What does radicalisation mean for children's rights in different regions?

With terrorism making the news daily, government responses to fear of 'radicalisation' are resulting in excessive measures that infringe human rights. These affect children in particular ways, but how is the term 'radicalisation' understood in different regions and historical contexts? Here we look at how it is used and what it means for children in the United Kingdom, Francophone countries, the Middle East and North Africa and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

This document is evolving rather than comprehensive. If you have relevant information, contact info@crin.org.

Regional & historical nuances

UNITED KINGDOM

1. Use of the word

The word 'radicalisation' has myriad meanings - not least an association with an 18th century British political movement, the principles of which are still the basis for the modern political system.[1] However, in recent years this word has almost exclusively been used in the context of terrorism.

The United Kingdom's Prevent programme has been at the forefront of promoting the use of the term radicalisation worldwide. Prevent is one of the four Ps that make up the government's post 9/11 counter-terrorism strategy known as Contest: Prepare for attacks, Protect the public, Pursue the attackers and Prevent their radicalisation in the first place. In this context radicalisation is defined in law as "the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups".

Following on from this 'extremism' is defined in the 2011 Prevent strategy (and the 2015 revised guidance) as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs", including calls for the death of the UK's forces at home or abroad (paragraph 7).

This includes non-violent extremism in its remit, as the government claims that such activity "can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists then exploit". The use of this category of extremism may be being interpreted in an overly broad fashion, as members of the UK's Green Party are currently being monitored for extremism by police.

[1] A look at how the term has been used historically in Britain highlights the difficulty of basing policy on such a broad term. Radicalism was a philosophical movement first associated with Jeremy Bentham (1748-1833) and others grounded in the belief that men are prompted in their behaviour by the desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain, and that the purpose of all legislation should be to 'promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. This at the time meant as little state interference as possible i.e. free market principles, etc., though this philosophy evolved to include aspects of socialism.

The government has also come under fire for a lack of a clear definition of extremism in its plans for a new civil order regime to tackle extremism announced in May. Civil rights groups say this risks outlawing any political expression that does not reflect mainstream or popular views. They add that Britain already has a raft of laws to tackle the incitement of terrorist acts, as well as racial and religious hatred. It is also unclear whether the plans will include 'extremist disruption orders' or 'banning orders' originally planned. Under these, police would be able to apply to the high court for an order to restrict the ill-defined 'harmful activities' of an ill-defined 'extremist' individual.

Enforcement of new civil measures against non-violent extremism has even been called into question by the police's Prevent lead, Chief Constable of Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Simon Cole, who said the plans were unenforceable and voiced concerns about the creation of 'thought police' through the legislation.

2. What does 'radicalisation' mean for children?

The use of the terms radicalisation and extremism affects children in particular because the government document 'Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015' states that schools

"… have a duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Being drawn into terrorism includes not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists exploit." (paragraph 64)

Schools are expected to be able to demonstrate their compliance with this duty, appropriate to the level of risk of radicalisation in their institution. Media reports have even brought to light a pilot project to use 'anti-radicalisation' software in schools to collect and retain data on students, which flags up certain trigger words such as "jihadi bride" and "YODO" (which stands for you only die once). In April 2016 the FBI announced plans to follow suit.

As well as the duty imposed on schools to report children vulnerable to radicalisation there are calls for 'out-of-school settings' to be more stringently monitored, with the current government suggestion necessitating that any out-of-school club hosting children for more than 'between six to eight hours' register and potentially submit to inspections. It has since been clarified that this would not target Sunday schools or one-off meetings, but concerns have been raised that it could be an attempt to target Madrassas without admitting such an intention explicitly.

Prevent's rules are meant as an extension of schools' responsibilities to safeguard their students from harm (which also include sexual, physical and emotional abuse). However, the vague nature of the term radicalisation and the consequences of not reporting have created a climate of fear in which children's free speech is restricted and in which their curiosity can be punished.

