



Съфинансирано от
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Capacity Building Through Exchange of Good Practices & Research in the Security Domain

Module 3: Propaganda

Topic: The use of propaganda by extremist groups and individuals and what police countermeasures are possible and how they work

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1. Introduction

This report provides the topic syllabus for the *Propaganda* topic for Module 3 of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) project *Capacity building through exchange of good practices and research in the security domain* led by the European Institute Foundation. This report provides the aim, objectives, reading list, presentation notes, topic content and sources of information for delivery of this topic.

This second part of the training material for the aforementioned course builds on Part 1, “The various extremist ideologies and how propaganda works.” It is therefore recommended that both parts be considered as a whole when planning future one-day training sessions, particularly due to the highly practical nature of Part 2.

2. Aim

The aim of the topic “*The use of propaganda by extremist groups and individuals and what police countermeasures are possible and how they work*” is:

“Learn how extremist and terrorist groups and individuals have used propaganda in the past to achieve their own goals. Based on real-life cases, understand how police measures and interventions can interrupt or even prevent propaganda, radicalisation and the perpetration of terrorist attacks. Finally, learn about the role of the police in combating such ideologies, based on insights from European police forces.”

3. Topic syllabus

To ensure that all students attending have a clear understanding of “Extremist Propaganda Strategies”. Therefore, this topic is divided into four parts as follows:

- **Part 1: Recruitment and Propaganda** – Explaining and understanding the processes of radicalisation, the causes and effects of propaganda, particularly in the context of practical examples and methods. The focus here is on the phenomenon of religious extremism.



- **Part 2: The role of the police in deradicalization and exit work** – Explanation and understanding of the role of the police in deradicalisation and the actual work with radicalised individuals in their exit process. The special feature here is the impetus that police officers can provide in this context.
- **Part 3: Table Exercise 1 – The 18 years old Terrorist (real case)** – Based on the pseudonymised real-life case of his 18-year-old terrorist, the main aim is to generate understanding of the means and methods of intervention that could have been used to prevent this attack..
- **Part 4: Table Exercise 2 – The 29-year-old imprisoned Islamist Extremist** – Based on the pseudonymised real-life case of a 28-year-old imprisoned extremist who wanted to join Islamic State and has already committed serious crimes, the main aim is to understand how inter-agency cooperation, coordinated by the police, can successfully facilitate a process of disengagement..

4. Learning objectives

The primary learning objectives of the extremist *propaganda/counter strategies* topic are to:

1. Understand how propaganda influences radicalisation processes
2. Learn more about processes such as mental programming and understand the effects this has
3. Understand the influence of propaganda in social media
4. Learn how extremist and terrorist groups use propaganda in different ways to target and recruit individuals
5. Learn and discuss the different roles that the police can, should and, where necessary, must play in working with radicalised individuals
6. Practise applying the knowledge you have learned to two specific practical examples, thereby consolidating what you have just learned



5. Learning outcomes

At the completion and conclusion of the *propaganda/counter strategies* topic presentation, students will be able to:

- explain the mechanisms by which propaganda contributes to radicalisation, citing specific examples of how extremist narratives manipulate emotions, identity, and group belonging to influence vulnerable individuals;
- to describe mental programming techniques (e.g., indoctrination, emotional manipulation, identity reinforcement) used in extremist propaganda, and discuss their psychological and behavioral effects on individuals at risk of radicalisation;
- to identify and analyse the role of social media platforms in spreading extremist propaganda, including how algorithms, viral content, and online communities facilitate radicalisation and recruitment;
- to compare and contrast the recruitment strategies of various extremist groups, detailing specific propaganda methods (e.g., tailored messaging, use of victimhood, high-production media, interactive content) aimed at different audiences, including youth and marginalized individuals;
- to outline and critically discuss the diverse roles of police in preventing, detecting, and responding to radicalisation, including community engagement, multi-agency cooperation, early intervention, safeguarding, and deradicalisation support;
- to recognise radicalisation at an early stage and take appropriate countermeasures in a targeted manner;
- Participants will be able to think in an interdisciplinary manner and involve potential partners in the measures they intend to take.



6. Reading list

The following list of reports, papers, websites and articles are recommended reading on the wider topic of *Counter Radicalisation and Propaganda Strategies* which complement the topic presentation and will add value to the students learning experience and includes:

Academic Publications & Reports

1. **"Propaganda 2.0: Psychological Effects of Right-Wing and Islamist Extremist Internet Videos on Young Adults"** *Bundeskriminalamt (BKA), Germany*
Analyzes how extremist propaganda on social media manipulates youth perceptions and behaviors. https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/Publikationsreihen/PolizeiUndForschung/1_44_Propaganda2.0.pdf
2. **"EU Policies for Preventing Violent Extremism: A New Paradigm for Action"** *Santina Musolino (CIDOB, 2021)*
Examines EU strategies, including the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), to counter propaganda and radicalization. <https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/eu-policies-preventing-violent-extremism-new-paradigm-action>
3. **"Preventing Violent Extremism in Germany: Synergies Across Fields of Action"** *SIPRI Working Paper (2020)*
Discusses German federal programs like *Demokratisch Handeln* and deradicalization initiatives targeting online hate speech. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/wp_2005_violent_extremism.pdf
4. **"A Behavioral Study of Radicalization Trajectories of American Homegrown Terrorism Offenders"** *J. Klausen (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016)*
Identifies behavioral indicators of radicalization and strategies for early intervention. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250417.pdf>
5. **"Using Community Policing to Counter Violent Extremism"** *International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) & COPS Office*
Outlines community engagement strategies for law enforcement to disrupt radicalization



pipelines. <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/all/f-h/Final%20Key%20Principles%20Guide.pdf>

Government & Policy Documents

6. **"Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States"** *The White House* (2011)
Details the U.S. federal strategy for countering extremist propaganda through community resilience and partnerships. <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/a-new-approach-to-countering-violent-extremism-sharing-expertise-and-empowering-local-communities>
7. **"The Danish Approach to Countering and Preventing Radicalization"** *Colorado Information Analysis Center*
Explores Denmark's holistic model combining social services, education, and law enforcement. <https://ciac.colorado.gov/files/D2DF00000/132.pdf>
8. **"Countering Violent Extremism: Strategic Implementation Plan"** *U.S. Department of Homeland Security* (DHS)
Focuses on countering online propaganda and enhancing interagency coordination.
9. **"FBI-DHS Domestic Terrorism Strategic Report"** *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)*
Analyzes anti-government extremism and strategies to mitigate propaganda-driven radicalization. https://www.odni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news_documents/ndaa-domestic-terrorism-strategic-report-051421.pdf

Case Studies & Practical Guides

10. **"The Role of Police in Multi-Agency Deradicalisation: Lessons from Bavaria"** *Holger Schmidt, Marc Allroggen & Jörg M. Fegert (2020) Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)*
Analyzes cooperation between police, youth welfare, and civil society actors in Bavaria. Describes case management approaches by the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office for early detection and coordinated intervention in cases of radicalization.



<https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Beitragsreihe/beitrag-band-10-schnittstellen2.pdf>

11. **"Handling Jihadist Returnees: Police Responsibilities in the EU" RAN POL Working Group** (2017) *Radicalisation Awareness Network (European Commission)*
A guide for police authorities on risk assessment, monitoring, and multi-institutional co-operation in the reintegration of IS returnees. Emphasizes the role of the police as an interface between security agencies and social services. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/ran_pol_role_of_police_officers_dusseldorf_30-31_03_2017_en.pdf
12. **"Strategic Enhancement of Deradicalisation: A German Approach" Federal Ministry of the Interior** (BMI) (2020)
Documents the cooperation between police, domestic intelligence, and exit programs in Germany. Includes case studies on the role of the Bavarian police in coordinated deradicalization in right-wing and Islamist contexts. <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/sicherheit/strategic-enhancement-deradicalisation.pdf>
13. **"Forensic Psychiatry and Police Collaboration in Radicalisation Cases" Bavarian State Ministry of Health** (2019)
Analyzes the interface between forensic commitment, psychiatry, and police in Bavaria. Describes protocols for information sharing in suspected cases and the role of Holger Schmidt's Competence Center for Deradicalization. https://www.antworten-auf-salafismus.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/salafismus/downloads/doku_ft_rel_beg_radikalisierung_psychiatrie_psychologie.pdf
14. **"EU Counter-Radicalisation Policies: The Police Perspective" European Parliamentary Research Service** (2022)
Study on the development of EU-wide police strategies against radicalization. Emphasizes the importance of locally anchored police work (community policing) and cross-border data networking. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/Reg-Data/etudes/IDAN/2022/739213/EPRS_IDA\(2022\)739213_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/Reg-Data/etudes/IDAN/2022/739213/EPRS_IDA(2022)739213_EN.pdf)



15. **"Radicalisation Contact Points in Germany: BAMF's Prevention Network"**
Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
Describes Germany's hotline system for reporting radicalization risks without police involvement.
16. **"Youth Social Work in Schools: A German Model for Preventing Radicalisation"**
BMFSFJ (German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs)
Details school-based programs to counter extremist narratives through civic education.

