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UNDERSTANDING DRIVERS AND NARRATIVES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

Despite the prevalence of violent extremism, the escalating violence, and increased recruitment of people into violent extremist groups, very little research is available in Afghanistan, focusing on underlying reasons for extremist groups' recruitment and the specific narratives of violent extremists use as recruiters and the recruits. This research aims to develop a deeper understanding of the recruits' profile of violent extremism and how extremist groups use various narratives to recruit new people. The aim of this research is, based on this understanding, to suggest ways of transforming these dynamics and start to dismantle the systems that contribute to violent extremism in Afghanistan.

This research studied the factors that contribute to a person's radicalization and the adoption of violence. More specifically, the research included a study of 1) the profile of the recruits and the recruiters of violent extremists; 2) the underlying reasons for being recruited; 3) the strategic narratives of the recruiters that convince the recruits to join the extremist groups and the stories of the recruits regarding their vulnerabilities that made them susceptible for recruitment, and 4) the policies and programmes that are available to counter violent extremism.

The theories this research relied on included the poverty theory, the game theory, the conspiracy theory, the relative deprivation theory, and the greed and grievance theory. The research design was qualitative and utilized a case study approach utilizing in-depth review of several cases, getting feedback, hearing views of specialists, and collecting information on a relatively few individuals and within a limited setting. The research involved 38 people that included active combatants, ex-combatants, civil society members, government staff, politicians, and researchers.

The significant recommendations this research provides for the government, the international community, politicians, academia, and CSOs include, but are not limited to: the creation of a national narrative with a worldview perspective for Afghans that focuses on the protection of national interests; the establishment of a governance system in accordance with Shariah law; the strengthening of a stable and accountable government with control over all territories; the creation of substitute religious narrative to counter violent extremism; the promotion of moderate Islam; the development of a comprehensive P/CVE strategy and its implementation with the support of CSOs and CBOs; the facilitation of education and employment opportunities for youth; the promotion of peace public awareness; the establishment of government's proper control and monitoring from education institutions; the integration of P/CVE in the school and university curriculums; government's registration of mosques, investment on madrasahs inside Afghanistan; and integration of school and madrasahs to fill the gap between the two schools of thoughts.