Evidence of this in practice was given to Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights, when Karon McCarthy, Prevent officer and Assistant Principal at Chobham Academy expressed her views on the matter. She explained that the lack of confidence staff had and a lack of guidance from the government contributed to over-reporting of 'radicalisation' in schools, adding that further legislation would not improve the situation. Watch the full

recorded debate. Indeed, the National Union of Teachers has backed a motion calling for Prevent to be scrapped.

Evidence supplied by David Anderson Q.C. (the government's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation) to the Home Affairs Committee suggested that Prevent had become a serious source of grievances and the UK's National Union of Teachers has officially backed calls for the programme to be scrapped.

CRIN's research has shown that young Muslims are disproportionately affected by Channel referrals under the Prevent duty, with almost 40 percent of referrals of under-18s relating to Muslim children.

Beyond the school setting, in October 2015 the Prime Minister announced that parents of children up to and including 17 years old with concerns that their child may travel to Syria to join IS would be allowed to apply to cancel their child's passport. The Quilliam Foundation and The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, however, have emphasised the importance of taking a family based approach to the problem, saying that families often travel together to Syria. In August 2015 the UK saw the first case of a girl being removed from her home because the judge concluded she was 'radicalised' by her parents.

Read more in Eroding Trust: The UK's Prevent Counter-Extremism Strategy in Health and Education, Open Society Justice Initiative, October 2016

FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES

1. **Use of the word**

France/Belgium

Change in use
As in English, the term for radicalisation in French has a much wider meaning than that to which it is currently restricted. In recent years, especially in the past year, the word has almost exclusively been used in the context of terrorism - a particular meaning of the word has swallowed the whole word.

Political use
As in other regions, this phenomenon has led to a lack of clarity about what the terms 'radicalisation' or 'radicalised' describe. For instance, in February 2016 a French newspaper announced the presence of "8,250 radicalised individuals in France", but what these figures actually represented was the number of people reported as having been radicalised on the telephone line dedicated to reporting such cases.

In France, the Prime Minister made a deeply worrying statement after the November 2015 attacks, suggesting a refusal to even define the meaning behind words such as radicalisation or jihadism.[2] No definitions or explanations of a phenomenon justify a response based on security measures alone (such a response indicates that "we do not understand this phenomenon, we do not want to understand it, so we will use force alone to counter it,

[2] *"Explaining jihadism is almost already wanting to find ways to excuse it".* On March 20th 2016, he finally backed away and said we shall seek to understand it.

because all other measures would require trying to understand").

In the French context, while radicalisation is used to describe many situations (from individuals accused of being 'apologists for terrorism' to individuals who go to Syria), the government 'deradicalisation' measures primarily target individuals returning from Syria, and programmes are delivered in prison. Outside of prisons, programmes are conducted by NGOs, with or without a government mandate.[3] Conversely, radicalisation prevention measures target a broad sweep of people.
Words matter, and the vague or absent definition of what is radicalisation translates into difficulties to shape 'deradicalisation' or prevention: who is best placed to work on these issues, who is actually working on these issues, who is the target and how impact is measured. According to some this leads to a complete lack of transparency on such programmes.

In **Quebec**, slightly more precise wording is used: '*prévention de la radicalisation menant à la violence*' (preventing radicalisation **leading to violence**).

In **Belgium**, the ombudsperson for children suggests using the term 'violent extremism'. After asserting that he thought there was no radicalisation issue, but rather individual situations that explode because of wider societal issues - he faced heavy criticism in Parliament. He was accused by some MPs of overstepping his professional duty to show reserve, accusations that demonstrate the sensitivity of the topic - and of the word 'radicalisation' - in Belgium.

Legal use
In **France**, there is no legal definition of the term. However it is used in the context of intelligence: there is a secret file on "persons reported for prevention of terrorist radicalisation". The criteria for names to be added to this list are unclear. According to a newspaper, the names of 1,800 children feature in the file.

The files of other intelligence services list more names, although information about if and how many minors this concerns is hard to come by.

West Africa

In **West Africa,** a shift has occurred. Terrorism used to be treated primarily as a military concern, in all likelihood this is at least in part because African countries are still perceived as a field operation for foreign countries (for instance in Mali, when extremist groups moved south, the response was solely military, first with Malian forces, then with French forces joining the fray).

