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THE ROLE OF OSCE IN COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

Abstract

Numerous terrorist attacks, mass shootings, war crimes and less brutal instances of deviant behaviour such as commitment to radical Islamism or hatred against other nations often tend to be the manifestation of one of the last stages of radicalization. There is no single scenario, according to which radicalization proceeds. Absolutely different reasons can encourage a person to renounce normal values and accept the idea that the world can and should be fundamentally changed, sometimes even by force and violence. This is the main reason why OSCE adopted a "Whole-of-Society" approach to counter radicalization and its brutal results throughout the OSCE area. The adopted strategy is highly comprehensive and tackles not only different aspects of radicalization (e.g. gender, war, post-conflict, etc.) but also numerous institutions (e.g. families, churches, mosques, schools, scholars, etc.) that can detect and prevent radicalization of a person and integrate him or her back into the society. This article provides an analysis of OSCE efforts in this field by studying OSCE reports on extremism and radicalization and evaluating achieved outcomes. It finds out that despite being highly inclusive and all-pervasive with various successful instances in different regions, a bulk of member states do not have a platform that would facilitate communication between all actors involved to provide early warning and rehabilitate radicals. Efforts to develop a comprehensive framework are too costly, leading to limited projects and initiatives. Further research in finding the most efficient ways to implement OSCE ideas in the OSCE member states and beyond is required.

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Keywords: OSCE, radicalization, de-radicalization, extremism, violence, terrorism, Whole-of-Society approach, PVERLT

INTRODUCTION

The world is going through various crises and abrupt changes. Some of them make the future bright and prosperous, while others make it uncertain and gloomy. People from the second category might be running out of options and resort to violent means not only to prove themselves that they are worth at least something but also to earn money or get a sense of the community. Since people are social beings, any approach to countering radicalization and its violent manifestations should include various aspects, such as social, economic, political, and sometimes even environmental. This automatically implies that different stakeholders at different levels must be engaged to detect violent units (e.g. early-warning mechanism) and reintegrate them into a normal and peaceful way of life. However, this is not always possible because of various structural factors that cannot be resolved overnight. These structural causes also tend to have a transnational character, meaning that cooperation between states might be required to solve them and better prevent extremists from committing illegal actions.

This paper intends to draw attention to one of the most important international organisations known as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Although international relations students and practitioners tend to associate it only with one of the reasons that caused the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it is still here today and implements various security policies ranging from conflict prevention and disarmament to human rights and democracy promotion. It implements a comprehensive security framework that is needed to prevent radicalization and spread the best practices of how to do this among countries. These tactics of dialogue and cooperation on various aspects, including extremism and radicalization, are unique to OSCE and more than worth studying. This is especially acute today since various attempts to study and understand "what goes on before the bomb goes off" (Neumann 2008) are still widely present in academic and political debates.

The publication is divided as follows. The first part is going to review the difference between extremism, radicalization, and terrorism since these are sometimes not very clearly defined concepts. It is followed by a short overview of OSCE and its importance on the international

stage. The third section is going to shed a light on OSCE activities and policies by referring to publications and policy briefs. The final part will summarize the findings and find an area for future research.

NECESSITYTODOTTHEI'SANDCROSSTHET'S

Before looking at the OSCE policies to address extremism and radicalization, it is needed to clearly define and distinguish them. It is useful to start with radicalization because it is connected to other concepts. To put it simply, radicalization is usually understood as "a process by which a person adopts belief systems which justify the use of violence to effect social change and comes to actively support as well as employ violent means for political purposes" (Maskaliūnaitė 2015). Although many authors vigorously disagree on many aspects and provide different definitions with various components, these debates are beyond this paper because it is more practice-oriented. Overall, radicalization is a process through which people tend to forget normal values and principles and substitute them with different norms which allow them to start considering certain, usually prohibited, actions in society normal and justified. You may immediately start thinking about killing people and committing terrorist attacks. This is not always true, however. For instance, people might be radicals but they might not resort to violent means as was with people who promoted the abolition of slavery or promoted human rights (OSCE 2014).

Speaking of theories of radicalization, Maskaliūnaitė (2015) provides a nice summary of them in the following table [1]:

Table 1. Speaking of theoris of radicalization

	Choice	Compulsion
Internal	Rational choice	Psychological traits
External	Grievance	Coercion/motivation

Source: Maskaliūnaitė (2015).

