Southeast Asia: The role of women in the prevention of Islamist radicalization and violent extremism

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Abstract

In Southeast Asia, Islamist radicalization is mainly rooted in ethno-nationalist grounds and presents an enduring threat to security and safety, as well as socio-economic, political and societal development Indonesia and Malaysia are most affected by Islamic radicalization and recruitment of radical Islamists and will therefore serve as practical examples in this research. To a large extent, this is based mainly on historical and political developments. In the fight against radicalization, the Malaysian government chooses to approach the challenges mainly with hard measures on the security level. This strict monitoring makes it challenging for civil society to actively engage in the efforts. The combination of soft and hard measures in Indonesia and the involvement of civil society functions as exemplary case study to other Southeast Asian countries. The importance of a gendered perspective in policies and strategies aimed at preventing radicalization and violent extremism, especially through increased involvement of women, is still not sufficiently considered in Southeast Asia. There is a great potential for female engagement in the fight against radical or violent extremist behavior. Society continues to be organized around patriarchal structures; yet, women play a key role within their families when it comes to shaping norms and traditions and it was found that gender equality decreases domestic terrorism.

CONTENT

Introduction

We live in turbulent times: natural catastrophes, crises, conflicts, people and even societies face existential fear. In the past years, this fear has been augmented with the anxiety of unforeseeable destruction caused by deadly terrorist attacks. The public lives with the constant concern that an attack can be carried out anywhere and at any time, which increases the general vulnerability and exposure of people worldwide. Terrorism is undisputedly one of the biggest and most pressing global issues, as is radicalization of individuals and groups and their willingness to resort to violent extremist behavior. The root causes for terrorist activities are manifold and are often based on strong religious beliefs or political identification. The line between religious zeal and radical behavior is oftentimes blurry. Radicalization often starts by generating extreme beliefs that justify violence and is one of the possible pathways into terrorism involvement (Borum 2011:7-36). It must be perceived as a circular process, whereby the participation increases connectedness with the activist network. This evolution will be further elaborated and represented graphically in this paper. Similarly, violent extremism cannot be down to the ground described as an ideological or social phenomenon but is a part of the process of radicalization and extremist behavior. The term "violent" stresses out the physical violence of the extremist or radical individual. To understand how civil society, NGOs, the government or justice institutions can intervene in the process of radicalization and thereby prevent radical behavior and often subsequent violent extremism or terrorism, this research first focuses on describing the process of radicalization, before stressing different methods of prevention. This process is to be understood as highly individual to each person. Yet, there are several factors that do play an important role (Gursky 2017:70). Southeast Asia has one the highest Muslim populations in the world. The country of Indonesia is not only one of the most populated countries, but also the one with the largest Muslim population in the world. This fact alone justifies taking a deeper analytical look at the root causes of Islamic radicalization in the region, while putting a special focus on Indonesia and Malaysia, since both countries are particularly affected by radical Islamist tendencies and the recruitment of radical Islamists. To a large extent, this is based on historical and political developments, such as fighters with Southeast Asian roots returning from the civil war in Afghanistan and reintegrating their societies of origin. The importance of a gendered perspective in policies and strategies aimed at preventing radicalization and violent extremism, especially through increased involvement of women, is still not sufficiently considered in Southeast Asia. Without a doubt, there is a great potential for female engagement in the fight against radical or violent extremist behavior. Society continues to be organized around patriarchal structures; even though women play a key role within their families when it comes to shaping norms and traditions. The role that women play in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism lies at the core of this research, as the entire population can be only approached with gendered policies. In patriarchal societies, the capabilities of women often remain untapped. This paper highlights how gendered approaches can be used to develop more successful prevention methods and strategies to ideally reach out to every individual in the process of radicalization and prevent them from further radicalizing. To fully make use of this potential, it was decided to base the research on the following question: "What is the role of women in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism in Southeast Asia?". On this backdrop, the research objective of this paper is to highlight the key role women and girls play in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism and to provide clear policy recommendations, as well as

best practice examples that can be promoted in United Nations Member States and implemented with the practical and technical assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The theoretical part provides a definition of the terms radicalization and violent extremism, as well as an overview of how the process of radicalization is taking place, what role polarization plays in the process, which persons are probable to fall prey to radical ideologies and behavior, while ensuring that the gender perspective is always taken into consideration. Furthermore, the difference between prevention of radicalization and deradicalization is described by defining the 'point of no return'. Qualitative interviews with experts on the topic and region were conducted as to compare academic findings with practical and on-site facts. In the conclusion, which includes policy recommendations, potential new prevention strategies and methods are highlighted. Thereby, the role of civil society, public institutions and the justice sector are especially emphasized.

1. Radicalization and violent extremism

A common misconception implies that radicalization and violent extremism are stagnant conditions that an individual finds him/herself in. Yet, it is of paramount importance to understand both as ongoing processes. The term radicalization can refer to ideologies that oppose to a society's core values and principles, such as democracy and human rights. Meanwhile, the term can relate to methods through which actors aim to reach their goals (Neumann 2010:12). The term radicalization is at present mainly used in the context of Islamist terrorist groups, even if radicalized individuals can be identified in all ideologic backgrounds Each ideological group has different triggers and motivations, but he common factor of those individuals displaying violent behavior through the means of extremist or terrorist methods is their perceived conception of personal or ideological fulfillment. That is the exact reason why it is of importance to concentrate on one group of radicalized people instead of lumping them together (Neumann 2017:32-34).

Insights into the region of Southeast Asia
Despite having faced Muslim separatist conflicts for decades, the region of Southeast Asia with both its secular and Islamic governments is often brought forward as a representative model of progressive Islam. Nevertheless, multiple terror attacks with manifold motives and characters were perpetrated in the region in the past. It is important to distinguish between nations, groups and grievances in Southeast Asia, because they generate a complex patchwork and there is no general pattern to be singled out. Each country in the region faces different challenges and has unique features, but numerous interconnections and similarities are found within them. Ethno-nationalist conflicts for instance are oftentimes misused in Indonesia and Malaysia to gather support for radical Islamism from Muslim minorities outside of this geographical area. While conflicts in Thailand and the Philippines are somewhat dominant in the Southeast Asian region and media coverage, they are the least societies to be influenced by jihadist ideology. Conflicts in the Philippines and Thailand, where Islam is a minority faith, are also driven by ethno-nationalist motives, but there are more Islamic connections to radicalization in Malaysia and Indonesia according to Helfstein (2015:4-6).

The process of radicalization
As stated beforehand, radicalization must be perceived as a circular process, whereby the participation increases connectedness with the radical network. In return, the ideological socialization is strengthened, and an ideological identity is being formed. The process will either

be restrained or encouraged by biographical availability, meaning that people with alternative priorities such as family and professional activities are more improbable to be caught in such a vicious circle (Mc Adam 1986:64-90). It often begins by generating extreme beliefs that justify violence and is one of the possible pathways into terrorism involvement (Borum 2011:7-36). To be considered a violent extremist/ radicalist, an individual must first be radical/extreme, to ultimately act in a violent way for its beliefs (Helfstein 2012:1-5).

In this regard, the phenomenon of polarization plays an important role in the process of radicalization and in understanding with which strategy to intervene in it and when. By describing polarization as "us-them thinking", Bart Brandsma visualizes that this way of thinking exists on the micro-level as well as on the macro-level. The difference between a conflict and polarization is that in a conflict, both players are known and can be identified, whereas in polarization any individual can decide whether to be part of a specific group. While everyone is usually part of a polarized group without even realizing it, the greatest challenge is to identify the key players within those said groups (Brandsma 2017:13-25). An acceleration in polarization can be prompted by trigger events or catalyzed and facilitated by different factors as mass media channels, social media, fake news or so-called information bubbles. When seeking to prevent radicalization, it is necessary to begin by comprehending the prevention of individuals drifting towards an extreme polarization (Lenos, Keltjens & van de Donk 6 July 2017:1-4).