Teaching Materials & Toolkits

17. **"Mitreden! Countering Islamist Propaganda Online"**
Hamburg State Office for Constitutional Protection
Provides educators and police with media literacy tools to debunk extremist content.
18. **"Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) Training Manuals"**
European Commission
Offers resources for first responders, including modules on detecting propaganda and supporting at-risk individuals.
19. **"Countering Terrorist Recruitment through Community Engagement"**
U.S. National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC)
Training materials for law enforcement on disrupting recruitment channels and propaganda dissemination.

Additional Resources

- "Deradicalization in Practice: The Bavarian Model", Holger Schmidt (2018), Lecture recording on the work of the Competence Center for Deradicalization (Bavarian State Criminal Police Office), including case examples of collaboration with Violence Prevention Network e.V. Summary (German)
- **"Country Reports on Terrorism 2019"** (U.S. State Department): Overview of global trends in extremist propaganda <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/>.
- **"Violence Prevention Network: Deradicalization in Practice"** (Germany): Case studies on rehabilitating extremists.



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This list integrates theoretical frameworks, policy blueprints, and practical tools from diverse geopolitical contexts. For access to paywalled articles, consult institutional libraries or official government portals.



7. Presentation notes

The following chapter contains a sample presentation that can be used as the basis for a training session lasting at least 120 minutes on the topic: “Ideologies of Terrorism & Extremism Causes, Recruitment and Propaganda and possible Counterstrategies”. This presentation is based on the training course successfully conducted in February 2025 by Col. Holger Schmidt and Dr. Holger Nitsch (Bavarian Police/Germany) for senior officers of the Bulgarian police. The training material is structured as follows:

- 1) Example of a presentation page (slide)
- 2) Explanations of the content presented, including supplementary background information

Important note: The case studies presented are all anonymised, but are based on actual cases. Further additional detailed information can be found in the scientific publications listed in section 6.

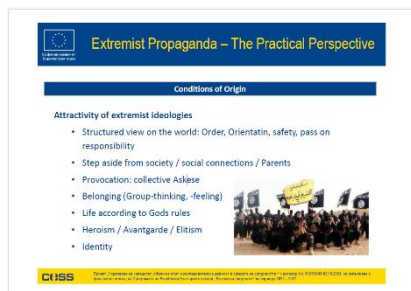
SLIDE 21 – Recruitment, Propaganda & possible Counterstrategies



The second part of the one-day training course begins with a brief summary of Part 1. The trainer is free to decide how intensive this should be. Slide 21 offers the trainer opportunities to transition into the practical part of the course. In this example, the topic of ‘religious extremism’ was deliberately chosen as the last subchapter in the first part. Given its topicality and, in particular, the propaganda spread by Islamist extremists on social media forums and the internet, this highly relevant topic was an obvious choice.



SLIDE 22 – Conditions of Origin



The content begins where the first part of the theory ended. In order to understand how radicalisation processes work, it is first important to understand what makes these extremist ideologies attractive to individuals. Psychological research into radicalisation also shows that radicalisation – regardless of the phenomenon – is always the result of something missing in the life of a person who is becoming radicalised. Identifying this deficiency is the key to any attempt to help someone leave radicalisation behind.

1. Structured View on the World: Order, Orientation, Safety, Passing on Responsibility

Religious extremist ideologies provide a rigid, binary worldview that simplifies complex societal issues into clear moral directives. For youth navigating uncertain transitions (e.g., adolescence to adulthood), this structure offers psychological safety and a sense of control. By framing life as a battle between "good" and "evil," these ideologies absolve individuals of personal responsibility, redirecting accountability to a divine or collective mandate. For example, ISIS propaganda often employs heroic narratives that promise divine purpose, reducing existential ambiguity.

2. Stepping away from society / social connections / parents

Extremist groups exploit generational and cultural divides by positioning themselves as alternatives to mainstream society. Youth disillusioned with familial or societal norms (e.g., secularism, individualism) may view extremism as a form of rebellion or autonomy. This rejection of societal frameworks is amplified in marginalized communities, where alienation from parents or institutions creates a vacuum filled by extremist kinship networks. For instance, studies show that radicalized youth often sever ties with family, adopting the extremist group as a "new family".



3. Provocation: collective asceticism

Extremist groups frame austerity (e.g., strict dress codes, dietary restrictions) as a form of moral superiority and resistance against perceived societal decadence. This collective asceticism serves dual purposes: it provokes mainstream society while fostering in-group cohesion. For youth, adopting such practices can signal defiance and commitment, enhancing their sense of uniqueness and purpose. The Islamic State's emphasis on purity and sacrifice, for example, appeals to youths seeking to distinguish themselves from "corrupt" Western lifestyles.

4. Belonging (group-thinking, feeling)

A particularly strong pull factor is the feeling of belonging, which is sought by individuals who are becoming radicalised and strongly offered by extremist groups.

The human need for belonging is acutely felt during adolescence. Extremist groups offer unconditional acceptance and camaraderie, often replacing fractured social bonds. Through rituals, shared jargon, and communal activities, they create an "us vs. them" identity that fosters loyalty. Research indicates that peer influence and small-group dynamics are critical in radicalization, as seen in cases where friends or online communities facilitate recruitment.

Other important points in this regard are:

Compensation for social exclusion

People who feel marginalised in mainstream society (e.g. due to migration, poverty or discrimination) often consciously or unconsciously seek alternative communities. Extremist groups offer **emotional security** and a **clear sense of belonging** that compensates for real or perceived isolation. For example, Salafist groups in Europe deliberately exploit identity conflicts among second-generation migrants by promoting a supposedly 'pure' Islamic identity as an alternative to what they perceive as a hostile majority society.

Rituals and group bonding mechanisms

Psychological studies show that **initiations** (e.g. oaths, symbolic acts of violence) and **repeated group activities** (community meetings, dissemination of propaganda) deepen the bond with the extremist group. These practices activate neuropsychological reward systems, similar to those found in cults or sports teams. One example is left-wing extremist 'Antifa'



groups, which build group solidarity through collective actions such as graffiti campaigns or participation in demonstrations.

Social sanctioning for distancing

Once integrated, members often experience massive **social costs** if they want to leave the group – ranging from emotional blackmail to physical threats. This creates a vicious circle in which belonging becomes the only remaining social resource. Case studies of people who have left the hooligan scene show that the loss of a sense of belonging to the group often leads to severe depression.

Digital radicalisation spaces

Online platforms such as Telegram and 4chan offer **24/7 experiences of belonging** through algorithmically reinforced echo chambers. Young people who do not have stable relationships in their offline lives develop a parasocial bond with extremist influencers who act as a 'surrogate family'. The gamification of propaganda (e.g. right-wing extremist meme competitions) reinforces this through playful group interaction.

5. Living according to God's rules

Extremist interpretations of religion provide absolute moral clarity, which is appealing to youths grappling with ethical ambiguity. By adhering to "divine laws," followers perceive themselves as morally righteous, bypassing the complexities of secular moral frameworks. This absolutism is evident in Salafi-jihadist rhetoric, which posits Sharia as the only legitimate governance system, offering a clear path to salvation. For youth facing identity crises, such dogmatism resolves internal conflicts about right and wrong.

6. Heroism / avant-garde / elitism

Extremist groups often cast members as heroic vanguards fighting for a sacred cause. This narrative taps into youthful desires for significance and legacy. For example, ISIS propaganda glorifies martyrdom as the ultimate act of heroism, promising eternal rewards. Similarly, far-right groups frame themselves as defenders of racial or cultural purity, appealing to youths seeking elitist status. The allure of being part of an "elect" group satisfies both egocentric and altruistic impulses.



7. Identity

Identity formation is central to adolescence, and extremist ideologies provide pre-packaged identities that resolve feelings of confusion or inadequacy. By adopting a militant religious identity, youths gain a sense of purpose and self-worth. Studies on identity diffusion show that individuals lacking a stable self-concept are more susceptible to extremist narratives that offer rigid, role-based identities. For example, converts to extremist groups often describe their pre-radicalized selves as "lost," contrasting with their post-radicalization "awakening".

SLIDE 23 – Radicalization – Self-Perception / Self-Promotion



The following two cases of terrorist violence serve to reinforce what was heard in the previous slide with concrete examples.

The essence of terrorist acts is that they are reported on. Self-promotion is therefore a key element. In particular, the cruelty and brutality displayed by terrorists in carrying out their acts is intended to ensure that their attacks are reported on.