The table demonstrates that some people might be mentally ill (psychological traits) and do not understand what they are doing, while others might simply calculate the costs and benefits of their actions and resort to violence as the most rational choice (rational choice theory). Another row in the table demonstrates that people might be dissatisfied

with their lives and resort to violence to achieve political changes (grievances), while the coercion/motivation approach emphasizes that people might be inspired by some charismatic leaders or a group of friends to follow the lead. This demonstrates that people might have different motivations and this necessitates the creation of a comprehensive and proactive approach to prevent the process of radicalization.

It is also important to briefly mention how radicalization happens. Moghaddam (2005) has developed the so-called "staircase to terrorism" which consists of five stages during which people gradually remove all their internal checks and balances, leading to the perception that committing violent attacks is morally appropriate. Importantly, the final stage is terrorism and this again shows how concepts are closely connected, but before considering terrorism, it is also important to mention a paper written by Doosje et al. (2016). Authors focused on the process of radicalization but with an emphasis on micro, meso, and macro factors which gradually remove psychological barriers to committing violence. This again demonstrates that a comprehensive approach is required to address various factors at different levels.

Returning back to terrorism, it is extremely hard to define it because "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (Reagan 1986). Another example would be a relatively recently conducted experiment where scholars were asked to provide their definitions of terrorism, resulting in more definitions than scholars, meaning that some scholars could not agree on their own (Schmid 2011). To simplify, this article considers terrorism as a phenomenon which involves violent means and causes casualties among citizens to scare the population and deliver a political message. This might be considered a weapon of the weak because they target innocent people because of ideologies and religions. This allows them to perceive themselves as freedom fighters or altruists who do this due to a holy goal which justifies any means to an end. The process of radicalization precedes a person becoming a terrorist because human principles should be forgotten and the realization that this is the only and legitimate choice should come. It is also important to note that this strategy was not very successful at the end of the day because, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the war against terror destroyed the whole infrastructure of terrorists in their safe havens, meaning it has become very hard for them to operate. Moreover, this also scared many supporters of radical ideologies away because they did not approve of such brutal tactics. Although the world today has a problem of lone wolves who are inspired by a powerful idea on the Internet, various private sector cooperative arrangements help to make social media and messengers

safe and deny access to terrorist suspects.

Finally, extremism is usually confused with terrorism, but a clear difference should be highlighted. This is also the last stage of the radicalization process and extremists are comparable to radicals. They advocate "extreme measures or views" (Merriam-Webster n.d.) which differ from the rest of society. They might promote their goals but without using violent means as terrorists do. Furthermore, they might be inspired by various causes, such as feminism, LGBT rights, environmental and animal protection, and other similar causes. Roughly speaking, on a scale, they would be just before terrorism because they try to avoid using violent means to kill people, despite being motivated by some idealist perceptions of the reality.

OSCE ASANINTERNATIONALACTOR

OSCE remains a core regional security organisation which fosters peace and cooperation among its members and partner countries. OSCE (2022) also emphasized that one of its core functions is "to improve the lives of individuals and communities" using various offices within the organisation. This was especially useful when the Soviet Union joined because although the Helsinki Accords were not binding in practice, they still allowed to name and shame countries which violated the human rights regime. Now this tactic is used to persuade countries to follow certain rules and procedures, including tactics to tackle radicalization and violent extremism.

Connecting this idea to the theoretical framework, OSCE has managed to create the so-called "security community" (Adler 1998). The idea behind this is that certain norms and principles become so essential and institutionalized that countries perceive them in the same way. This creates a "we-feeling" and allows countries to work together on various security aspects within and beyond the OSCE community. What is more important, is the idea of seminar diplomacy through which a "we-feeling" was partly spread, meaning that the organisation held seminars in different countries to show that "we are the same" to facilitate the working process and demonstrate that certain practices are very similar to each other. This seminar diplomacy includes meetings of diplomats, academics, youth, social activists, IR experts, civil society and community leaders, and all other potential stakeholders. This eventually leads to a consensus on many aspects and allows to work together more efficiently. This approach is also in line with the Paris School of International Security (Bigo 2008) which emphasizes the importance of connected international security

experts who work together under different circumstances.

This brief OSCE overview allows us to argue that OSCE is highly important as a platform which fosters dialogue and cooperation. Its comprehensive approach to security issues traces its origin to the founding principles of the organisation. Radicalization and violent extremism require this approach because the issue is just too complex and diverse, making OSCE an ideal institution to find best practices to tackle these problems and promote them in member states and beyond. These practices and attempts are going to be reviewed in the following section.