"[...]extremist ideology is defined here as the set of justifications that legitimizes an in-group, which is primarily expressed through texts, including both the written and spoken word." (Berger April 2017:7) Usually, the out-group is defined simply by all people that are not part of the in-group, as visualized in the following graphic. The following graph shows the different steps in the process of identity construction of an individual getting radicalized. The first step on the pathway of radicalization which can be seen on the top left, is polarization.
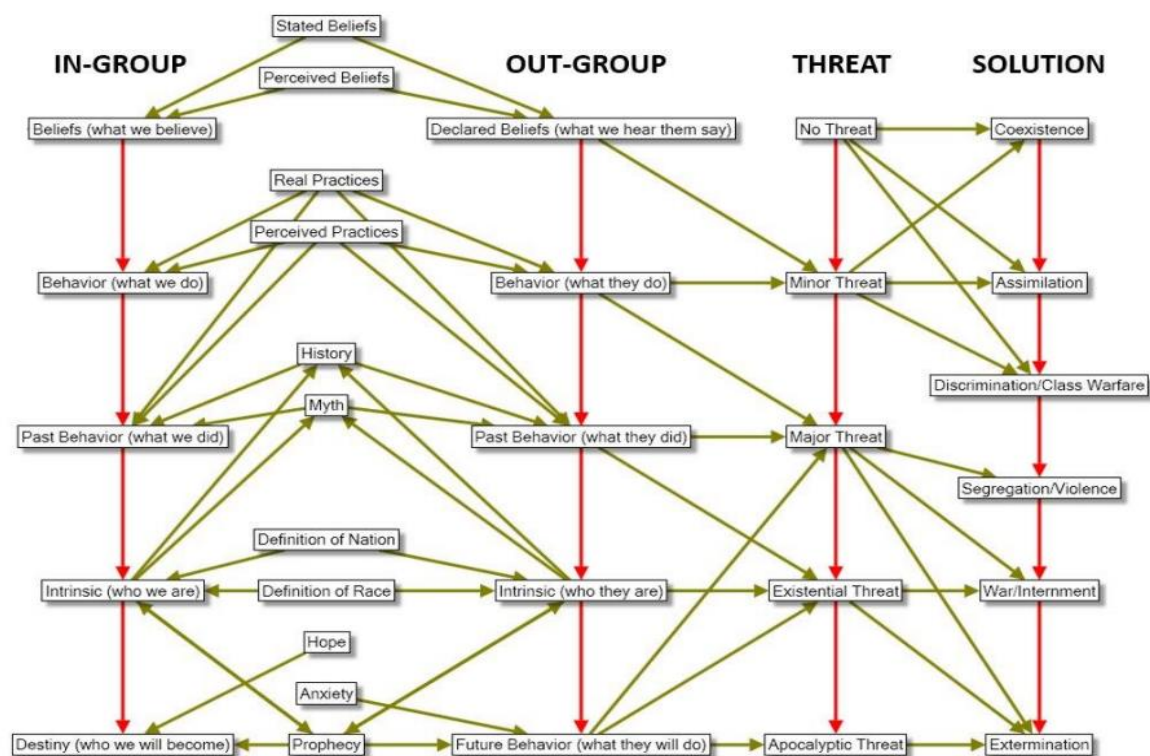

Figure 1 Identity groups evolving into extremism (Berger 2017)

(Berger 2017:56)

As can be seen above, preventing and decreasing polarization can understood as key strategy to create the conditions needed for the prevention of radicalization (Lenos, Keltjens & van de Donk 6 July 2017:1-4). Radicalization-related behavior can be differentiated in three stages, during which distinctive signs will be apparent, depending on the type of radicalization. In the case of religious radicalization in the first stage, the person is probable to experience a strong desire to share the newly gained knowledge with family and friends. Fixation and energy-bursts are common signs for this stage. Politically radicalized individuals often show completely opposite signs, as this form of radicalization is often based on rejecting the mainstream cultures. In this regard, politically radicalized people will tend to isolate themselves and dissociate from society. While going through the second stage, individuals display behavioral changes as depression and frustration, accompanied by a hostile fixation on details and decreasing acceptance for differing opinions. Individuals often show signs of sleep deprivation, anxiety, nervousness, nutritional disturbances and concentration problems. During the later stages, affected individuals shift to a calmer, harmonized and happier behavior, because they believe in having found the perfect solution for their problem (Köhler 2016:78-79). Radicalization always happens gradually and there are perennial episodes of doubt (Khosrokhavar 2017:109).

To better understand the different ways of radicalization and define the fine line between an activist and a radicalized individual, it is important to distinguish between high-risk/cost and low-risk/cost activism. The term "cost" hereafter used stands for the investment of time, money and energy required of a person actively involved in radical behavior. The term "risk" points out the anticipated dangers, e.g. social, legal, physical, financial and so forth, that people face by engaging in activism (Mc Adam 1986:67). It is necessary to differentiate between high-risk/cost and low-risk/cost activism because only high-risk/cost activists run the risk of becoming active participants of movements/ recruits (Mc Adam 1986:71-89). Low-cost activism is the first stage of radicalization, whereas the decision to commit high-cost activism marks the second stage of radicalization-related behavior. The following figure visualizes the gradual process of radicalization and the interplay of different causes:

The Process
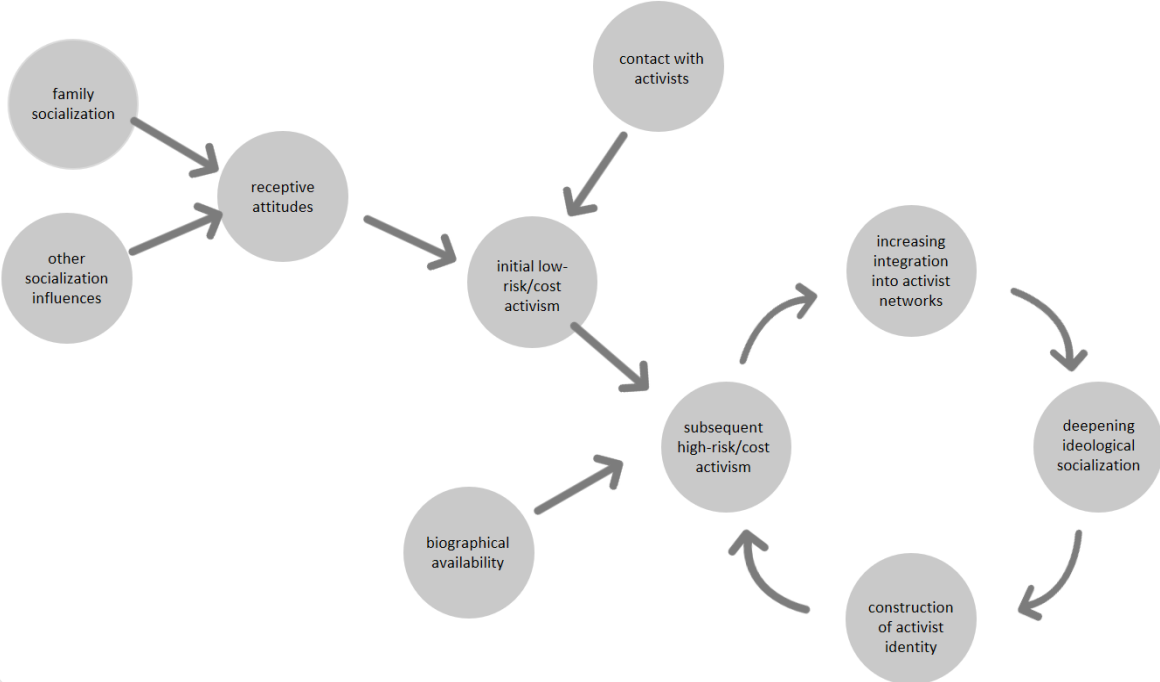
(Mc Adam 1986, 69)

Yet again, the factors influencing the radicalization process are highly personal and the above-mentioned graph is non-exhaustive. These days, biographical availability for example can be also replaced by Internet research and relationships built online, which is quite a new phenomenon thanks to the easy accessibility of the world wide web. Recently, new trends in the process of radicalization emerged, such as the importance of the Internet and social media in self-radicalization and recruitment (Khosrokhavar 2017:57-62). This is one of the predominant causes why the phenomenon of so-called "lone wolves" and very small groups of radicalized people has become such a pressing issue (Neumann 2017:160-216). "Lone wolves" are individuals who act alone in perpetrating an attack but are influenced by a community or a group. Another widespread phenomenon through the easy access to the Internet are self-radicalized individuals who choose the path of radicalization personally, oftentimes influenced by content they read online, in books or other material highly controlled by radical groups (Khosrokhavar 2017:109). Consequently, jihadists tend to opt less for advertising their ideology in mosques but are focusing more on bonding in a virtual world (Khosrokhavar 2017:58-69).

