfully combined to evaluate interventions. These data are especially important taking into account the lack of empirically-based evaluations of interventions (Lub, 2013).

Future directions

Whereas SAFIRE's agenda was about radicalisation and relevant interventions, some unexplored directions should be regarded in future research. For instance:

- Evaluation approaches. Evidence-based practice (EBP) seems to be one of the most mainstream evaluation tools for any social intervention. The up-coming FP7 project IMPACT-Europe may help provide insight into this matter regarding de-radicalisation interventions;

- How can de-radicalisation interventions make use of best practices and lessons learned from generally used social interventions;

- SAFIRE has taken a multi-disciplinary approach to radicalisation. Some relevant disciplines have not been included in this project such as re-socialisation (defined here as a process of identity transformation), developmental and clinical psychology, or a more specific focus on criminology. Future research could benefit from this inclusion.

- It can be assumed that in view of the specific nature of some radicalised individuals, front-line practitioners may face risks of physical or verbal violence. Tools like

assertiveness techniques, contributive negotiation or ethics of reciprocity could help address power- wielding clients.

- Self-de-radicalisation does not seem to have ever been considered per se, though it may be a process worth studying. Potentially, many radicals remain unknown or undetected and, after a while, decide to or simply stop being radical on their own. For example, how does social integration work out and how can family and peers help in this process.

To conclude, we believe the results of this project has increased the understanding of conceptual aspects of radicalisation by perceiving it as a normal process that should not be approached merely from a security perspective. In addition, the results have pointed out an overlap in social work to prevent radicalisation as well as field efforts and interventions – when, why and how they work. This can help in decision making on allocation of resources of future studies and the implementation of interventions in order to prevent, halt or counter radicalisation. Radicalisation is not simply the sum of different factors; different factors play a role at different stages in the process. Key events motivate individuals to radicalise further or to de-radicalise, supporting the notion of a non-linear and dynamic process.

Hinweis

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