OSCE ACTIVITIESANDPOLICIES

OSCE focuses on the comprehensive approach to prevent violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (PVERLT). It is a part of the strategy to prevent terrorism and other illegal activities with an emphasis on protecting human rights and other fundamental freedoms. The comprehensive approach has its name: a "Whole-of-Society" approach which is focused on involving all potential stakeholders within the state, such as police, youth, education specialists, representatives of various ministries, journalists, religious communities, and all others from different spheres of life (OSCE 2020a). The idea to address PVERLT comprehensively appeared for a reason. Initially, the organisation was already busy with many policies in various directions and regions, and it would be costly and pointless to restart already launched projects. This means that, for instance, women empowerment or advancing freedom of the media are goals on their own because they have many positive consequences in related fields. They are not pursued just because they help to counter PVERLT and must not be centredaround only one goal. Following this idea, the arguments below imply deductive thinking where just certain aspects related to fighting PVERLT under the "Whole-of-Society" approacThare picked and analyzed.

Overall, the approach implies detecting people who might be susceptible to the influence of radical groups or dissatisfied with certain ideas. When such people are found (it might be at schools since many young people try to attract attention or find a new identity or at churches or mosques where such people could be classified by religious mentors), people might start communicating with potential individuals or deliver a message to community leaders or other superiors who would address these concerns (OSCE 2020a). Importantly, it should not be considered a denunciation because this process of communication should be open

and based on consent and respect. These long-term measures are also supported by Bjørgo (2016) who states that a multitude of preventive mechanisms can work more efficiently and remove negative effects which are usually linked to several heavily implemented counter-radicalization measures. The role of OSCE is to foster this holistic approach and develop a dense network of agents and measures to tackle radicalization issues in member states.

Despite many advantages of this strategy, usually, countries do not have platforms which would allow this flow of communication to happen, meaning that certain guidelines, procedures, and rules do not exist. This means that the approach cannot work at full capacity because certain elements from the structure, such as de-radicalization practitioners or social care services, might not receive the information on time. It is also important not to boil down the mission simply to the police because the police officers might not be aware of how to communicate with radicalized individuals. Moreover, in certain countries, there are communities which were oppressed by police for years and that is the reason why they cannot trust each other, meaning that sometimes police might be the last resort. This is mainly because radicals usually have not yet committed terrorist acts and they cannot be preventively arrested until certain evidence is discovered. One of the examples of such a community would be Northern Ireland where the policy war reformed at the beginning of the 2000s to make it more open, inclusive, and responsive to the local needs. The main aim was to recruit more people from the Catholic community and make their working contracts long-term to secure their places there, put an emphasis on the career growth and spread the idea that they will have to work together for a long period, meaning that it is in their interests to solve problems in a responsible way (OSCE 2014).Another programme in Northern Ireland is called "Pizza with a Peeler" and it is designed to foster cooperation between police officers and youth. They have a chance to discuss the acute matter in an informal environment and realize that police officers are friendly people who offer help when needed. This might help to stop the process of radicalization at the beginning and put some "seeds of destruction" into people's understanding of the reality in case they are already handled by some radicals. Such practices must be promoted by OSCE instruments throughout the region because civil-government cooperation is a prerequisite to detecting radical elements.

The next part of the comprehensive approach is the so-called "referral mechanisms". These are a part of the intervention programming, namely "secondary prevention" where people at their radicalization pathways are detected and certain authorized bodies must dissuade them

from continuing (OSCE 2019). This requires information sharing and as it has been argued above, usually such platforms do not exist. More than that, participation is purely voluntary, meaning that some people might refuse to participate and this would not harm their de-radicalization track. However, family members and relatives might step in and through a combination of carrots and sticks get a person out of the radicalization cycle. This might also be done through common activities, such as sports competitions or trips (OSCE 2019). This would also require a developed culture which would support people's actions and efforts to talk to radicals because it might be extremely hard to spend time with them because of their short temper or weird views.

It is also important to mention the rehabilitation and reintegration of people who either have already hurt somebody or are about to commit certain violent acts. This is also a part of the "Whole-of-Society" approach which focuses on disengagement and de-radicalization of people. This approach is focused on several pillars: socio-economic support (people should be able to find a flat and a work), psychosocial support (they might not feel a part of society, so at the initial stages they have somebody to talk to), theological or ideological support (it is important to focus on right beliefs, religion, and ideologies, but do not change them completely), family counselling (family has many functions which cannot be performed by other social institutions), recreational and cultural support (people will escape their inner experiences and focus on something positive) (OSCE 2020b). These tactics also automatically imply that various stakeholders are needed to address all these problems.