As for Boko Haram, children are mainly depicted as victims in the media (they are victims of kidnapping, slavery, used as suicide bombers). While this may be positive, it masks the fact that minors arrested by authorities are treated like adults when they are not perceived as victims. Depicting children as innocent victims without addressing radicalisation means that radicalised children are not considered as children. The "all children are innocent" current depiction of the situation is too 'white' to not hide a 'black and white' (good children vs bad children) understanding of the situation (this opposition is not publicly acknowledged, but exists in reality. See below).

[3] A first organisation was mandated by the government, but recently resigned. The government has announced its intention to publish a new call for tenders.

Now, governments are beginning to perceive violent extremism as an 'internal', societal issue, too. Nigeria has set up deradicalisation programmes, and various countries are expressing fear that their youth are at risk of being radicalised by extremists groups. This leads to other questions and means the response cannot be purely military. The question now is: will the response be based almost exclusively on security/surveillance measures or more diversified? It remains to be seen how the debate on radicalisation, its roots and solutions will develop in West Africa. For now, it appears that violent extremism has a wide variety of causes West Africa, depending on each country's historical and current context.

2. What does 'radicalisation' mean for children?

France

As mentioned, radicalisation is used to describe many situations, from individuals accused of being 'apologists for terrorism'[4] to individuals going to Syria. According to the Prime Minister, 18 French children are in Syria. They face detention if they return. According to Mediapart, 80 children have left for Syria (this includes children who came back, those who died and those who remain). 1,800 children are listed as 'radicalised individuals' (see above), but there is no information about what they did to end up on this list.

West Africa

Boko Haram

Nigerian authorities now have 'deradicalisation' programmes for adults, but there is very little information about children. From the media coverage, it seems that where children are concerned, Boko Haram uses mainly kidnapping and forced recruitment to then keep children as slaves or use them as suicide bombers. But this should be monitored, because

- there is a lack of care for victims who manage to escape
- Not much is known about how children considered as radicalised are being treated by the authorities (see above). Amnesty has reported that boys died in detention after being arrested by the authorities.

Other groups

Terrorist attacks in West Africa target either the military in post-conflict situations (for instance in the North of Mali), or foreign interests (for instance attacks by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb against hotels in capital cities[5]). As noted above, youth radicalisation is starting to be perceived as an issue, but there is a lack of research on the extent of the phenomenon, the underlying causes and a lack of data on the effects of counter-terrorist measures.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

[4] According to Amnesty International, "In 2015 French courts handed down 385 sentences for "apology of terrorism", *a third of which were against minors*. Definitions of what constitutes "apology" are extremely broad." (emphasis added). See: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/01/eu-orwellian-counter-terrorism-laws-stripping-rights-under-guise-of-defending-them/.

[5] Geopolis, "Côte d'Ivoire : attaque de Grand-Bassam, un mode opératoire signé AQMI", 14 March 2016 http://geopolis.francetvinfo.fr/attaque-de-grand-bassam-abidjan-une-cible-et-un-mode-operatoire-signe-aqmi-100283.

1. Use of the term

The use of the term 'radical' in MENA countries derives from Radical Islamism - a modern political ideology developed by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s. This ideology is completely separate from the Islamic faith, and has the primary goal of imposing an Islamic state based on a selective interpretation of Islam. It envisages violence - or jihadism - as a necessary means to achieve such a state.[6]

The word 'Radical' in the Arabic language is exactly the same as the English word and carries the same meaning. In general use, e.g. in the media and among politicians, NGOs and the general public, the terms radical, extreme, terrorist, Islamic fundamentalist and the Takfiri groups[7] are used vaguely and interchangeably; in academic research radical or radical extremist are more common.