Isolation, a predominant factor that can be found online just as in prisons, has a significant effect on the process of radicalization. It can notably shorten the above-mentioned steps in the process or even make people skip certain steps as to speed up the operation. Prisons in all periods of history have been thriving places for radicalization and recruitment. Detainees have much time at hand to reflect their past and possible future, oftentimes looking for a fresh start. Prisons are undoubtedly places of vulnerability, since politically motivated offenders driven by a desire to defy authorities and prisoners tend to look for protection and religion to rely on morally. Moreover, prisons are often overcrowded and in combination with a shortage of staff it becomes hard to monitor the eventual emergence of radical groups or to identify radicalized individuals (Neumann 2010:25-37).

'Jihadi tourism' is another way violent extremists manage to get in touch with people on a local level, namely by traveling to their home country from a war zone and meeting up with possible recruits before returning to combat. Another factor to consider in the radicalization process is the phenomenon of returning foreign fighters. In the future, societies will increasingly face the problem of foreign fighters returning to their home country where they will share their experience with like-minded individuals, speed up the process of radicalization of other individuals or manage to attract people who, under normal circumstances, would not have been driven to the cause. Even though, according to Gursky (2017:105-129), only 10% of all returning foreign fighters pose a threat to homeland security, the influence they could have on others cannot be ignored.

At this point, it seems important to insist that most people disposing of radical beliefs and justifying violence are improbable to conduct terrorist attacks or take violent action (Borum 2011:30). A high level of radicalization does not necessarily equal violent behavior. Violent radical ideologies, in continuation, erase or deny alternative definitions of the ideology's core values and concept. The dilemma with violent radical ideology is that non-violent solutions start to disappear altogether from the set of possible solutions to the problem. If individuals see the increasing urgency to act and the alternatives to the radical ideology as two vectors who will cross at a point where no non-radical alternatives are left, that is the exact point where deradicalization starts and prevention possibilities stop (Köhler 2016:74-76).
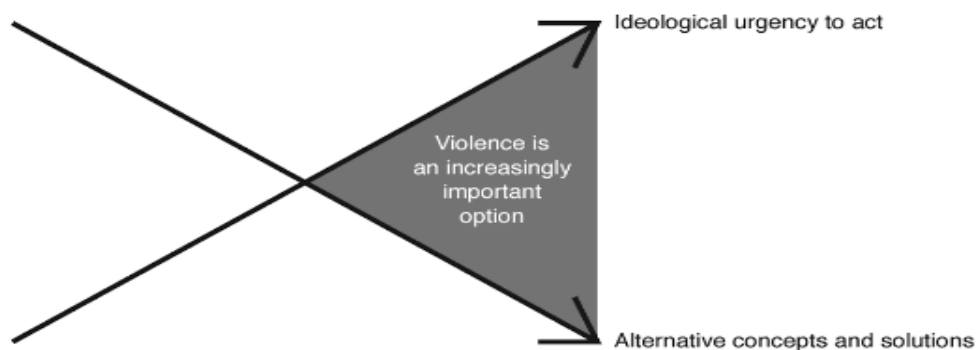
Figure 3.1 The time bomb effect of violent radicalization.

(Köhler 2016:79)

"Non-violent solutions have been declared ineffective or useless and are not adequate to the perceived importance of the problem anymore. Slowly (or sometimes rather quickly) reaching that critical point is the 'time bomb effect'- a mechanism underlying every form of radicalization. If these processes do not lead to violence, the individual's (or group's) ideology is not in direct, or is only in modest, contract with the mainstream political culture and surrounding ideology." (Köhler 2016:76).

It is impossible to define where the radicalization process exactly starts and where it ends; just as it is disputable whether there can even be an end to it and how the 'final product' of a completed radicalization circle presents itself. In this regard, it is necessary to first define the parameters of what is considered "moderate" and "radical" in a specific society at any given moment. Something that might be considered extreme in one society, may be understood as the societal norm in another society's context (Neumann 2017:28-31).

The presented research will mainly focus on the prevention of Islamist radicalization, especially in the context of the so-called "Islamic State" (also referred to as IS/ISIS/ISIL/Daesh) and the key role of women and girls in the prevention of radical and/or violent behavior. Following the proclamation of the so-called "caliphate" in the summer of 2014, Daesh has attracted a significantly high number of women (Neumann 2017:206-207). As of now, ISIS actively tries to attract women with a specifically gendered approach (Musial 2016/17:44-80). This fact is indeed highly relevant in the research, since Islamist terrorist organizations didn't openly display such an interest in consciously involving women within their structure before. While in the years prior the proclamation of the "caliphate" only 15% of the radicalized individuals joining Daesh were women, the number rose to 40% in the year 2015 alone (Neumann 2017:197-216). Consequently, this new reality bears the growing risk of women radicalizing other individuals - female and male.

2. The gender perspective

While a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the radicalization process of male terrorists, reliable information and knowledge about the very specific role of women in the prevention and countering of violent extremism and terrorism is still deficient, which is, however, crucial to the development of tailored and gendered strategies aiming at building resilience against extremist violence. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP 2015:5) points out that a "gender-aware countering violent extremism program recognizes the differential impacts of violent extremist messaging for women and men. It seeks to analyze how traditional stereotypes, attitudes and behaviors affect women and men and how they may inadvertently encourage violent extremism." Accepting a solely binary theory of women as either victims, perpetrators or preventers of violent extremist acts is treacherous and fails to point out the important

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interrelation of male and female extremists (USIP 2015:12). Female involvement in modern terrorism has a longstanding history and women have played substantial roles, including leadership roles, in terrorism. Women's involvement in terrorism dates back as far as 1861 in Russia (Weinberg 2011:22-49). Even though the commitment of females for radical Islamist acts is on the rise, there is still a huge lack of gender-specific prevention approaches (Musial 2016/17:39). Contemporary women's roles have undergone significant and dynamic changes not least because of globalization and the rise of the Internet, encompassing a multitude of societal and political layers. Gradually, a more preventive approach, in comparison to a fundamentally reactive one, is adopted by society and the international community (Chowdhury Fink; Shetret & Barakat 2013:1).

Regarding this paper's topic of violent extremism and radicalization, with a special focus on the region of Southeast Asia, it should be noted that women play an increasingly important role in mobilization, recruitment (especially through social media channels), financing and fundraising for terrorist organizations (Bin Ali & Hussin 2017:1). This fact is particularly important to note since it is known that women and girls are "disproportionately affected" by extremist and terrorist activities (USIP 2015:15). Regardless of the geographical context, violent Islamic terrorism enforces patriarchal and subservient stances upon women (USIP 2015:17). Oftentimes, women's rights will be wrongfully framed as "occidental" or "Western" and religion, in this context Islam, misused to justify the violent repression of the female population (ibid.). Violent extremism and terrorism in Southeast Asia presents an enduring threat to security and safety, as well as socio-economic, political and societal development.

Within the "Islamic State", women play a key role in recruiting and securing the survival of the ideology through generations (Saltman & Smith 2015:18). As of now, ISIS actively tries to attract women with a specifically gendered approach (Musial 2016/17:44-80). Examples for those approaches are dedicating sections of their online magazine *Dabiq* to their female community members and giving female members more responsibility by incorporating them strongly in their online and especially social media recruitment (Saltman & Smith 2015:17-19).

Terrorist organizations have strategic interests in women, because they are less probable to be suspected of being a suicide bomber and in Muslim countries, men are often not allowed to frisk them (Khosrokhavar 2017:46). Furthermore, women seem to play an important role in spreading online propaganda of radical Islamist ideologies and managing the online content for foreign fighters (Klausen 2015:1-21). Online, women are present as 'fan girls', who are glorifying their husbands or actions of fighters in general, but they also play a role in motivating other members of the group to remain dedicated to the cause (Gursky 2017:99).