It is essential to note that it is not a one size fits all programme where all efforts are standardized for everybody and applied everywhere. Rather, special rehabilitation efforts, namely de-radicalization and disengagement, are chosen specifically for the needs of each person. The logic is relatively simple and straightforward: people who decided to abandon a radical organized voluntarily tend to be different from individuals who were radicalized and then detained by the government because of their dangerous intentions and plans. This confirms that one standard approach cannot address all these differences and more tailored made solutions should be considered.

OSCE takes into account these different pathways to radicalization and considers them in its "Whole-of-Society" plan. The thinking is that that different actors should be alliable to step in and facilitate the integration of radicals. It might be former radicals because they know the whole process of radicalization, but it is essential to make sure that they are fully de-radicalized before allowing them to organize meetings

and events. When it comes to Islamic extremism, some scholars can be invited to talk to radicals and provide them with another point of view. This discussion with valid arguments can help to change their minds and become more critical (Islam 2019). It might also be social workers, NGOs, close friends, probation workers, authorities, and all other social actors because people interact at different levels of intensity with all of them. All these actors must be aware of the problem and have points of contact in case their need assistance in talking to these people.

At a first glance, this is an essential component of the counter-PVERLT strategy. However, such efforts might not achieve success because some countries do not have enough resources to reintegrate individuals and develop such policies, while other structural issues, such as economic crises or global pandemics, might make this worse, regardless of the efforts of some institutions. This is where OSCE should step in and highlight levels of priority for countries to focus on because, without some templates or professional guidance, it would be hard to develop beneficial and cost-efficient measures to tackle radicalization. Some might believe that this is a viable solution, but Bakker and Kessels (2012) note that OSCE also has its own resource constraints and this is reflected in OSCE field offices. Many of them have very wide mandates and a long to-do list, while they are running out of experts and other capabilities. It is also important to apply this logic at the country level because some regional governments might not have enough capabilities and professionals to deliver certain policies to citizens. This means that resource constraints must always be taken into account and allocated as efficiently as possible from the top, whether it is OSCEC Secretariat, which sets the general agenda, or central governments, which allocate resources and conduct planning activities.

Remarkably, all reports emphasise the gender aspect of radicalization and de-radicalization because the experience of women and men tend to be different. This also should find its representation in attempts to identify potential radicals because women were usually overlooked from the general discourse because of the gender bias that they cannot be terrorists too. Reports (OSCE 2019, 2020a) also mention that many of them travelled to the Middle East to become wives for soldiers or foreign fighters. However, their expectations usually do not match reality, leading to dissatisfaction and frustration, meaning that their emotions and inner experiences should be also addressed with the help of law-enforcement institutions and international organisations, such as INTERPOL orEUROPOL to detect such people at borders and gradually initiate the processes of de-radicalization. Thiswould also

require specialists who would respect gender differences and find the right activities, words, and values to re-integrate women.

Although the two aforementioned security institutions might help member states to reduce the threat of entering radicals or terrorists to their countries, they cannot be an ideal sieve which would detect everybody and everywhere. Any security organisation implies information sharing and sometimes it might be even intelligence. Once a piece of sensitive document is shared with another country, the number of actors who has access to it increased. This means that the chances of it being leaked to the media are greater. Such risks might compromise some classified projects, agents, and other assets which are always highly valued. Such logic partly explains why INTERPOL and EUROPOL have certain limits and cannot unleash their potential. Since tackling radicalization results is harder and might involve more risks to ordinary people, it is necessary to focus on causes which might ignite PVERLT trends. Although it is also very challenging and time-consuming, OSCE has already achieved substantial benefits and positive side effects which play a vital role in improving the conditions of life and decreasing motivation to become a violent extremists.

CONCLUSION

All in all, this paper demonstrates that OSCE is a vital organisation to counter radicalization and violent extremism because it has various soft power mechanisms to promote the "Whole-of-Society" approach among its member states. Despite it being very efficient on paper, in practice countries usually do not have a platform to engage various actors and share information. All attempts tend to be limited and boil down to only a few initiatives and projects. Nevertheless, they already managed to produce tangible outcomes and allow to promote a culture of tolerance and non-discrimination which is required for the successful reintegration of individuals into society. The research on best practices and projects is also an inherent and vital function of OSCE. More research, however, is required in the field of implementation of such practices and the most efficient ways to do this because countries are not ready to invest big amounts of money in comprehensive projects.This means that strategies or templates for the gradual development of such projects are necessary to further promote a comprehensive and inclusive framework at all levels of governance.

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