2. The rise of 'radicalisation' in the Middle East & North Africa

Radical Islam further evolved from its origins in the political discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1979 when the 'jihadists'[8] - actively encouraged and trained as part of American foreign policy - joined Afghanistan in its war against Russia. This development laid the foundations for Al-Qaida during the 1980s. The emergence of radical groups also has a sectarian dimension reflected in the targeting of Sunnites, especially in Syria and Iraq. Islamic State - a group more radical than al-Qaeda - in particular arises from this dynamic which reflects the dominant thinking of a new generation of Salafi Jihadists.

Studies suggest that poverty and unemployment are not a major cause of radicalisation in the MENA region; for example many extremists who fought in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, did not suffer poverty. Motivations are instead thought to be primarily political; including the search for identity and recognition, political and economic marginalisation, opposition to secular nationalist ideologies, corrupt governments, and weak education systems.

Respected writers, such as Muhammad Abu Ruman, point in particular to the corruption among regimes in the region as the main driver of the violence overwhelming Arab societies. He asserts that if democratic regimes were in place striving for social justice and promoting respect for the diversity of religions, beliefs and political views, extreme groups who depend on the dynamics of internal conflicts based on identity and religion would never have emerged.

3. What does 'radicalisation' mean for children?

Recruitment

IS is developing a new generation of recruits in children, especially in Al-Raqqah in Syria. They use a range of methods to recruit children beyond those who grow up in the "Islamic State" and those who are abducted. These include indoctrinating children through a new school curriculum which instils in children a 'better understanding' of Islam and reaching out to children in other regions through social media. In addition, children begin compulsory military training from as young as 12 years old - or even earlier. Some children have been

[6] Read more in a speech by Maajid Nawaz, the director of Quilliam addressing a special Policy Forum luncheon at The Washington Institute, 5 January 2011. Available at: http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/events/maajid-nawaz-speaks-at-the-washington-institute/.

[7] Groups who accuse other Muslims of apostasy

[8] Those participating in a military movement rooted in radical political Islam.

encouraged or forced to witness public executions or even participate in these executions or carry out suicide bombings; girls have been sexually enslaved and married. Children who refuse to participate are tortured or killed.

Radical movements have not established programmes to improve social and economic conditions for people, including children, in the region; their sole approach is to adopt violence as a means to achieve its central doctrine[9] (the promotion of a culture of death and suicide to eradicate others in the name of jihad and to secure a 'return of the Caliphate'[10]).

Education

A number of MENA countries are seeking to combat extremism and sectarianism through the education system. Jordan's Ministry of the Interior is supporting a strengthening of the values of creativity, the art of persuasion, acceptance of others and reinforce positive behaviour.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has sought to change the curriculum to this end since 2014. Kuwait is also applying such an approach following the recommendations of the latest Conference of Education Ministers in the Gulf states, held in October 2014.

In Egypt, the Ministry of Education and the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf called for a review of the curriculum of religious materials in order to counter violence and extremism.
In 2016, Morocco's King instructed the government to review the curriculum of the religious education throughout the various Moroccan education levels, in order to spread tolerance and moderation.

However, many cultural and political Arab communities emphasise that while school curricula, although are partly responsible for the emergence of terrorism and extremist thinking, they are not the key factor in the spreading this phenomenon. Several generations have studied the same curriculum with a different outcome. In addition, the formation of "ISIS" and other terrorist groups included a large number of those who came from European and Western countries, as well as from Tunisia where a secular educational system dominates.

Furthermore, Jordanian writer Dalal Salameh has commented that while words related to extremism may be absent from the country's new curriculum, they are rooted in the old mentality. The new books set for six- and seven-year-olds for example state that the holy books of other monotheistic religions are "corrupt" and that peaceful coexistence only happens among Muslims. The problem is not in associating these values with Islam, but rather in the connection established between these values and Islam to the exclusion of all other beliefs.

Legislation

A wave of anti-terrorism laws were passed in Arab countries in the wake of the terrorist attacks that took place in several countries in the region, including Jordan, Egypt and

[9] This is evidenced in the the burning of the December 2014 capture of the Royal Jordanian Air Force pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh, enslavement of Yazidi women in Northern Iraq, the act of beheading prisoners the taking of the religious *jizyah* tax from Christians in eastern Syria, to lengthy discussions on the newly instituted Islamic economic system set up by ISIS including its minted currency - based on the - intrinsic values of gold, silver and copper, executions and legal punishments (*hadd*).