"In other respects, the radicalization of men and of women seems to result from the same factors: a sense of humiliation, deep resentment, an increased capacity to act through an organization or through ad hoc measures developed within a group and finally, a desire to humiliate the humiliator. In cases of radical Islamism, it also entails earning the status of martyr and being rewarded with a privileged place in paradise; in the other cases, it means acquiring the aura of heroism and a place in collective memory." (Khosrokhavar 2017: 47-48). The presumption that the main motivation for women to get radicalized is their wish to become a "jihadi bride" is simply wrong and obstructive. Female recruits tend to be very young, just as men, come from rich and poor families and are well or badly educated. While some are strongly influenced by their families, others belong to families with no radical or even Islamic background at all (Saltman & Smith 2015:69-71).

Many women hope to achieve equality by demonstrating that they are capable of the same things men are, for example by showing heroism in the face of death. Nevertheless, radical Islamist

groups use female suicide bombers only under extraordinary circumstances (Khosrokhavar 2017: 46). Contrary to this, there are also women who are unsettled by the leveling effect of gender equality and consequently see their inferiority as their femininity. This mindset incites women to depart to terrorist-controlled territories by renouncing their equality and building a new sacred world with clear gender roles (Khosrokhavar 2017: 111-112).

Being able to protest against modern gender relations gives them a feeling of superiority, by living the radicalized Islamic way where the niqabs often mark their resistance and weapon in the fight against 'the others'. The debate whether the burqa should be allowed in Western states even encourages them in the feeling of being a 'resistance fighter' by wearing the niqab (Schröter 2015: 1-9). Gender aspects can mainly be found in the strategic use of language, images and in gender-specific narratives (Saltman & Smith 2015: 9-17). It is important to consider the factor of different gendered narratives and propaganda material in gendered prevention approaches.

Main drivers, causes and risk factors for Islamist radicalization and violent extremism

Radicalization and the often-subsequent threat of violent extremism are problems that society, governments and justice institutions are facing since the dawn of humanity (Gursky 2017:9). Terrorism or radicalization is an attitude based on 'micro-elements', but the indicators that are used to describe it are 'macro-variables', as age, income, religion or level of education. Using these indicators to identify future violent extremists or terrorists in a society, one will quickly realize that a great number of potential terrorist might slip through this rather coarse meshed system. It is important to highlight once more that there is no 'one-fits-all' approach. For this exact reason, the following parts of the research are focusing on drivers and motives, as well as risk factors for radicalization (Neumann 2017:14- 36).

To understand what drives people towards terrorism or violent extremism, Gursky (2017:8-9) stresses to look at the motivations of people going to war in general. War can be defined as "[...]the use of armed aggression by one group against another for some larger purpose, territory, resources, defense, ideology, etc.). More specifically, state actors (or non-state actors) engaged in armed action against another state actor." (Gursky 2017:8). Terrorism is somewhere in between the two definitions and is hence defined as a form of war, which is an interesting starting point when looking for the motives of radicalization (Gursky 2017:8-9). Radicalized and violent extremist individuals are often driven by humanitarian motives, hoping to contribute to making the world a better place. Other reasons why individuals decide to participate in combats are: naked aggression, nationalism/ ideology, resource acquisition, territorial expansion, defense, coming to the aid of an ally and for a higher cause (religion) (Gursky 2017: 8-55). Terrorists often see themselves as 'freedom fighters and not as 'terrorists' (Neumann 2017:25-28). Similarly to war heroes, jihadists who commit attacks or other violent acts for the sake of their ideology, hope for an international reputation as 'stars', regardless of the possible negative media coverage of their persona (Khosrokhavar 2017:98). The radicalization of other members of society has similarly positive connotations within the communities and is also seen as an honorable act.

Another driver towards radicalization lies in the misinterpretation of the Quran. There are three main aspects on how violent extremists can use the Quran as justification that their actions are divinely inspired, the main reason being simply leaving out the broader (historical) context when interpreting the verses. Terrorist groups voluntarily misuse the Quran to support their propaganda. The hadiths which are supplementing the Quran are another source that violent extremists take out of their context to mislead their supporters that they act in a holy cause. There is also a grave discrepancy on which source is reliable and which is not (Gursky 2017:18-24).

Suspecting a radical Islamist in all kinds of Islamic denominations is also a driver that can lead towards radicalization, as this leads to a feeling of discrimination and repulsion by society, which consequence can be radicalization. What contributes to this are authoritarian regimes. The illegitimacy of the ruling power gives somehow the feeling of legitimacy to oppositions, even if they are violent and jihadism turns this to account to win people from different strata of the population. Fear and insecurity caused by terrorism unifies people to fight against it. In an autocratic system, this mechanism of prevention is not possible because public opinion is muzzled or not forming in the first place (Khosrokhavar 2017: 117-123).

3.   Research objective, method and aim

Research objective
Given the fact that the level of awareness regarding the direct involvement and role of women and girls in the process of radicalization is - to a large extent - regarded as a mere "side-effect" of terrorism, it is essential to highlight this aspect in order to exploit the theoretical and practical findings for future tailor-made strategies and projects to prevent radicalization and violent extremism, as well as for the development of measures to counter radicalization.

Method
After careful consideration and consultation with experts in qualitative and quantitative research methods, it became apparent that a qualitative methodological focus is more reasonable given the desired result of the research with primarily exploratory character. It is aimed to gain a general understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations of the role of women in the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism. Qualitative research methods allowed to explore the topic in more depth and detail, while offering the needed flexibility in terms of location and timing to collect data. The generated insight into the problem helped to develop ideas and hypotheses for potential further quantitative research in the future. In this regard, the findings of this qualitative research are not conclusive and cannot be used to generalize about the population of interest. To get a closer insight in existing methods of prevention and possible practices not yet implemented, expert interviews were conducted with professionals in the field of radicalization, violent extremism or terrorism in the region of Southeast Asia.

In the interviews, the focus was naturally put on the role of women in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism in Southeast Asia and more specifically in the countries of Indonesia and Malaysia. All interviews are based on a pre-established questionnaire and most of them conducted via Skype. That way, a maximum amount of flexibility, but also authenticity in the answers and information gathered are guaranteed to the interviewees. By focusing on the manifest variables derived from the interviews, the information gained was then evaluated by means of Qualitative Content Analysis. The information retrieved from these interviews, in a next step, was compared to the knowledge provided in the theoretical background part and through detailed literature research. As result from the comparison of theory and practice it is possible to develop policy recommendations for the region of Southeast Asia with a focus on a better inclusion of women and gender aspects.

3. Expert Interviews

Interviews with the following experts in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism were conducted: Rafia Bhulai, Senior Programs Officer at the Global Center on Cooperative Security (New York); Mr. Alamsyah M. Dja'far, Senior Researcher at the Wahid Foundation

(Jakarta); Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Rüdiger Lohlker, Southeast Asia expert at the University of Vienna; Ms. Riri Khariroh, Commissioner in National Commission on Violence against Women - Komnas Perempuan (Jakarta) and Mr. Dionnisius E. Swasono, Deputy Director of Regional Cooperation at the National Counter-Terrorism Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (BNPT). Questions included historical aspects of radical Islamist movements, different triggers of radical behavior, prevention methods, as well as gender roles and gendered prevention approaches.

In the interview with Mr. Lohlker, which was the first to be conducted for the research, general insight into the Southeast Asian culture and history was gained. He stressed the importance to clearly differentiate between the distinct countries in the region to get constructive results for the research. He and Mr. Dja'far also pointed out that especially the historical context in Afghanistan plays an important role in why countries in Southeast Asia are affected differently. Many networks have their roots in the civil war after the Russian occupation. Activists from the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia joined ranks in this war and quickly established networks, which were maintained even after their definitive return to their respective home countries, thus laying the cornerstone for a transnational jihadist subculture that was exported to Southeast Asia. Yet, national extremist groups in Indonesia for example need to be differentiated from those transnational groups. In the South of the Philippines there can currently be seen a shift from national trends to a jihad-oriented movement. This trend was already identified in the context of Al Qaeda, highlighting once more the historical perspective prevailing over mere cultural aspects. Interestingly, Mr. Dja'far pointed to the origins of the difficulties in Indonesia in historical reasons related to religion, namely that the state officially recognizes only the following six religions: Islam, Catholic, Christian (Protestant), Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian. Until a recent amendment, people of different faith were unable to state their religion in their identity card. In addition to the already stated factors, Ms. Bhulai also attributed some of the root causes of violent extremism to socioeconomic and political grievances. Marginalization within society can be a driving force towards the extremist narrative of the "Islamic State" for example and is often enhanced through the usage of the Internet and other technology.