Example 1 - The Murder of Lee Rigby: A Case Summary

On May 22, 2013, Fusilier Lee Rigby, a 25-year-old British soldier and father of one, was brutally murdered near the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich, southeast London. This horrific attack shocked the United Kingdom and garnered international attention due to its public nature and ideological motivation.

The Attack

At approximately 2:20 PM, Michael Adebolajo (29) and Michael Adebawale (22) deliberately drove their Vauxhall Tigra car at 30-40 mph into Rigby as he crossed Wellington Street. After the collision, both assailants emerged from the vehicle armed with knives, a meat cleaver, and a revolver, then proceeded to attack the motionless soldier. In a particularly gruesome act, they attempted to behead him before dragging his body into the middle of the road.



What distinguished this attack from many other murders was the perpetrators' deliberate effort to create a public spectacle. The attackers remained at the scene, allowing bystanders to film them². Adebolajo, with bloodied hands, addressed onlookers directly: "The only reason we have killed this man today is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers. This British soldier is one – he is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth".

The Perpetrators

Both Adebolajo and Adebowale were British citizens of Nigerian descent who had been raised in Christian families before converting to Islam. Adebolajo converted around 2002-2003 while at university, while Adebowale converted more recently between 2008-2009. Both men were already known to police and security services prior to the attack.

During their trial, Adebolajo described himself as a "soldier of Allah" and claimed the killing was an act of war rather than murder. He stated they had targeted Rigby because he was wearing a Help for Heroes charity sweatshirt that identified him as a soldier.

Legal Proceedings and Sentencing

On December 19, 2013, after just 90 minutes of jury deliberation, both men were found guilty of murdering Lee Rigby. They were acquitted on charges of attempting to murder a police officer. The sentencing on February 26, 2014, was marked by dramatic scenes in the courtroom. Both defendants shouted and struggled with security guards after the judge described their extremist views as "a betrayal of Islam". The judge, Mr. Justice Sweeney, sentenced them in their absence:

- Michael Adebolajo received a whole-life term, meaning he will never be released from prison
- Michael Adebowale was given life imprisonment with a minimum term of 45 years

The judge described their actions as "barbaric" and "sickening and pitiless," noting that they had "butchered" Rigby and "gloried in what you had done".

Media Coverage and Public Reaction

The murder received extensive coverage across traditional and social media platforms. Video footage of Adebolajo speaking directly to cameras with bloodied hands became a defining image of the attack. Researchers from Cardiff University conducted studies analyzing how social media shaped public understanding and reaction to the crime.

The media coverage revealed several patterns of public response:



- Expressions of condolence and sympathy for Rigby's family were prominent, especially on Twitter;
- The murder triggered increased attacks on mosques and Islamic centers across Britain;
- Far-right groups organized protests in response to the attack;
- British Muslim organizations quickly condemned the murder, with the Muslim Council of Britain calling it "truly a barbaric act".

The case also raised questions about the effectiveness of British intelligence services, as both perpetrators had been known to authorities before the attack.

Legacy

Following the murder, support for the military charity Help for Heroes surged, with over £600,000 in donations received within five days of Rigby's death. A military funeral was held for Rigby on July 12, 2013, attended by thousands, including then-Prime Minister David Cameron. The attack is remembered as one of the most shocking examples of ideologically motivated terrorism on British soil, notable for its public nature and the killers' deliberate engagement with media channels to spread their message.

Conclusion

The murder of Lee Rigby represents a significant case in the history of terrorism in the United Kingdom. The brutality of the attack, combined with the perpetrators' deliberate media strategy, created a template for a new form of terrorist attack that has unfortunately been repeated elsewhere. The case continues to be studied by researchers examining the relationship between traditional media, social media, and public reactions to terrorist incidents.

The Rigby family's statement that "no other sentence would have been acceptable" reflected the public sentiment that justice had been served through the perpetrators' life sentences. However, the case remains a painful reminder of how ideological extremism can manifest in shocking violence on city streets.

Example 2 - The Murder of James Wright Foley: A Case Summary

On August 19, 2014, American journalist James Wright Foley became a symbol of the brutal tactics employed by the Islamic State (ISIS) when a video of his execution was released online. His murder, marked by its graphic violence and strategic dissemination, underscored the evolving nature of modern terrorism and its exploitation of digital media. Foley's death catalyzed



global outrage, legal action against his killers, and critical debates about journalistic safety and media ethics in conflict zones.

The Abduction and Murder

James Foley, a 40-year-old freelance journalist, was abducted in northwestern Syria on November 22, 2012, while reporting on the Syrian Civil War for outlets including GlobalPost and Agence France-Presse. His disappearance followed a pattern of ISIS targeting Western journalists and aid workers to leverage political concessions. After nearly two years in captivity, ISIS released a video titled *A Message to America*, showing Foley in an orange jumpsuit forced to condemn U.S. airstrikes in Iraq before being beheaded by a masked militant. The video, which also threatened the life of another American hostage, Steven Sotloff, was authenticated by U.S. intelligence agencies and sparked international condemnation.

Foley's murder was not an isolated act but part of a broader campaign of terror. ISIS aimed to intimidate Western governments and amplify its ideological reach through meticulously produced propaganda. The group's decision to execute Foley—a non-combatant dedicated to documenting civilian suffering—highlighted its disregard for international norms and deliberate targeting of symbolic figures.

The Perpetrators: The ISIS "Beatles"

Foley's murder was carried out by a cell of British ISIS members infamously dubbed "the Beatles" due to their accents. The core members included Mohammed Emwazi ("Jihadi John"), Alexandra Kotey, El Shafee Elsheikh, and Aine Davis. Emwazi, who directly appeared in the execution videos, was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Syria in 2015. Kotey and Elsheikh were captured in 2018 by Syrian Kurdish forces and later extradited to the United States to face trial.

During their time in ISIS, the "Beatles" oversaw the detention, torture, and execution of at least 27 hostages, including Foley, Steven Sotloff, aid workers Kayla Mueller and Peter Kassig, and British nationals David Haines and Alan Henning. Hostages described the cell's brutality: they subjected prisoners to mock executions, waterboarding, and psychological torture while enforcing strict isolation. Kotey and Elsheikh played key logistical roles, extracting ransom demands and coordinating communications between ISIS leadership and victims' families.



Legal Proceedings and Consequences

In 2021–2022, Kotey and Elsheikh faced trial in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. Kotey pleaded guilty to eight charges, including hostage-taking resulting in death, and was sentenced to life imprisonment in April 2022. Elsheikh, convicted by a jury in April 2022 on charges of conspiracy to commit murder and supporting terrorism, received eight concurrent life sentences in August 2022. Both men were stripped of British citizenship and remain incarcerated in ADX Florence, a supermax prison in Colorado.

The trials revealed the extent of the cell's operations. Prosecutors emphasized Elsheikh's leadership role, citing his participation in Foley's murder and the sexual abuse of Kayla Mueller. Despite expressing limited remorse, neither defendant received the death penalty due to a U.S.-U.K. extradition agreement. Their sentences marked a rare instance of accountability for ISIS atrocities, though Foley's family emphasized that no punishment could redress their loss.

Media Coverage and Ethical Dilemmas

The release of Foley's execution video triggered a global media storm. Outlets grappled with whether to broadcast the footage, balancing the public's right to know against the risk of amplifying ISIS propaganda. While CNN and the BBC refrained from showing graphic content, tabloids like the New York Post and Daily Telegraph published still images of Foley's final moments, drawing criticism for sensationalism. Social media platforms faced scrutiny for enabling the video's rapid spread, prompting campaigns like #ISISMediaBlackout to discourage sharing. Foley's murder also intensified debates about freelance journalism in conflict zones. Unlike staff reporters, freelancers often lack institutional support, insurance, or hostage negotiation resources, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by armed groups. His death spurred initiatives to improve journalist safety, including the establishment of the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, which advocates for hostage families and promotes press freedom.

Legacy and Policy Impact

Foley's execution had lasting repercussions on U.S. foreign policy and counterterrorism strategies. President Barack Obama condemned the act as "an affront to humanity" and authorized expanded airstrikes against ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria. The incident also exposed flaws in the U.S. government's approach to hostage crises, leading to a 2015 policy review that permitted families to communicate with captors without prosecution. Internationally, the case highlighted the transnational threat of foreign fighters. The "Beatles," radicalized in the U.K., exemplified how Western nationals could perpetuate global terrorism, prompting reforms in



U.K. counterextremism programs. Foley's story remains a touchstone in discussions about the human cost of conflict reporting and the ethical responsibilities of media consumers in the digital age.