[10] On June 19, 2014, IS announced a self-proclaimed Caliphate in an audio recording entitled "This is the Promise of God" (*hatha wa'adu Allah*), via its official speaker Abu Muhammad al-Adnani.

Morocco, among others. These have been roundly criticised.

The main common features of these laws are that they are overly broad, lack fair trial standards; include political activities such as terrorist acts and target journalists and freedom of expression.

The Egyptian law, which was approved by the president in August 2015, was condemned for targeting the press in Article 35, because it was considered to promote blackmailing journalists who oppose officials. In addition, the vague wording of the law may consider civil disobedience, for example, a terrorist act. A number of Egyptian NGOs said that this law could fuel motivations to commit acts of extremism, terrorism

In Saudi Arabia, the penal system and its financing have been criticised because of the ambiguity of the definition of terrorism, the absence of fair trial guarantees and giving the Minister of Interior absolute authority, superseding the role of courts in the arrest and release of suspects.

In Iraq, where the anti-terrorism law was approved in 2005, the law included only six articles. It is criticised for being too vague and includes the death penalty as a possible sentence.

Similar criticisms were levelled at the Moroccan law which was approved in 2003: this is overly broad and conflates common crimes with terrorism. The Tunisian law which was approved in 2015 neglects fair trial guarantees and gives the police extra powers. The Libyan law, which was adopted in 2014, has also been criticised. Although it does not include the death penalty, it too defines extremism too broadly, for example including secessionist calls and harming the national unity.

EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA (EECA)

1. Use of the term

The term ‘radicalisation’ is often used synonymously with ‘extremism’, but there is an essential difference in the content of these ideas and how they are implemented.

The term ‘radicalisation’ is determined by socio-political ideas and actions aimed at a fundamental, decisive - ‘radical’ - change in existing social and political institutions. Therefore radicalism, unlike extremism, is ideological rather than action-oriented. Extremism, on the other hand, focuses on the methods and means of struggle.

However, the terms radicalisation and extremism are often conflated in EECA countries by the media, NGOs and politicians. For example, in a quick scan of information for an event on the issue of radicalisation in Kazakhstan, the following terms were used to refer to the same subject:

- radical Islam
- violent radicalism
- Islamic extremism
- Islamic radicalism
- religious radicalisation

‘Radicalisation’ as such is not defined in the region’s law, only “extremism”.

The legal definition of extremism in Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan is very broad with no clear distinction between “terrorism” and “extremism”. In particular, “extremist activity” could be everything from the actual terrorist activity, a potential threat to national security, incitement to discrimination, hatred and violence based on national pride or other discriminatory grounds. As such, it can technically be used against not only terrorist groups but also those with other opinions and activities that are perfectly legal.

- ➔ The definition of extremist religious organisations is stated after public organisations, implying a link (Tajikistan)
- ➔ The definition of "extremist material" implies that the State has the authority to prevent access to any material which it does not approve of (Kyrgyzstan and Belarus)

2. **The rise of ‘radicalisation’ in EECA**

As in the Middle East and North Africa, ‘radicalisation’ has always been associated with Radical Political Islam. The breakdown of the USSR played a crucial role in the spread of ‘radicalisation’ across EECA countries. When socialist ideals collapsed they brought financial and ideological stability crashing down with them. This ideological vacuum in Russia was quickly filled in certain regions of Russia by Salafists and Wahhabists - first in the Northern Caucasus (Chechnya and Dagestan), then other Muslim regions, and lastly in the former Soviet Republics. Two Chechen wars in the 1990s also played an important role in “radicalising” the Northern Caucasus.

The attraction of the so-called Islamic State in the region is based on the unrealised desire for political and social changes at home. Rich or poor, educated or uneducated, young or mature, male or female - there is no typical portrait of a supporter of the "Islamic state." But research suggests that the most fertile ground for recruitment is an environment in which divisions of friends and foes flourish (such as children from our district v. those from other schools).