In contrast to other countries in and outside of Southeast Asia, the readiness to use violence is not glorified by society in Indonesia for instance, which can be traced back to the foundational philosophical theory of the state, the Pancasila and the unitary state of Indonesia based on *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"), according to Mr. Swasono. Even in a non-violent society as the Indonesian, a social division can enhance propensity to violence. Mr. Dja'far précised that in contrast to Indonesia, religion often mixes with violent tendencies in Malaysia. While Malaysia and Indonesia have been particularly affected by Islamist radicalization, parts of the Philippines, especially the Mindanao region, is increasingly targeted as the "Islamic State" continues to lose territories in Iraq and Syria and is looking for a base to extend their influence in the Southeast Asian region. In especially marginalized populations in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, recruiters often play on ethno-nationalist sentiments to proselytize people for their cause. Another important aspect is the feeling of many Muslims considering themselves to be "humiliated" by the rest of the world opposing their faith and belief system, oftentimes even believing in some sort of conspiracy against Islam. Similarly, to European countries, the middle-class population in Indonesia and Malaysia is particularly vulnerable to being religiously radicalized. (Ms. Bhulai)

Mr. Dja'far reiterated that it is not the poor and uneducated who are vulnerable to commit violent acts, but the middle class. This is often based on poor knowledge about religion and the

fact that they have better access to radical narratives propagated on the internet and books than the poor and try to inform themselves about religion on a point of struggle in their lives. Many Muslims who attended Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) often practice a very moderate version of Islam. All experts agreed that no general conclusion can be drawn as to whether well-being or education influences the probability to be radicalized. However, welfare can be a reason for radicalization as it can represent a source of income. Therefore, it is important to consider strategies how to prevent poor people from radicalizing for financial reasons (Ms. Khariroh).

It is important to stress the difference between radicalization in urban and rural areas and between the regions where radical individuals are recruited and based in. In addition, a differentiation between the dominant groups and organizations is essential, since they often pursue different objectives and targets. Mr. Swasono highlighted that the type of intervention that is carried out in different regions of the country depends on local conditions. According to Mr. Dja'far, most of the violent acts perpetrated in Indonesia now are to be found in the region of West Java. Historical reasons were mentioned, namely the fact that the Islamist group DI/TII (*Darul Islam*) tried to establish a "caliphate" there in the past. The Indonesian state struggles with debates on the relation between religion and state since its independence in 1945 and the emergence of Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DII/TII) (Ms. Khariroh). Accordingly, some groups launched terrorist acts when their wish to build the country based on certain religious grounds could not be materialized (Mr. Swasono).

According to Mr. Lohlker, Malaysia can rely on a highly efficient police and anti-terror force. Nevertheless, the difficulty to reconcile the respect of human rights and the necessary operational freedom that authorities require to take decisive action against radical networks persists. Ms. Bhulai insisted that a strong security-centric approach is generally insufficient in preventing and countering violent extremism and can in some cases even contribute to further radicalization of individuals. Additionally, in cases where hard security is prioritized, it is often difficult to get adequate access to data that can help conducting essential and much-needed research on violent extremism for non-security actors, such as social workers, educators and civil society organizations to be engaged and encouraged to play a complementary role particularly in the prevention space. It was pointed out by Ms. Khariroh, an expert in policy reforming and mainstreaming women's human rights in P/CVE, that upholding law enforcement and soft security approaches that protect human rights and not violate them, are a key-function criminal justice institutions have in prevention. In this regard, Mr. Swasono also highlighted that criminal justice institutions can act through measures as community policing, which is also adopted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). At this point, it is crucial to stress that women and men are often approaching the prevention of radicalization in different areas, there is a lack in the presence of female security and law enforcement officers. Nonetheless the presence of women in this sector is important for a gendered strategy and to ensure a gender specific treatment. The significance of gender specific practice in a patriarchal society as the Indonesian will be further specified. Ms. Bhulai also noted that important work is being conducted by civil society organizations in the region to prevent and counter violent extremism, particularly in the development and peacebuilding areas. Nevertheless, much of the work that may have P/CVE objectives are not labeled "P/CVE" per se as there is a certain stigma associated with those labels since they are considered to predominantly target Muslim populations. It is part of the change, that awareness about the issue of P/CVE is raised among civil society, to reach out to more individuals, but also to get rid of certain stigmas associated with those labels (Ms. Khariroh). In this regard, Mr. Swasono pointed out that two moderate mass organizations, *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah,* help counter violent extremism through

their positive narratives and collaborated projects with the government, which has greatly contributed to tackle radicalization in the society.

Mr. Lohlker and Mr. Dja'far both stressed that women continue to be active in radicalized groups and that especially in Indonesia, it cannot be overlooked that radical networks are being supported by schools, social contacts, sports clubs, but also by mosques and families, in which women play an elementary role. Unfortunately, a starting radicalization of students is often overlooked in schools, as stated by Mr. Dja'far. As mentioned above, both experts insisted on the fact that people with a solid educational background in cities are notably active in radical networks. Those networks target and approach women directly and can be described as "modern, globalized and urban" (Mr. Lohlker), highlighting that a continuous urbanization doesn't necessarily contribute positively to the prevention of further radicalization.

To find effective possibilities for the prevention of radical behavior, it is crucial to support prevention methods based on bottom-up principles. Since radicalization in Indonesia takes place especially through the form of kinship, friendship, discipleship and worship, which are all happening on a local level, only the new method of using media, like the internet, as a pathway to radicalize others is considered a multi-regional approach (Ms. Khariroh). This is one of the reasons why Mr. Lohlker and the other experts insisted that the focus should be put on the micro-level which will later allow the actors to build up upon these approaches on the meso-level. Equally essential is the creation of a space allowing direct exchange between civil society organizations as to encourage mutual learning processes. This mindset is already being put into practice in Indonesia, where Ms. Bhulai referred to a working group on the topic of women and the prevention of violent extremism which includes 16 organizations who coordinate among themselves and try to work with policy makers and the government to ensure gender sensitive P/CVE approaches and strategies. The national commission on violence against women, *Komnas Perempuan*, continues to work on gender equality issues. According to Ms. Bhulai, civil society groups in Indonesia engaged in the fight against radicalization can rely on a tight-knit network established through social media as to ensure that their work is complementary to each other and does not overlap. Another practical example was provided by Mr. Swasono who presented a project initiated collaboratively by the BNPT and *Nahdlatul Ulama,* which included the initiation of 1,000 'anti-radicalism preachers' from *Fatayat NU* as 'strategic partners' to the BNPT in the work to counter the spread of radical narratives among women. Exchange and cooperation between the different regional institutions and civil society organizations was mentioned as significant to unfold the full potential of regional policies and strategies (Ms. Khariroh). The use and respect of local wisdom to better include the work of peace agents to achieve social cohesion in the prevention of radicalization is considered as a substantial aspect when formulating national action plans (Ms. Khariroh).

Mr. Lohlker stated that Singapore can be put forward as an example for a functioning coordination between state and civil societies initiatives engaged in the prevention of radicalization and deradicalization. Families are specifically targeted and supported to deprive male family members of possible ideological props aiming to prevent them from re-establishing old networks. Mr. Swasono agreed that women play a key role within their families when it comes shaping norms and traditions and to detecting any attitudinal or behavioral changes of their spouses or children. So-called "mother schools" in Indonesia build up on exactly this approach, by empowering women to debunk terrorist narratives. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that radical sons were raised by mothers too. In addition, Ms. Khariroh stressed the fact that women's roles as mothers, wives or sisters can be an asset when approaching radicalized individuals, especially when it comes to family. Other significant roles women play in the

prevention of radicalization are acting as peace agents, initiating social cohesion and being the people who build the warn network in order to detect radicalized individuals. In order to do this, women need to have the possibility of expressing their views and opinions openly, as Mr. Swasono stressed.

Once more, it was pointed out by Ms. Bhulai that to effectively prevent violent extremism, it is crucial to involve and connect families, teachers and social workers and other engaged actors once signs of radicalization or changes in behavior are detected. On this backdrop, Mr. Dja'far confided that the *Wahid Foundation* is currently in the process of setting up a helpline where parents, teachers or concerned citizens can seek help or information after having registered possible signs of radicalization. Through such an initiative, the national governments and civil society actors can establish a direct link of exchange, especially considering that many people seemingly have a lack of knowledge of religious teachings and therefore also of possibilities they have in preventing an individual from becoming violent.