Conclusion

The murder of James Foley epitomized ISIS's brutality and media-savvy manipulation. While his killers faced justice, the case underscores enduring challenges: combating terrorist propaganda, protecting journalists, and balancing transparency with ethical reporting. Foley's legacy endures through advocacy for press freedom and the recognition that his work-giving voice to marginalized communities-stands in stark contrast to the nihilism of his captors. As Diane Foley, his mother, asserted, "Jim's death was not in vain if it inspires us to seek justice and uphold the values he championed".

SLIDE 24 – What are the common elements?



Slide 24 is primarily intended to highlight once again the common features of terrorist offences, specifically: (1) the justification terrorists feel for their actions and (2) their self-portrayal as victims and fighters for justice.

Terrorist Justifications: Frameworks and Narratives

Revenge for Western Aggression

Terrorist groups frequently frame violence as retribution for perceived Western military interventions, economic exploitation, or cultural domination. For instance, jihadist organizations like ISIS and al-Qaeda cite U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, drone strikes, or support for authoritarian regimes as acts of aggression requiring retaliation. This narrative portrays attacks



as proportional responses to "crimes against Muslims," leveraging historical grievances such as colonialism or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By framing violence as vengeance, terrorists seek moral legitimacy and emotional resonance among sympathizers who view Western powers as perpetual oppressors.

Fight for Peace and Unity of Muslims Worldwide

The establishment of a global caliphate, as proclaimed by ISIS in 2014, is justified as a divine mandate to unify Muslims under a single political and religious authority. This ideology draws on Salafi-jihadi interpretations of early Islamic history, claiming that fragmented Muslim-majority nations must be forcibly reunited to resist Western hegemony. Groups like ISIS argue that their violent campaigns against secular governments and rival Muslim factions are necessary to eradicate internal divisions (fitna) and restore Islamic solidarity against external threats.

Fight for Undisturbed Religious Activity

Terrorist organizations often conflate their violent agendas with defense of religious freedom, alleging that Western secularism and liberal values threaten Islamic practices. For example, ISIS has destroyed shrines and persecuted minority sects under the guise of purifying Islam from "heretical" influences. Similarly, groups like al-Shabaab frame their insurgencies as resistance against governments that restrict Sharia-compliant governance. These claims distort international human rights frameworks, which protect religious freedom but reject violence as a means to enforce doctrinal conformity.

Fight for a State Aligned with Their Rules and Traditions

The demand for autonomous territories governed by strict interpretations of Islamic law is central to groups like ISIS and the Taliban. By declaring a caliphate in Iraq and Syria, ISIS sought to create a "pure" Islamic state enforcing its version of Sharia, including prohibitions on education, dress, and social behavior. This justification appeals to disillusioned Muslims seeking identity and order amid political instability, positioning terrorism as a revolutionary struggle against corrupt nation-states and foreign-imposed systems.

"Guilty Is the West" (Self-Defense Narrative)

Terrorist propaganda often inverts victimhood, portraying attacks as defensive measures against Western "war on Islam." The 2005 London bombings and 2015 Paris attacks were



justified as responses to Western military actions in Muslim-majority regions. This narrative exploits international law concepts like self-defense, with groups misinterpreting Islamic jurisprudential principles (e.g., jihad al-daf) to legitimize preemptive strikes against civilians. By framing the West as an existential threat, terrorists seek to mobilize support and rationalize indiscriminate violence.

"Sorry, but It Has to Be Done" (Pragmatic Necessity)

Some terrorists adopt a detached, utilitarian rationale, viewing violence as an unavoidable tool to achieve political or ideological goals. This mindset is evident in the writings of figures like Osama bin Laden, who described 9/11 as a "necessary evil" to awaken Muslims to oppression. Modern lone-wolf attackers, radicalized online, often express resignation about causing civilian casualties, believing systemic change requires extreme measures. Psychological studies note that such actors may disengage moral self-sanctions, dehumanizing victims to justify atrocities as "sacrifices" for a higher cause.

These narratives, while diverse, share a common thread: they weaponize legitimate grievances and theological concepts to legitimize violence. Counterterrorism strategies must address both the material and ideological drivers of these justifications to undermine their appeal.

Self-Perception / Self-Portrayal / Self-Identification as Resistance Fighters

Self-Perception as Victims

Terrorist groups frequently cultivate a narrative of collective victimhood to legitimize violence, framing themselves as defenders of oppressed communities against systemic injustices. This mindset often draws on historical grievances, such as Western colonialism, military interventions, or perceived cultural imperialism, to portray their actions as defensive measures. For instance, jihadist organizations like ISIS and al-Qaeda invoke imagery of Muslim suffering in Palestine, Iraq, or Afghanistan to cast their attacks as retribution for "crimes against Islam". By amplifying real or imagined marginalization, terrorists recast their violence as morally justified resistance, exploiting psychological mechanisms where perceived victimhood fosters radicalization by fostering resentment and moral disengagement. This narrative resonates with individuals who feel disenfranchised, offering a sense of purpose through "righteous vengeance" against perceived oppressors.



Self-Identification as Resistance Fighters

Many terrorist groups reject the "terrorist" label, instead positioning themselves as legitimate resistance movements fighting foreign occupation or authoritarian regimes. This framing borrows from anticolonial struggles, leveraging international law concepts like self-determination to justify violence against civilians or state actors. For example, Hamas designates its attacks as part of a "liberation struggle" against Israeli occupation, while the Taliban portrays its insurgency as resistance to foreign military presence in Afghanistan. Such groups often contrast their tactics with state-sponsored violence, arguing that asymmetrical warfare is their only viable tool against superior military powers. However, this self-perception deliberately obscures the targeting of non-combatants, as seen in ISIS's executions of journalists and aid workers, which violate international humanitarian law principles distinguishing combatants from civilians. By appropriating the language of freedom fighting, terrorists seek to legitimize their actions ideologically while evading moral accountability for indiscriminate violence.

These intertwined narratives of victimhood and resistance enable terrorist groups to manipulate societal grievances, recruit disillusioned individuals, and frame their campaigns as morally necessary. Counterterrorism efforts must address both the material conditions fueling these perceptions and the ideological frameworks that weaponize them

SLIDE 25/26 – The factor of Mental Programming

The image shows two slides from a presentation titled "Extremist Propaganda – The Practical Perspective". Both slides have a blue header with the European Union flag and the title. The left slide is titled "The factor of Mental Programming" and lists two main points: "Voluntary Isolation" and "Voluntary Participation". Under "Voluntary Participation", it lists "Unfreeing" and "Attack of identity - disorientation, by:", followed by a list of tactics: "Sleep deprivation", "Food manipulation", "Drugs", "Disguised hypnosis", "Inundation with sensory impressions", and "Feelings of guilt and anxiety, and much more". The right slide is also titled "The factor of Mental Programming" and lists "Change:" and "Freeing Again:". Under "Change:", it lists "slow introduction to the ideology with slow radicalization", "constant repetition, monotony, rhythms, new language system", "endless video recordings of 'enemies'", and "Generation of Hatred". Under "Freeing Again:", it lists "New Name, new clothes, common rituals". Both slides have a yellow footer with the CHSS logo and a small text line.

Mental Programming in Terrorist and Extremist Recruitment (Examples)

Voluntary Isolation

Terrorist groups often exploit voluntary isolation as a critical step in mental programming, where recruits gradually sever ties with family, friends, and mainstream society. This isolation intensifies dependence on the group for social validation and ideological guidance. For



example, jihadist cells like the 17-A attackers in Barcelona were systematically isolated from non-radical influences through controlled meetings in private homes and mosques. By monopolizing social interactions, extremist organizations create an echo chamber that reinforces their narratives while suppressing dissent. This strategy mirrors techniques observed in coercive cults, where physical and psychological separation from prior networks accelerates ideological conformity.

Voluntary Participation

Recruits often engage in voluntary participation initially, driven by perceived grievances or a desire for purpose. Extremist groups exploit this by framing recruitment as a noble cause, leveraging societal dogmas or religious appeals to attract disillusioned individuals. In Punjab, Pakistan, youth joined militant groups voluntarily, motivated by ideologies glorifying jihad as a sacred duty. However, this "voluntary" phase is typically a gateway to more coercive tactics. Recruiters use persuasive communication to inflame existing frustrations, gradually replacing personal agency with group-directed goals. The shift from voluntary engagement to controlled compliance is facilitated through incremental indoctrination, where recruits are praised for small ideological concessions before facing pressure for deeper commitment.

Unfreezing: Identity Attack and Disorientation

The unfreezing phase destabilizes a recruit's existing identity through systematic psychological and physiological manipulation:

Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation weakens cognitive resilience, impairing judgment and increasing suggestibility. Studies show sleep-deprived individuals are 4.5 times more likely to comply with false confessions. Extremist cells use prolonged interrogation sessions or enforced wakefulness during indoctrination to break down resistance, as seen in CIA "enhanced interrogation" practices.

