Cutting through complexity

Evaluating countering violent extremism (CVE)

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Programmes and interventions to counter violent extremism (CVE) have become widespread across Europe. CVE is a relatively new and very complex phenomenon. The term itself has become a – contested – catch phrase for a broad array of interventions targeting different populations at different stages in the radicalization process. The complexity of CVE has resulted in a serious lack of evaluations in the field. Those few evaluations that we can draw upon are very heterogeneous, both in terms of evaluation method and the type of interventions that they address. It is therefore impossible to make any grounded statements on the effectiveness of CVE. Academia thus has little theoretical basis for adequately advising the policy and practitioner community on the best course of action.

We are in need of an evaluation method that can accommodate the complexity of CVE, while providing an authoritative basis for new evaluations and at the same time exposing incorrect or too limited, normative assumptions in CVE policy. We also require a ‘meta-analysis’ method for synthesizing the variety of evaluations available to produce generic insights.

This study applies and further develops realistic evaluation and realist review to provide an evaluation and synthesis method for complex social programmes such as CVE. The end result is heuristic development of the realistic evaluation method which provides a basis for future CVE evaluation studies. The dissertation also provides insights on relevant contexts and mechanisms in CVE, which will help policymakers further develop their CVE programmes.

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Cutting through Complexity
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*Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)*

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Prof. dr. M. Noordegraaf (Universiteit Utrecht)

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# Contents

1 Introduction
   1.1 The complexity of violent extremism and challenges for evaluation  
   1.2 Policymaking and societal debate: The repercussions of neglecting complexity  
   1.3 CVE as an essentially contestable concept  
   1.4 Realistic evaluation and realist review  
   1.5 Research focus and approach  
   1.6 My role as a researcher  

2 Countering Violent Extremism: A Realist Review for Assessing What Works, for Whom, in What Circumstances and How?  
   2.1 Introduction  
   2.2 Evaluation methods and CVE  
   2.3 Realist review  
   2.4 Realist CVE synthesis  
   2.5 Discussion and conclusion  

3 Lessons from a Realist Review of Countering Violent Extremism: Development of Refined Heuristic Guidelines for Complex Social Programmes  
   3.2 Heuristic guidelines for realist review of complex social programmes  
   3.3 Applying realist review to CVE  
      3.3.1 Step 1: Clarify the scope of the review  
      3.3.2 Step 2: Searching for primary CVE studies  
      3.3.3 Step 3: Quality appraisal  
      3.3.4 Step 4: Extracting the data  
      3.3.5 Step 5: Synthesizing the CVE studies  
      3.3.6 Step 6: Dissemination of findings  
   3.4 Adapted heuristic guidelines for realist review for complex social problems  
   3.5 Conclusion
4 Supporting Families of Foreign Fighters: A Realistic Approach for Measuring Effectiveness

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Family support practices across Europe

4.3 Measuring the effectiveness of family support

4.4 Folk theories on family support: Lessons learnt

4.5 Developing a theory on family support for empirical testing

4.6 Conclusion and discussion

5 Exit Programmes for Female Jihadists: A Proposal for Conducting a Realistic Evaluation of the Dutch Approach

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Definitions

5.3 Theoretical model (step 1)

5.4 Hypotheses on C-M-Os for exit programmes

5.5 Multi-method data collection and analysis (steps 2 and 3)

5.6 Conclusion: Refined programme theory (step 4) and reflection

6 Evidence-based Informed Policy Design for Support Groups for Families of Foreign Fighters: Ex Ante Application of Realistic Evaluation and Review

Amy-Jane Gielen and Annebregt Dijkman

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Realist review to develop a theoretical model

6.2.1 Step 1: Scope of the review

6.2.2 Steps 2 and 3: Searching for primary CVE studies and quality appraisal

6.2.3 Step 4: Extracting the data

6.2.4 Steps 5 and 6: Synthesizing the support group literature and dissemination

6.3 Ex ante realistic evaluation: Methodology

6.4 Ex-ante realistic evaluation: Relevant contexts, mechanisms and outcomes for support groups for families of foreign fighters

6.4.1 Contexts (C) of group-based support for families of foreign fighters

Characteristics of the target audience

Content of group-based support

Composition of the group

Group size