Mr. Lohlker also highlighted that to further involve women in the prevention process within civil society, it is important for women to somehow embody the prevailing traditional point of view in countries as Indonesia, still highly influenced by patriarchal structures. Encouraging outspoken and active women who do not define themselves merely on the grounds of wearing a veil will eventually lead to societal change. In general, it is crucial to openly highlight a positive image of women as to empower more women and give them the competency to act within their societies. One very positive example mentioned is the head organizer of the *Bali Democratic Forum*, a woman and former diplomat. Similarly, female imams who already work very effectively in repressing radical Islamic beliefs and practices by transporting their knowledge in theology should be highlighted as playing a big role in preventing radicalization or even, at a later stage, help deradicalization efforts. Ms. Bhulai mentioned similar successful initiatives in Indonesia, where both male and female religious leaders provide interpretations of religious texts that highlights women's rights and equality. Additionally, other programs for example in Malaysia help boys and girls learn about their cultural historical background which aids to build a positive self-image and can prevent possible identity crises later. In conclusion, the evidence points almost exclusively to the fact that cultural and societal changes are a prerequisite for enabling effective prevention (Ms. Khariroh).

As previously mentioned by stressing typical contexts in which people get radicalized or manage to radicalize others, it became obvious that prisons are hotbeds for radicalization. In this context, Ms. Bhulai mentioned a program in Indonesia where wives and families of imprisoned terrorists are empowered economically as one way to prevent their husbands from re-engaging or becoming re-radicalized after being released from prison. Ms. Bhulai highlighted that women are often supporting men financially to help them travelling abroad and joining terrorist organizations. Many women are organized in social media groups, where they exchange knowledge and personal experiences. It is extremely challenging to intervene in those dynamics, as the way of thinking is being passed on in such isolated communities.

Ms. Bhulai emphasized the fact that women are approached differently by radical groups than men and therefore it is important to also have a gendered perspective on the counter-side which is mostly still missing. Mr. Dja'far explained in this regard that it is essential to consider that society is still very traditional in Indonesia and that women are best addressed by women and that they often need their husbands' permission to be able to take part in activities outside the house. In this regard, it was stressed that gender equality amongst men needs to be promoted further (Mr. Dja'far and Ms. Kariroh). This is particularly appreciated when done by imams who manage

to convey the understanding of gender equality and the empowerment of women being strongly supported by religious narratives and institutions. As a recommendation, he suggested men to address other men or men to empower other men to then encourage their wives to actively engage in society. Unfortunately, it would be rather difficult for women to directly address men who are outside of their personal family environment (Mr. Dja'far). In this regard, Mr. Swasono shared that different approaches of men and women are done through a careful gender perspective analysis, which nevertheless requires a strong aggregated data basis.

Ms. Bhulai additionally recommended to enhance the general support from supranational institutions to governments as to overcome the lack of a gender perspective in their research and policies or prevention strategies and support the creation of national action plans that better involve civil society organizations. Mr. Swasono insisted on the importance of an extensive exchange between the government and the civil society to take place. Yet, a certain space must be left for communities and civil society actors to develop initiatives of their own and to determine if, and when, state involvement is appropriate, and to what extent. This is particularly important in the case of initiatives aiming to mobilize actors outside of the mainstream. Credible counter narratives necessarily require a perceptible distance from the government, he pointed out. One of the most important features to achieve this collaboration is building trust. It is also important to come up with national action plans that incorporate various stakeholders and even consider international cooperation. In addition, it is of utmost relevance to integrate a gender perspective and human rights into national policies and action plans on P/CVE (Ms. Khariroh). In regard to international cooperation, Mr. Swasono highlighted that Indonesia is actively engaged with other countries, be it on a bilateral, regional or multilateral level. Up to now, Indonesia has signed an *Memorandum of Understanding* on Counter Terrorism with 14 countries, actively plays a role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) Working Group on Counter Terrorism, and together with Australia is becoming Co-Chairs of the CVE Working Group under the framework of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). In the sub region, Indonesia has a strong cooperation with Malaysia and the Philippines on countering terrorism. On a regular basis, the three countries exchange information on intelligence, conduct efforts to counter terrorism, such as carrying out joint patrols in the sub region bordering the three countries, and organized a Trilateral Meeting in June 2017 in response to the Marawi crisis. They are at the early stage of developing CVE projects as part of efforts to rebuild and reconstruct Marawi. Gender mainstreaming is one of principle efforts, that Indonesia takes it into consideration.

Another reason why a gendered approach on the prevention of radicalization is of importance is appearance. Mr. Dja'far raised the awareness that any change in the way women dress/cover themselves can be a possible indicator for starting radicalization and could be used by the government in data-collecting efforts about radicalized women. Based on those findings, the *Wahid Foundation* implemented a new program addressing women separately, by running activities, especially in research and community development through economic activities to counter radical narratives addressed to women. In this regard, data gathered through a survey facilitated by the *Wahid Foundation* had as a result that women in Indonesia are frequently engaged in socio-economic radicalization. This survey differentiated between the two terms "intolerant" and "radical"; "radical" being connected to the support or enforcement of violence, while "intolerant" individuals deny the rights of minorities within a society for example. They concluded that women tend to be more intolerant and are more often involved in activities such as hate speech and that men tend to be more radical, which implies the willingness to violence in preassigned definitions.

During the interview, Mr. Dja'far pointed out that violent extremism always starts with intolerance towards other groups and, in a later stage, becomes violent. Hence the importance to differentiate between intolerant and violent groups. This theory explained by Mr. Dja'far is reflected in the above-mentioned theory of polarization, which also sees the roots of radicalization in the dynamics of in drawing a line between two groups, namely the group an individual belongs to and one of "the others". When looking into radicalization, it is crucial to analyze at which state the prevention of radicalization is still possible and where deradicalization measures must start.

4. Main findings

Radicalization and violent extremism are processes that start with polarization. Polarization is part of any individual's life, because on the micro- and on the macro-level, every single person belongs to a world divided into categories of "us" and "them". Everyone who is not inside your group is automatically part of "them". Understanding this dynamic is essential when trying to put forward strategies to prevent radicalization and the oftentimes following violent extremism. Prevention starts by spreading more tolerance within civil society, for the simple reason that increased tolerance leads to more people being part of the same group and to less need for radical behavior within differing groups.

An equally important finding is the difference between high and low-cost activism, which also marks the transition from the first to the second step of the radicalization process. In the first step, people have relatively low costs as consequence for their radical behavior, because they either excitedly share their new mindsets with others or isolate themselves based on their newly gained knowledge. In the second step, they start to be frustrated about the ignorance of the people not following their ideology or political opinion, which leads to a stronger need of clear distinction between "us" and "them". Signs for the need of prevention become obvious at this stage and with the help of civil society, individuals could be easily identified and possibly inhibited to further radicalize. In the third step, deradicalization begins. The radicalized individual is confident with its new identity and willing to commit any action necessary to achieve the objectives of the radical group it now belongs to. Violence is not necessarily a consequence of radicalization, but radicalization can end in violent extremism.

In the past, mainly men were approached by radical groups but recently groups realized that to continue their bloodline, women need to be involved in their communities. Consequently, new narratives specifically addressing women were put forward and since 2014; the percentage of women joining Daesh has increased 25% within one year. This fact supports the argument that there is not only a need to research on how women can prevent men to get radicalized, but also on how women can prevent other women to engage in radical behavior.

Motives of female Islamic radicalization are often very similar to those of men, but feminism and the aspiration of increased gender representation is to be understood as a specific aspect. Women try to achieve more obvious equality by demonstrating that they can perpetrate the same acts as men. Therefore, female suicide bombers who die as martyrs are often considered as anti-patriarchal or even feminist. Harris and Milton (2016:60-78) conducted a highly relevant research about how women's rights and terrorism are linked to one another. By comparing data on the increase and decrease of women's rights to the carrying out of domestic and transnational terror attacks, they have concluded that women's rights indeed have an influence on terrorism on the micro level (domestic terrorism). Simply put: if women's rights are low in a country, there is a higher rate of domestic terrorism. There are also women who get radicalized outside of the

already mentioned motivations - they want to protest modern gender relations and therefore renounce their equality and niqabs or burqas mark their resistance and weapon in the fight against "the others". As women are more involved in non-violent radicalization, they often play roles as recruiters, are responsible for (online) marketing or give financial support, by sending money to foreign fighters for example.