Food Manipulation

Controlling food intake-through restricted diets or intermittent fasting-induces physical stress, lowering mental defenses. This tactic, documented in North Korean prisoner reeducation camps, heightens vulnerability to ideological.



Change: Introduction to New Ideology and Behaviors

Once the recruit's previous identity is weakened, the group introduces its ideology and practices:

- Slow introduction to ideology: Radicalization is gradual, often starting with moderate ideas and escalating over time.
- Constant repetition, monotony, rhythms, new language: Slogans, chants, and a new vocabulary reinforce group identity and beliefs.
- Endless video recordings of "enemies": Continuous exposure to propaganda videos dehumanizes opponents and justifies violence.
- Generation of hatred: Emotional manipulation fosters anger and hatred towards designated enemies, further bonding the recruit to the group.

Freezing Again: Solidifying the New Identity

The final phase consolidates the new identity and loyalty to the group:

- New name, new clothes, common rituals: Adopting a new identity, uniform, and participating in group rituals cements the sense of belonging and commitment.
- Shared rituals and practices: Regular group activities reinforce unity and suppress doubts.

SLIDE 27 – The influence of Propaganda in Social Media



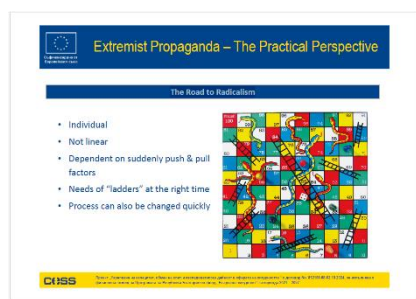
Social media plays a critical and accelerating role in the radicalization process. Extremist groups use platforms to widely disseminate propaganda, recruit members, and create online communities that reinforce radical beliefs. Social media allows for rapid, repeated exposure to extremist content-including videos, images, and manifestos-which can normalize violence and foster a sense of belonging among isolated individuals. Lone actors, in particular, are highly influenced by online networks; in recent years, up to 88% of lone extremists in the U.S. had



social media as a key factor in their radicalization. The constant connectivity and algorithm-driven content feeds can intensify echo chambers, accelerate the radicalization timeline, and make it easier for individuals to transition from passive consumers of extremist material to active participants in extremist networks.

In preparation for the seminar, the speaker is advised to select current examples of propaganda used by extremist organisations and tailor them to the target group. In this case, the magazine 'Dabiq' and IS publications published during the 'hot' phase in 2017/2018 were selected, among others.

SLIDE 28 – The Road to Radicalism



Explain the “Road to Radicalism”

The board game depicted is "Snakes and Ladders," which has been used as a metaphor for the "road of radicalism" in research on extremism and radicalization. In this analogy, the game illustrates how the path to radicalization is neither linear nor uniform, but rather shaped by unpredictable advances (ladders) and setbacks (snakes), much like the real-life process of becoming radicalized or deradicalized.

Meaning in the Context of Radicalization:

Ladders represent factors or events that accelerate an individual's movement toward deeper radicalization, such as successful recruitment, exposure to extremist propaganda, or acceptance into a radical group.

Snakes symbolize obstacles or interventions that can slow down, halt, or even reverse radicalization, such as family support, counter-narratives, or law enforcement intervention.

The unpredictability of dice rolls mirrors the random and individualized nature of radicalization pathways, highlighting that not everyone progresses at the same pace or reaches the



same outcome. The game also reflects how individuals can quickly advance or fall back based on critical incidents, social influences, or personal decisions.

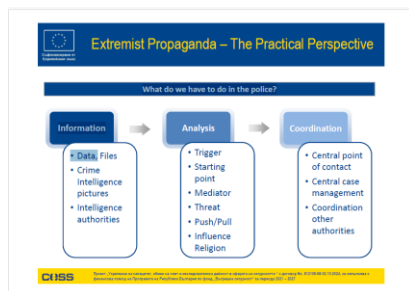
Researcher:

This gamified approach to understanding radicalization has been explored by Linda Schlegel in her work "Jumanji Extremism? How games and gamification could facilitate radicalization processes." Schlegel analyzes how game mechanics and metaphors like "Snakes and Ladders" can help explain the psychological and social dynamics of radicalization, making the process more tangible for prevention and intervention practitioners. By using such metaphors, researchers and educators can better communicate the complexity and variability of radicalization, emphasizing that it is not a straightforward journey but one filled with risks, opportunities, and turning points.

Recommendation:

Explain the board game **using a real case** of radicalisation. This will keep participants engaged and improve the overall quality of the presentation.

SLIDE 29 – What do we have to do in the police?



The following final slide in this chapter is intended to bridge the gap to the practical application that follows. In the previous sections, numerous practical examples from the police sector (important!) were explained. This slide is therefore intended to summarise why the police play a role in an exit process. Of course, this role can vary greatly. The following aspects are considered particularly important:

Role of Police in Deradicalization Processes

The slide illustrates a three-stage process framework for police involvement in addressing radicalization. The process flows from **Information** to **Analysis** to **Coordination**:



1. **Information stage:** Police collect and manage data, files, crime intelligence pictures, and information from intelligence authorities.
2. **Analysis stage:** Officers identify triggers and starting points of radicalization, evaluate potential threats, analyze push/pull factors, and assess religious influences as mediators in the radicalization process.
3. **Coordination stage:** Police establish a central point of contact, implement case management systems, and coordinate with other authorities to create a cohesive response.

Therefore the police plays multiple critical roles in deradicalization efforts:

Information management: Police serve as primary collectors and processors of intelligence regarding extremist activities. They monitor online and offline spaces to identify radicalization indicators and track individuals showing signs of extremist ideology.

Risk assessment: Based on the "analysis" phase shown in the slide, police evaluate the threat level posed by radicalized individuals and determine appropriate intervention strategies. This includes understanding both the push factors (grievances driving people toward extremism) and pull factors (attractive elements of extremist groups).

Intervention coordination: As depicted in the coordination phase, police establish central management systems to coordinate multi-agency responses. This often includes working with:

- Social services
- Mental health professionals
- Religious leaders
- Community organizations
- Family members

Early warning systems: Police develop mechanisms to detect early signs of radicalization, allowing for preventive rather than purely reactive measures.

Direct outreach: In some jurisdictions, police maintain specialized units that directly engage with radicalized individuals to offer exit pathways and support (e.g. Center for Excellenz in the Bavarian State Crime Police / BLKA – Bavarian Police/Germany).

Legal frameworks: Police enforce existing laws against hate speech, incitement, and terrorist activities while balancing security concerns with civil liberties.



The model shown in the slide represents a comprehensive approach that recognizes radicalization as a complex process requiring multi-faceted interventions rather than purely punitive measures.

According to Col. Schmidt of the Bavarian State Criminal Police Office (Bayerisches Landeskriminalamt), the police play a central and multi-faceted role in deradicalization:

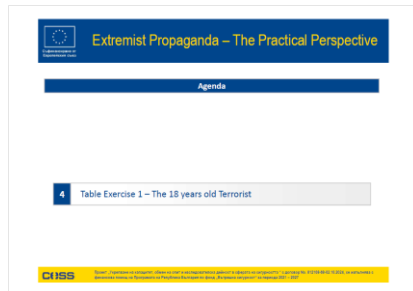
- **Centralized Expertise and Case Management:** Under Schmidt's leadership, the Competence Center for Deradicalization was established to serve as a central point of contact for radicalization cases in Bavaria. This center evaluates security-relevant cases to determine whether and how to initiate exit and distancing processes.
- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** Police coordinate with psychologists, social workers, civil society partners (such as the Violence Prevention Network e.V.), and other authorities to ensure a comprehensive approach to deradicalization and reintegration.
- **Operational and Strategic Analysis:** The police analyze individual cases to assess threats, understand the dynamics of radicalization (including push and pull factors), and identify suitable intervention strategies.
- **Support for Research and Program Development:** The team also includes coordinating research projects and supporting the development of deradicalization programs, both in Germany and internationally (e.g. establishing a prevention center in Jordan, the Community Peace Center).
- **Prevention and Early Intervention:** By identifying early warning signs and collaborating with community partners, the police can intervene before radicalization progresses, offering support and exit options to at-risk individuals.

In summary:

The police, especially through specialized units like the one led by a higher ranked police officer, act as both security actors and coordinators in the deradicalization process. They manage information, conduct risk assessments, and facilitate cooperation between state and non-state actors to support individuals in leaving extremist environments and reintegrating into society.