However, human rights activists operating in the region believe that the fight against terrorism and extremism is a convenient pretext for authoritarian governments to suppress political opponents, civil activists and dissidents. Young people born after the fall of the Soviet Union have high hopes for social change and are more actively involved in protests than any previous generation, consequently, the youth of the country are seen as a challenge to the political status quo. Analysts believe that repression by the authorities has so far failed to yield the expected results, and instead fuelled the inclination to turn to extreme views, including among relatives of those arrested on suspicion of terrorism and extremism.

3. What does ‘radicalisation’ mean for children?

Central Asian citizens in Syria currently number some 500 **Uzbeks**, 360 **Turkmen**, 400 **Tajiks** (50 of whom were accompanied by their wives and children), 400 **Kazakh,** 500 **Kyrgyz** nationals (including 130 children) and 100 **Georgian** nationals (from Pankisi).

Since 2014, there have been several cases when the teenagers from muslim region of Pankisi in **Georgia** went to Syria to join ISIS, and in April 2015 a 17-year-old girl was sent to Syria as a bride, with the consent of her parents.

The most recent estimate of the number of **Russian** citizens involved in the ranks of the "Islamic State" is edging towards several thousands (in 2015 about 270 children from North Caucasus left of their own accord or were taken by others to Syria).

Of those recruited, the majority are migrant workers and their families, for example, just 20 percent of the **Tajiks** involved went to Syria directly from Tajikistan, while 80 percent travelled from Russia. Another explanation here is that in Tajikistan Internet is restricted, slow and has very low coverage, while Russia has a relatively “open” internet which provides more fertile ground for extremist recruiters.

In 2015, an IS training camp was uncovered in Turkey, where 50 foreigners were present. Of these, 24 were children from **Uzbekistan** and **Tajikistan** about to be sent to Syria.

Three girls from **Chechnya** also made the news when they extorted money from IS recruiters through social media by asking them to send money for plane tickets to Turkey.

At the moment, the government’s main tool to prevent radicalisation among young people in Central Asian countries is the education system. For example **Tajikistan** recently introduced religious classes in schools to impart the main principles of Islam. Religious education has been taught in **Kazakhstan** since 2009, but the Ministry of Education and Science is now launching new series of schoolbooks which will reflect the modern realities of religious radicalism. In **Uzbekistan** meanwhile teachers hold ‘information hours’, aimed at preventing extremism and terrorism; they also control attendance at school or sports clubs by students from problematic families. However, these efforts fail to consider marginalised children who do not attend school, who live in the suburbs or work in the markets or construction sites.

In **Russia**, from which the majority of citizens who join IS from EECA countries are drawn, Children's Rights Commissioner for the President, Pavel Astakhov, is calling for efforts to reach children who do not go to school, but may be receiving unofficial education provided by radicalised groups in the regions. He also points out that this approach should be rehabilitative in nature rather than focused on law enforcement.

Some NGOs, for example Information Foundation for Religious Affairs “Areal” in **Kazakhstan** has a helpline, but this service is for everyone, it does not specialise in supporting children. Educational programmes to prevent radicalisation have emerged in **Kazakhstan**, **Tajikistan** and **Kyrgyzstan**, mostly established by NGOs, which target adults as well as young people.

In other developments, draft bills in **Russia** and **Kyrgyzstan** propose setting a minimum age of 14 years for the prosecution of crimes related to terrorism and religious extremism. Children are also banned from attending mosques in the majority of Central Asian countries.

Children usually leave for Syria with their parents or at least the blessing of their parents (for example, to marry) and are therefore not portrayed in the media as individuals who make their own choices. A media scan suggests that children have not run away to Syria of their own accord unlike cases reported in western European countries. The recent proposal in Kyrgyzstan, though, to set a minimum age of 14 years for the prosecution of crimes related to terrorism and religious extremism, indicates a shift in that radicalised children are being considered as adults rather than children.

For more information, see recommendations (in Russian) to reduce the threat of radicalisation in the region.