It is of utmost importance to stress which factors influence people following through with their transformation within the radicalization process from one stage of radical behavior to another later stage to be able to prevent this progress in the first place. Biographical availability, such as socialization in the family, at work, at school, at sport activities, in mosques, religious communities, prisons or even online, is one of the main factors in the radicalization process.

The conducted expert interviews, as well as the researched literature demonstrated that a high percentage of the Muslim population in Southeast Asia, especially coming from urban areas and middle-class backgrounds, do not possess sufficient knowledge about moderate Islam. Coupled with the propagated narrative of Muslims being globally discriminated and persecuted, which is also linked to a colonial past in Indonesia and Malaysia, polarization continues to grow. Nevertheless, this could also represent an ideal point to focus on when developing prevention policies. Furthermore, it was stressed that poverty and the prospect of an income source can be motivations for radicalization and therefore it is important to also include policies in national action plans which raise the well-being of the population. A similar driver is the feeling of social or cultural isolation, pull factors are the wish to belong to a community and idealistic goals to build a "caliphate". There is also a trend to romanticize the experience of joining a radical community or even moving to the "Islamic State", where hopes are high to establish a somewhat normal family life. While terrorists are - for obvious reasons - portrayed very negatively by anyone outside their circle and free media, they and their community often see themselves as freedom fighters, engaged for a good cause and are glorified by other group members. A driver towards violent extremism can also be the achievement of quick fame and receiving the admiration by others. As mentioned in the interviews, the wrong or mis-interpretation of the religious texts can boost radical behavior. Mr. Dja'far put forward that individuals are often confronted with these radical interpretations of the Quran by their social surroundings in school, at work, in mosques or even by other family members. A further step could be replacing clearly radical imams or school teachers by outspokenly tolerant ones to prevent further radicalization. In this regard, especially initiatives favoring positive and moderate narratives of Islam, for example through so-called 'anti-radicalism preachers', would be beneficial for societies and populations at risk.

In Southeast Asia, radicalization is mainly based on ethno-nationalist grounds, which is strongly connected to religion in Indonesia and Malaysia. Each country in the region faces different challenges and has unique features, but there are numerous interconnections and similarities in the region. Malaysia and Indonesia have a history of fighters returning from religious wars back to their home countries and bringing back radical Islamic ideologies. As the country with the largest Muslim population worldwide, Indonesia is strongly affected by radical Islamist ideologies, but also has brought forward a lot of research and programs in the hopes to prevent Islamist radicalization. One reason for the frequent radical-religious polarizations in Indonesia is that until recently, the state officially just accepted the six biggest religions represented in the country. People who belonged to other religious groups had serious disadvantages in society and this also led to a high intolerance towards minorities among the population. Mr. Dja'far emphasized the
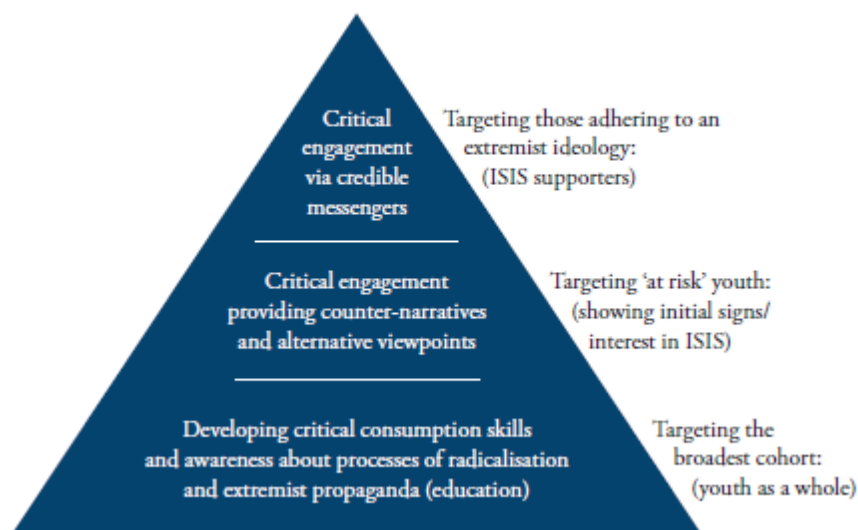
fact that a difference must be made between radicalization in urban and rural areas, as well as between the regions where radicals are recruited and where they settle. In addition, different radicalized groups pursuing contrasting objectives and targets need to be looked at individually when developing prevention strategies. According to Mr. Dja'far, the current hotspot of violent extremism in Indonesia is found in West Java. This fact is due to historical reasons, as the DI/TII (*Darul Islam*) Islamic group tried to build a "caliphate" there in the past. Again, when planning future prevention mechanisms, it is important to address regions where radicalized individuals are recruited those were they settle differently to achieve the desired results. There is a big difference in how both the Malaysian and Indonesian government address the raising problem of radicalization. While Malaysia mainly focuses on hard and security measures through a strong monitory system and by giving a lot of power to police and military, the Indonesian government tries to collaborate closely with the civil society. Because of strict monitoring policies, it is challenging for experts to research on the topic in Malaysia and for civil society to engage in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.

All interviewed experts agree on the fact that prevention measures in general should be emphasized on the micro-level. All of them equally stressed that it is of the biggest importance to support "bottom-up"- approaches as to reach a maximum amount of people in the needed way to be able to effectively prevent the propagation of radicalization and violent extremism within the society. In addition, they acknowledge the fact that there is a prevailing insufficiency in gendered approaches in both countries, which are also due to a lack of exploitable data sets and that there is a need of stronger embracement of gender equality. To do so it is recommended to reform policies and action plans in a way that women's rights become human rights. As mentioned above, a driver towards female radicalization can be the striving for gender equality. A gendered approach could even be based on physical appearance, as Mr. Dja'far made aware of the fact that any change in the way women dress themselves can be an indicator for beginning radicalization and could be used by the government when trying to identify radicalized women. As Indonesia and Malaysia are still based on very patriarchal society structures, it is important to take this into account when developing gender-based approaches, such as the "mother schools" mentioned by Mr. Lohlker. In this context, Mr. Dja'far highlighted the importance of the fact that in this regard, gender dynamics always need to be considered as women often need the permission of men to involve in activities outside the house, and it continues to be difficult for women to address men outside their personal family environment. As previously stated by stressing typical dynamics in which people get radicalized or radicalize others, prisons are true hotbeds of radicalization. In this context, programs such as the one established in Indonesia empowering wives of imprisoned terrorists to prevent their husbands from re-engaging or becoming re-radicalized after being released from prison, deserve further promotion. All experts and the studied literature agree on the fact that existing efforts are insufficient and that there is great potential for future research which will permit to build even stronger ties between government and civil society organizations to reach a greater number of individuals and fix the imperfections and loopholes in the prevention system. Trust is a significant facilitator in this ties between civil society and government institutions and programs and needs to be further deepened through specific measures on different societal and governmental levels, as displayed in the following policy recommendations.

5. Policy recommendations

After comparing the theoretical framework to the results in the expert interviews, it was possible to put forward the following policy recommendations. It is crucial to differentiate in developing prevention strategies for the three stages of radical behavior mentioned above. In the following graph it is visualized how awareness can be raised on the bottom of the triangle, on a higher level of radicalization methods as counter-narratives can be used and at an even higher level of radicalization which is at the top of the triangle, direct and individual approach is needed.