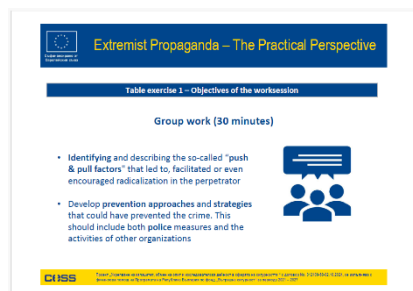
SLIDE 30 – Table Exercise 1 – The 18 years old Terrorist



The practical part begins with slide 30. We recommend taking a break of at least 20 minutes before starting the practical part. This will give the instructors time to arrange the room appropriately and distribute or prepare the necessary teaching materials.

This exercise is based on the case study developed by Col. Holger Schmidt, which is included as an appendix to the training material.

SLIDE 31 – Table exercise 1 – Objectives of the work session



Objectives

- see explanation Slide 31

SLIDE 32 – Table exercise 1 – The Case





The Case (present the case and show a video from the attack; source: YouTube)

- On September 5, 2024, at 9:10 a.m., 18-year-old Ibrahim Brahimowic gets out of his Ford Couga car, takes a long gun out of the trunk, walks towards the "Documentation of National Socialism" museum and shoots at the entrance door several times.
- Without seeing anyone, he continues through the adjacent area, enters at least one other building and shoots at more houses. At first he did not encounter any people.
- Shortly afterwards, he recognizes the Consulate General of the State of Israel. He approaches the building and shoots at the guardroom and the police officers coming towards him.
- They return fire. The perpetrator retreats and goes into another building, where he encounters police officers again. The perpetrator dies in the ensuing exchange of fire.
- The perpetrator shot a total of 16 times with the assault rifle (same penetration power as a modern assault rifle) that he had legally purchased three days earlier in an Austrian gun store, including 50 rounds of ammunition.
- During the subsequent search, the police officers found unfired ammunition in the places in the area where the perpetrator had reloaded.

The Terrorist/Perpetrator

- The perpetrator is 18 years old when the crime is committed. He lives in a small town near Salzburg. No police information is available so far (in Germany).
- The offender is in his 2nd year of training as a commercial clerk at a company with approx. 200 employees. He lives at home with his parents. There are two other siblings in the household, an older brother (23 years old) and a younger sister (16 years old).
- He spends most of his free time at home. He plays computer games frequently and for a long time, especially first-person shooters. His last favorite game was "...". This game is known for its chat functions, which are used in particular by the Islamic State to recruit.
- Starting in 2021, Ibrahim B. became more and more withdrawn and met fewer and fewer friends. He never had a girlfriend.
- It is now known that, since 2021, he has repeatedly visited a mosque that is also frequented by known Islamists. This mosque is also known to regularly host people from other Arab countries.
- The Austrian police were aware of Ibrahim B.'s incipient radicalization.
- The notes in his room show that he converted to Islam in 2021. Numerous documents containing Islamist propaganda can be found on his computer.



- He actually had contact with IS via the chat function in the above-mentioned computer game.
- It is also known that he is particularly outspoken against Israel and the war in Gaza in several chats. His comments in chats include the words: "It's about time someone did something about the infidel Jews!"

His Environment

- His parents came to Austria from Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995 as a result of the war at the time.
- Ibrahim B.'s role model is his older brother. He is known to the police for several violent crimes and Islamist statements.
- Ibrahim B. always had a very good relationship with his mother, but less so with his father.
- His mother had mentioned his change to the family several times, but was not listened to. She became increasingly worried.
- He was not particularly conspicuous at work, only his "hostility towards Israel" was known because he always reacted emotionally in discussions on this topic and took a clear position in favor of the Palestinians. He thought Hamas' actions on October 7 were right.

SLIDE 33 – Methodology

Extremist Propaganda – The Practical Perspective

Table exercise 1

Group work (30 minutes)

- Please divide in 4 groups (7/8)
- Take maximum 10 minutes to read the facts of the case/biography/environment
- Discuss in your group: (3&2) push & pull factors for the radicalization of Ibrahim B. (3&4) possible prevention measures & approaches
- Write the results on the flip chart
- 1 group member presents the results; the other group complemented

Methodology

- The speakers present the planned table exercise, explain the objectives and the procedure (5 min).



- As part of a short presentation, the speakers will first briefly present the case, including a video of the crime (5 min).
- The approximately 30 participants are then divided into four groups. Two groups each receive the same assignment in written form (5 min).
- The working groups work out their solutions and document the results on a flip chart (30 min).
- One group presents the results, the other adds further results if necessary; both speakers also comment and add (15 min)
- At the end of both working sessions, the speakers summarize and present the final recommendations (20-30 min)
- Start with the group work.

Once the group work is complete, one of the group members presents the results and discusses them with all participants. The speakers add their expert comments and moderate the discussion. For the present case, the following aspects should be mentioned (this list is not exhaustive).

Expected results of the workshop (not conclusive):

- 1) Assessment of Ibrahim B.'s radicalization process, including possible reasons for his radicalization:**

Social isolation

The change in 18-year-old Ibrahim B. began in 2021. It is likely that the coronavirus pandemic, which was rampant at the time, had a particular influence on the perpetrator's social withdrawal. As he had no particular hobbies, the perpetrator did not gain any recognition or self-affirmation from such social contacts. He was also inconspicuous in his teaching profession. Due to his very vocal support for Hamas, he is also unlikely to have found much personal support in his professional environment. The lack of a typical adolescent partnership in particular could have led to a further stressor for Ibrahim B. A possible, but unknown, sexual same-sex orientation may also have been the reason for Ibrahim B.'s lack of a partnership.

Particularly favorable radicalization factors



In particular, the social isolation described above led Ibrahim B. to play so-called first-person shooters beyond the normal level during the coronavirus pandemic and to withdraw further and further. This was aggravated by the fact that a brother, whom he also saw as a role model, already had intensive contacts with an apparently Islamist mosque. The bridge from virtual contact with extremist groups to personal contact is obvious here and typical in such radicalization processes. Above all, the feeling of belonging to such a religious community quickly leads to a sense of solidarity, which has a radicalization-promoting effect, especially in introverted young people who also have difficulties making social contacts.

The radicalization of Ibrahim B. could have been facilitated above all by the invasion of Israeli troops in Gaza, which began in October 2024, as a result of the Hamas attack on Israeli settlements and military bases on 7 October 2024. The living situation of the Palestinian people has been the unifying element of the Muslim community for many decades.

The suffering and displacement of the mainly civilian Palestinians, caused by the military conflict, is primarily attributed to the state of Israel. Israel is therefore the declared main enemy. Solidarity with the Palestinians could therefore have led to a so-called "pull factor" and driver in the radicalization process, especially in Ibrahim B.'s case. This is particularly evident in the chosen object of attack, the Israeli Consulate General. The fact that he initially shot at a nearby museum was obviously due to a lack of local knowledge and hardly any pre-planning of the terrorist act of violence. The same applies to the lack of civilian victims. It was more of a coincidence that there were no civilians in the area.

Another particularly facilitating factor was obviously the 'initial contact' that Ibrahim B. had with Islamist individuals/groups who profess allegiance to IS via the first-person shooter game '...'. Above all, the daily playing and thus probably very regular contacts made it more difficult for Ibrahim B. to reach them as time went on. His mother appears to have been the only stabilizing factor. However, her influence obviously diminished the more intensive the contacts with the extremist-oriented people at the mosque became. An accepted father figure has been missing in recent years.

2) Preventive approaches - police and non-police:

The central social question after such an act of terrorist violence is, above all, whether and how such an act could have been prevented. The table exercise should therefore provide the



opportunity to work out possible preventative approaches that could have prevented the act. The following aspects should therefore be examined and discussed:

Who is the first to notice a possible change in a person like Ibrahim B.?

The next of kin have a special role to play in prevention. In this particular case, however, the brother and father are not involved. This is not unusual. Therefore, the mother, in particular in this case, has a very important role to play. Mothers generally have a more intensive and emotionally close relationship with their children. Even if the relationship is strained, mothers do not want their child to commit a serious act of violence and go to prison for it, or even die.

The professional environment also plays a special role. Ibrahim B. was an apprentice at a training company and a vocational school. He attracted particular attention at the training company due to his anti-Semitic and religiously extremist remarks.

What state and civil options should therefore be offered?

The basic principle of prevention work is that the earlier a radicalization process is identified, the easier it will be to turn the person away from extremist ideas. If there are already strong personal contacts with extremist individuals and these are maintained on a regular basis, it will be all the more difficult to break them off.

A key factor in prevention is therefore to overcome the threshold from "ignore" to "act". The easier it is to take this step, the easier it is. A very important point here is that so-called professional and free advice services are available and, above all, known.

In Germany in particular, a lot of money has been invested in setting up such structures over the last 10 years. The main target groups for these counseling services are actually mothers and school teaching staff. In order to make these counseling services known, regular information events and their integration into the training and further education of teaching staff should be maintained.

State institutions often reach their limits here. It is therefore important that such educational and training measures in particular are carried out by civilian organizations.

However, maintaining regular contact with mosques is a particular challenge. The promotion of interfaith dialog is therefore of particular importance.



It is also particularly important that police officers are aware of radicalization processes and how to recognize particular radicalization characteristics. Police officers often come into contact with particularly troubled families or check on people who are conspicuous or behave conspicuously. Officers working in state security and counter-terrorism investigations in particular should/must have detailed knowledge of this. Very often, the police themselves learn of conspicuous persons in the course of their own work. It is particularly important to pass this information on to the relevant authorities as quickly as possible.

Which authorities should be involved in such a process?

- Secondary schools (from 7th/8th grade, especially from 10th/11th grade)
- Social and immigration authorities
- State psychiatric facilities
- Security authorities (police and secret service)

Who should take the lead in such a process?

This question depends on the course and current status of radicalization. The lower the threshold of radicalization (e.g. through mere expressions of sympathy for extremist organizations; no personal contact with extremists yet; no announced acts of violence), the better the involvement of civil society organizations (so-called non-government organizations, NGOs). Teaching staff and employees of social authorities in particular are reluctant to involve the police and secret service. This also applies to parents.

However, in the above-mentioned cases where so-called "security-relevant" aspects become known, the police should immediately take on a coordinating role. In cases of already committed or announced acts of violence or in the presence of psychological abnormalities, the implementation of professional and institutionalized threat management is particularly important. The coordination of such threat management, including documentation, should be the responsibility of the police (see Munich Police Department). A partial measure in threat management is the so-called risk analysis.

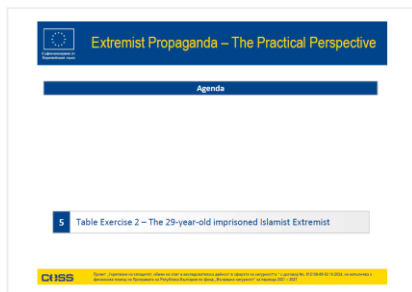
What specific measures would be possible and necessary from a police perspective?

- Internal information, training and awareness-raising measures to identify radicalization.
- Providing information on how radicalization can be countered and where these services can be found in practice.
- Identify radicalized individuals as early as possible.



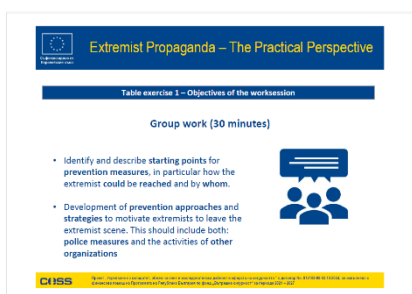
- In individual cases, the implementation of an interdisciplinary risk analysis involving psychologists, Islamic studies experts, sociologists.
- The review and implementation of threat management, depending on the risk analysis.
- Conducting so-called "danger talks" to inform the radicalized person that they are the focus of police attention.
- The implementation of a "deradicalization programme" (exit programme) in the police or secret service to carry out concrete exit measures (counselling and support) with the target person.
- It is particularly important for the police, the secret service and, if necessary, social authorities and NGOs to regularly exchange information internally during the consultation process and about the further course of events so that countermeasures can be taken at any time.
- In exceptional cases, the examination of personal intensive observation measures or surveillance with ankle bracelets may be considered.

SLIDE 34 – Table Exercise 2 – The 29-year-old imprisoned Islamist Extremist



This second exercise is based also on the case study developed by Col. Holger Schmidt, which is included as an appendix to the training material.

SLIDE 35 – Table exercise 2 – Objectives of the worksession





Objectives

- see explanation Slide 35

SLIDE 36 – Table exercise 2 – The Case

Extremist Propaganda – The Practical Perspective

Table exercise 1 – The Case

What's exactly happened?

- 29-year-old Andreas R. has been in prison for 5 years in 2017
- He was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment (heavy robbery)
- To get money to join IS (2013) and to buy weapons
- Andreas R. was arrested by the police and convicted.
- Assessment of the security authorities: high terrorist threat
- He regularly causes enormous problems in prison
- June 2017: Police got a interesting signal – a love letter

CHSS Center for Human Security Studies

The Story

- 29-year-old Andreas R. has been in prison for 5 years in 2017
- Andreas R is sentenced to 7 years imprisonment for multiple aggravated robbery. Two years remaining sentence. Released in June 2019.
- The reason for the robberies was the desire to obtain money with which to pay for their departure to Syria to join IS and to buy weapons.
- However, Andreas R. was arrested by the police and subsequently sentenced.
- His former friend and accomplice managed to leave the country for Syria, where he was killed in fighting in 2016. Andreas R admits that the same thing happened to him and that he is now dead.
- Andreas R. regularly causes problems in prison and refuses to work in prison because he is not allowed to pray while working. He has no contact with fellow prisoners. He lives in isolation in prison. He receives no visitors.
- The prison staff are in close contact with the police, in particular with the police officer responsible for Andreas R.'s threat management.
- Leaving the extremist scene is out of the question for him or has not yet been tried.
- Prison staff have the task of passing on conspicuous information to the police.
- In June 2017, the prison employee calls his police contact and informs them that Andreas R. has sent a sincere "love letter" to a former girlfriend. In the letter, he wishes to have a partnership with her after his release and asks her to contact him again and write to him.



- What do you do with this information?

The Target Person

- Andreas R. came to Germany with his parents at the age of 5. His parents grew up in the Soviet Union.
- Andreas R. makes few friends at school and has hardly any friends. He found his interest very early on, at the age of 15, in a Muslim mosque. He felt safe there and found a surrogate family.
- This mosque has close contacts with Chechnya.
- In 2011, he is fascinated by the idea of living in the caliphate in Syria and is determined to leave. Above all, he believes that all fighters against the infidels are a group of like-minded people.
- Andreas R. is classified by the police in Bavaria as a so-called "Gefährder". This means that he is expected to commit further serious and terrorist acts once he is free.
- The police will not be able to keep him under permanent surveillance after his release from prison (too much manpower required).
- He is due to be released from prison on 30.06.2019.
- Andreas R. is a very skilled craftsman and would like to work more as a mechanical fitter. However, he has not completed an apprenticeship.
- In prison, he misses an imam or a person with whom he can discuss religion.

His Environment

- Andreas R. has a sister who lives happily with her family (husband, two children) in Nuremberg. She is the only family contact. She is very important to him. Why?
- He has no contact with his parents.
- Before his imprisonment, Andreas R. had been in a relationship with a young woman from Duisburg (approx. 500 km from the prison) for several years.
- The girlfriend broke up with him about six months before he was arrested. Reason: He was too radical for her. She said to him: "I love you. But we only have a chance again when you are no longer so radical." She is not Muslim, but accepts his faith.



SLIDE 37 – Methodology

Extremist Propaganda – The Practical Perspective

Table exercise 2

Group work (30 minutes)

- Please divide you in 4 groups (7/8)
- Take maximum 10 minutes to read the facts of the case/biography/environment
- Discuss in your group: (1&2) prevention approaches & strategies (3&4) starting points for prevention measures, how the extremist could be reached and by whom
- Write the results on the flip chart
- 1 group member presents the results; the other group complemented

CHS

Methodology

- The speakers present the planned table exercise, explain the objectives and the procedure (5 min).
- As part of a short presentation, the speakers will first briefly present the case, including a video of the crime (5 min).
- The approximately 30 participants are then divided into four groups. Two groups each receive the same assignment in written form (5 min).
- The working groups work out their solutions and document the results on a flip chart (30 min).
- One group presents the results, the other adds further results if necessary; both speakers also comment and add (15 min).
- At the end of both working sessions, the speakers summarize and present the final recommendations (20-30 min).
- Start with the group work.

Once the group work is complete, one of the group members presents the results and discusses them with all participants. The speakers add their expert comments and moderate the discussion. For the present case, the following aspects should be mentioned (this list is not exhaustive).

Expected results of the workshop (not conclusive)

1) Analysis of preventive approaches

Desire for a minimum level of religious practice



The period of imprisonment is generally a very stressful phase, especially in the first weeks and months. Anger towards the police, the public prosecutor's office and the court is usually high. This is mainly due to the feeling that, as a Muslim, they are being treated unfairly and to have been persecuted. There is therefore a risk of greater radicalization in prison is caused by hatred because it builds up. In addition, there is a strong Need for religiosity observed among prisoners. Ensuring a minimum level of religious practice (prayers) is therefore a relieving factor that reduces stress and builds trust in order to subsequently begin exit measures.

Lack of a religious contact person / religious discourse

Solitary confinement, which is particularly important in the initial phase of a longer prison stay, is a decisive factor. During this time, imprisoned extremists reflect on the path their lives have taken so far. This is the beginning of a phase of opening up to other thoughts. One of the aims of solitary confinement is to prevent negative influences from outside (e.g. extremist imams). However, it is all the more important to give space to the need for religious exchange and discourse. This can be achieved above all through imams who represent the basic principles of freedom and act in the interests of religious practice in accordance with fundamental rights. Organizing and offering talks with such imams is therefore very important.