Three Levels of Prevention: Aims, Means and Target Audiences

Critical engagement via credible messengers — Targeting those adhering to an extremist ideology: (ISIS supporters)

Critical engagement providing counter-narratives and alternative viewpoints — Targeting 'at risk' youth: (showing initial signs/ interest in ISIS)

Developing critical consumption skills and awareness about processes of radicalisation and extremist propaganda (education) — Targeting the broadest cohort: (youth as a whole)

(Saltman & Smith 2015: 53)

To fix imperfections in the prevention system, it is essential to increase the direct exchange between governmental and approaches from the civil society. To be able to merge strategies and build stronger linkages, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Empower social society initiatives by supporting them with a public space for action and funding;
2. Provide space for discussion in form of conferences and networks for civil society institutions to exchange knowledge with government experts;
3. Involve civil society groups in the development of national action plans;
4. Increasing the government's (financial) support to research on the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism;
5. Support and encourage civil society groups working on gender equality;
6. Establish mixed working groups of civil society and government experts as well as academics to work on the issue;
7. Facilitate frequent meetings with civil society groups to get first-hand information on needs to better address the issue of radicalization;
8. Support regional prevention networks to focus differently on regions where radicals are recruited and regions where radicals are settling;
9. Formulate and put forward a whole-of-society approach involving multiple stakeholders to displaying counter-radicalization measures of the government and civil society sector on national and international level;
10. Facilitate a leeway within action plans for civil society to implement new measures as needed without the need of prior clarification with the government, especially when developing strategies aimed at mobilizing actors outside of the mainstream narrative

11. Reinforce the exchange and synergies between intelligence agencies;
12. Establish a criteria catalogue for good governance and transparent administration initiatives;
13. Develop a network of cross-disciplinary and transnational research networks and resource centers for information exchange later leading to monitoring groups in the region and to better understand recruitment methods abroad;

Ethno-nationalist and religious polarization seem to be the main triggers for Islamist radicalization in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the general feeling of discrimination within the Muslim population. To tackle this, it is recommended to:

14. Spread more tolerance amongst society for other all members of society by encouraging people to be embrace differences positively;
15. Facilitate workshops in which people can learn to strengthen their identity based on categories other than religion or ethnic origin;
16. Show cast role models that demonstrate that an individual doesn't need to just fit into one framework or category;
17. Support minority rights and support civil society organizations that work with minority groups;
18. Closely collaborate with civil society organizations to address the support needed by minorities;

As found in the present research, there is a significant loss in prevention possibilities in Indonesia and Malaysia due to a lack of gender equality. To make use of the full potential of women in the prevention of radicalization it is therefore recommended to:

19. Embrace gender equality in (social) media, but also use traditional mediums such as television to maximize the public range of counter-narrative messages, especially to reach remote areas;
20. Provide trainings for religious leaders to advocate gender equality and the empowerment of women;
21. Promote the power of women by providing them more leverage within the government;
22. Support the establishment of "mother schools", where women can learn to detect radical behavior and prevent their family members from engaging in radical behavior;
23. Support the training of female religious leaders, who are found to be able to more adequately address other women and are known to be more moderate in religious practices than their male counterparts;
24. Implement gender equality in national law;
25. Support the education of women on religion and history, highlighting that there are moderate and radical interpretations of narratives;
26. Strengthen and ameliorate the presence and visibility of female security and law enforcement officers;
27. Develop partnerships with women's organizations to pursue common goals;
28. Support and encourage women's involvement in the public sphere;
29. Provide platforms for women to create a space of exchange to share experiences and concerns about the prevention of radicalization;

Misinterpretation of religious texts is often a driver towards radicalization, to prevent this:

30. Increase surveillance and monitoring measures in public spaces and online communication;
31. Support trainings for the civil society about different interpretations of religious and historical narratives, and enable individuals to detect radical signals;
32. Facilitate the establishment of a national helpline, where people can call to inform themselves about moderate Islam and report detected cases of radicalism, and possibilities to prevent the spreading of radical Islam;
33. Encourage the collaboration of religious leaders with the government, by regularly reporting the needs of their community;
34. Imams can help the law enforcement to understand if a narrative is radical or moderate;
35. Support imams to work closely with/in prisons, as radicalization spreads easily in isolated spaces and prisoners are especially vulnerable individuals for receiving radical narratives;
36. Support imams in providing counter narratives to give individuals in the process of radicalization an alternative point of view;

Many individuals get radicalized based on socio-economic grievances, to prevent this:

37. Facilitate workshops to allow individuals to train additional skills, to become more attractive to the job market;
38. Support civil society groups that try to facilitate additional jobs in areas lacking economic opportunities;
39. Encourage micro-financing to allow individuals to start their own businesses;
40. Promote women-inclusive initiatives that are culturally sensitive and inclusive of local/regional norms and traditions;
41. Set-up specific measures/programs to accompany the process of rehabilitation, reintegration, re-assimilation and re-education of (ex-)prisoners;

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7. Appendix

Islamist Radicalization

Khosrokhavar (2017:38) distinguishes between three types of radical Islamists and divides them by regions and the different conflicts Muslims in those regions face. First people from countries with Muslim majority, as the Middle East, Pakistan or Indonesia, their will to establish a transnational Islamic regime (neo-caliphate) started off in protests the current political regime. The second group is formed by people from Western Europe, North America or Australia, where Muslim minorities are struggling with islamophobia and are subject to insults targeting Muslim countries. Similarly, to the first group, they are hopeful to expand the rule of Islam globally. The last type of Islamists are the ones from countries where Muslim nations are being occupied by powers or armies, as the Palestinians by the Israeli army, which oppose the Western support of Israel. (Khosrokhavar 2017: 37- 40)

About 90 percent of Muslims are Sunni, whereas only 10 percent of Muslims are Shia and they have a long history of repression through Sunni. The Shia celebrate every year the Martyrdom of Husayn, who was executed by Calif Yazid in 680. In consequence of this, radicalized Shia appeal to death as a fundamental element of their religiosity to an extreme, where the wish to die is stronger than the desire to live. Shia radicalization is supported by states as Iran, Lebanon and Iraq based on ethnicity. (Khosrokhavar 2017: 41-42)

For radicalized Sunni there is no such extreme desire to die, but the aspiration to cause and the death of a radical individual is just a sacrifice to unfavorable power relations. In contrast to Shia there is no state financially supporting them. In the early twenty-first century Sunni radicalization was mainly exercised by the al-Qaeda network, but during the civil war in Syria, the Shia government tried to marginalize the Sunni, and this gave a new upswing to jihadist groups that are linked to al-Qaeda or compete with it. The largest of these are the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). (Khosrokhavar 2017: 41-43)

Radicalization can be also distinguished between ad extra (directed outward), that means jihadists leave a country to fight in a holy war, and ad intra (directed inward), here domestic terrorists commit attacks in their own country of origin. Another way to distinguish is to differ between national radicalization, which is based on a precise target for example the enemy which occupies the country and transnational radicalization. Here the enemy has many faces and not just located in the national territory. One example for transnational radicalization are the Islamic-nationalists, whose aim is a version of Islam that promotes nationhood (Khosrokhavar 2017: 114-116).

Interview questionnaire

1.   Can you please shortly introduce yourself?

2.   What is your initiative about?

Southeast Asia

3.   What do you know about radicalization processes in Southeast Asia?

4. Is there a region in Southeast Asia, that you would point out as most active in Islamic radicalization?

5. What defers that region from others in Southeast Asia regarding Islamic radicalization?

6. With which methods does this region tackle the problem of Islamic radicalization? Are there different approaches on how men and women can approach the issue?

Radicalization and prevention

7. Is there an historical background that plays an important role in the way the situation is right now, in regard to Islamic radicalization?

8. Does the level of education/prosperity influence the degree/likeness of people getting radicalized?

9. At what moments is it still possible to intervene in the radicalization process of an individual?

10. Do you know any groups of civil society engaged in the prevention of Islamic radicalization or violent extremism? Do they have gendered approaches? Do you know women's initiatives to prevent Islamic violent extremism and radicalization?

11. What mechanisms should Southeast Asian Muslim civil society actors employ in CVE efforts?

12. How can government institutions and civil society groups work together to empower communities of young men and women across the region to fight radicalization that can lead to violent extremism and terrorism?

13. How can we respond strategically to these challenges at the local, national, regional, international, and virtual levels?

14. What role do criminal justice institutions play?

15. In your opinion, what role do women play in the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization? What could be done to involve them further and to exploit their potential in preventing radicalization?

16. How are radicalized females or the process of radicalization of females differ from men?

17. How can women approach radicalized individuals differently from men?

18. Are gendered approaches to prevent radicalization and violent extremism more effective than non gender-specific approaches and why?

19. What policy recommendation would you formulate for the national governments in order to better fight against radicalization or violent extremism?