It is also helpful that non-religious literature is offered in addition to (reviewed) religious novels and readings. The same applies, of course, to the consumption of films. It is particularly challenging and positive to find new areas of interest or to awaken hidden former interests.

Boredom of imprisonment

Prison offers a fundamental opportunity to deradicalize or leave the extremist scene. The reason for this is that every prisoner has phases of hopelessness, doubt and the desire for a new start during their imprisonment. In addition, there is above all a pronounced boredom during imprisonment, especially if no work is taken up. Exploiting this boredom and filling it with interesting offers is a very important factor in starting the exit process or winning the extremist over for it.

Social isolation in prison

Another important factor is the threat of social isolation in prison. Extremists are generally in a clear minority in European prisons in particular, e.g. Germany. However, most people are



looking for personal contact. Breaking this isolation and filling it with appropriate alternative, non-extremist contacts has a strong exit-promoting effect.

Interest in practicing a profession

Boredom, social isolation and, above all, the question of their future personal life path are the main concerns of the vast majority of imprisoned extremists. A fulfilling occupation that matches the personal interests and abilities of the person concerned offers very good prospects. For this reason, opportunities for vocational training should be taken advantage of while in prison. At the same time, employers should be sought as early as possible and while the person is still in prison who will employ them after their sentence. An income and recognition in the job are essential stabilizing factors in the exit process.

Desire for partnership

One of the most important radicalization factors is an extremist reference person (e.g. imam), who is often seen as a "family substitute" by the person concerned. Friendships within the group, which are seen as a substitute for family, also have an effect. These bonds are often so strong that loyalty knows hardly any bounds and can end in self-sacrifice for brothers and sisters. A functioning partnership can provide a counterbalance here. The search for a partner, combined with the desire to start a family of their own, often plays a key role in the exit process. This factor plays a particularly important role for extremists over the age of 20.

2) Developing prevention strategies for Andreas R.

Carry out a risk analysis, including a comprehensive biographical study

In the specialist literature and after more than 10 years of intensive and practical exit work in the phenomenon of religiously based extremism, there is now a consensus that there is no uniform ethnic, socio-economic or other typical profile for people who go through the radicalization process to Islamism. Even for the much smaller group of jihadists traveling from Germany in the direction of Syria, there is no uniform picture in this regard. This is due in particular to the fact that people's specific life stories play a key role in their entry into the radicalization process.

Accordingly, targeted measures tailored to the individual must be found in order to have a chance of success in the deradicalization process. The entry into the exit process is particularly



important here. This is especially true for people who have not yet expressed their own will to leave, such as Andreas R.

The appropriate instrument for this is risk analysis. The method of an interdisciplinary risk analysis based on the evaluation of biographies should be carried out in the police sector. In addition to police officers with relevant knowledge, psychologists, Islamic studies experts and, if necessary, sociologists should be involved in such a risk analysis.

In the case of Andreas R., the competent authority carried out a comprehensive risk analysis and initially recommended that the need to practise religion should be addressed in the new prison. The aim of the initial measures was to make contact with Andreas R. in the first place. However, risk analyses are not a one-off process, but must be continued, supplemented or adapted on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available.

Defining rules for religious practice

In order to reduce the perceived personal pressure, it is important to channel its religious needs. It is therefore particularly important to set fixed prayer times in conjunction with Friday prayer arrangements. The exit counsellors or escorts in the deradicalization process should therefore work closely with the prison management and prison staff. Accompanying training, in particular with regard to anomalies - both those that promote and those that inhibit exit - should be a priority here.

In the specific case at hand, in addition to several discussions with the prison management, Andreas R.'s guards in particular were trained to recognize potential exit signals. At the same time, possible rules for practising religion in conjunction with rules of conduct (e.g. no conflicts with prison staff or other inmates) were defined with the prison management. This was followed by an agreement between the prison management and the inmate Andreas R.

The training of the prison staff, in particular, paid off immediately shortly after its implementation. The guard responsible for Andreas R., who also carried out the court-ordered monitoring of letters, came across a love letter that Andreas R. had written to his girlfriend at the time. This information led to an addition to the existing risk analysis and assessment of factors favorable to leaving the prison.



Find a religious contact person

The channeling of religious needs plays an important role. Particularly in the initial phase of the prison stay, an imam should (ideally) be regularly placed at the extremist's side for exchange. Without this measure, the imprisoned extremist will otherwise look for a contact.

Andreas R.'s prison was initially unable to find a suitable imam. For this reason, he was placed with an exit counselor from an NGO who had in-depth knowledge of religious matters. The counselor was therefore in a position to conduct in-depth religious debates with Andreas R.. The main purpose of these discussions was to build trust and get to know each other better. Andreas R.'s boredom encouraged this measure.

Create motivation to perform work

Taking up a job in prison has several advantages. In addition to better integration into everyday prison life, it offers the opportunity to make alternative contacts with people outside the extremist scene. At the same time, it may be possible to find and promote points of contact and prospects for the time after release. In the case of Andreas R., a conversation with the above-mentioned religious counselor or exit counselor a few months after contact was made provided an important starting point. Andreas R. asked his counselor if he could help him write job applications. At first, Andreas R. only meant this as a test. However, the subsequent discussions revealed that Andreas R. intended to take up a solid profession as a mechanical engineer after his time in prison. Andreas R. was therefore offered further training in prison, where he could acquire professional qualifications. He proved to be extremely skilled and motivated. As a result, Andreas R. received several firm job offers while still in prison. One of them was with a large medium-sized company.

Getting to the bottom of the desire for partnership

The central point for Andreas R. was the desire for a stable partnership. The evaluation of the exit interviews conducted so far revealed that he particularly admired his sister for her life (family). His sister served as an ideal that he himself emulated. Understandably, this urgent desire for a permanent partnership could not be met in prison, but the exit counselors encouraged him to make contact with his former girlfriend. After his release from prison, he began a new relationship with this young woman. However, this did not last long. Andreas R. pursued the efforts for family support that had matured in prison and were supported by the exit counselor. After another somewhat longer-lasting relationship (1.5 years), Andreas R. found his current wife, with whom he now also has two children. Andreas R. still regularly attends a mosque



and intensively practices the Muslim religion. However, he has now completely turned away from the extremist faith. Andreas R. is now classified as a so-called "endangered person". Police measures are no longer necessary.

SLIDE 38/39 – Summary & Final Remarks



The slide summarizes four key recommendations for police involvement in the prevention of radicalization, emphasizing the importance of early detection, information gathering, active participation in exit programs, and trust-building through community engagement.

Four Final Recommendations:

1. Identify radicalization hints early

Police should be trained and equipped to recognize early signs and indicators of radicalization within communities, allowing for timely intervention before extremist beliefs become entrenched.

2. Gather relevant information of radicalization

It is essential for police to systematically collect and analyze information related to radicalization processes, individuals at risk, and emerging extremist trends to inform effective prevention strategies.

3. Police should be a part of exit programs

Law enforcement agencies should actively participate in deradicalization and exit programs, collaborating with social services and other stakeholders to support individuals seeking to leave extremist environments.

4. Building trust through community policing

Developing strong, trust-based relationships with communities through community policing initiatives enhances cooperation, encourages information sharing, and fosters resilience against radicalization.



SLIDE 40/41 – Questions & Thanks



The one-day seminar should conclude with a final question to the participants to determine whether any issues remain unresolved. At the same time, it is important to use a feedback form to find out whether the seminar objectives were achieved for the participants and whether the topics were presented in a clear and motivating manner. It is also important to thank the participants for their cooperation and numerous questions, including a concluding message to the participants. In this case, reference was made to the outstanding study visits to Munich and the joint and important international police cooperation.

8. Remarks

Final remarks on Part 2 of the training: **The use of propaganda by extremist groups and individuals and what police countermeasures are possible and how they work.**

The second part of the training course mainly comprises a variety of practical elements. The case studies provided can of course also be used for future training sessions. However, as the cases become older, it is recommended to refer to current events.

End of Part 2

Този обучителен материал е създаден в рамките на проект „Укрепване на капацитет, обмен на опит и изследователска дейност в сферата на сигурността“, с номер BG65ISPR001-3.004-0002, по договор № 812108-68-02.10.2024, финансиран по Програмата на Република България по фонд „Вътрешна сигурност“ за периода 2021 – 2027 г. Цялата отговорност за съдържанието на материала е на неговите автори и фондация „Европейски институт“ и при никакви обстоятелства не може да се приема, че този документ отразява официалното становище на ЕС и Отговорния управляващ орган.