

Review

Appraising Women's Participation in the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism in Cameroon

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Abstract

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The presentation will focus on the situation of participation of women in preventing and countering violent extremism in Cameroon. Here will be an overview of the national situation in the say specific areas of study. Additionally, there will be emphasized on the links between the national people daily life and the subsequent impact on economic, social and cultural development. The survey did around the participation of women give the feeble rate. The rate gives the low weight on women who in their majority are less represented indecision-making. For that low-rate reason, this category of the population is highly exposed to all these forms of violence because their decision-making power is quite minimal and they have limited bargaining power because of the patriarchal society in which violence against women and children fits as tolerated cultural practice. Despite considerable improvement in the perception of women and children resulting in greater respect for their rights, some countries in the world still seeing them as the object, for women as a family asset and an object of pleasure and procreation. These are few consequences link to the negative impact of women participation. In many poor countries we have to do with violated relationships with some categories of populations. These categories are always victim of many types of violence because of their respective social status and sometime as we said early a cultural barrier. We have these types and manifestation of violence.

Keywords: Extremism, Participation, Prevention, Violence, Women

INTRODUCTION

The workshop is proceeding at a special difficult time. After five years of the terrorist attacks, the nation found itself faced with unprecedented threats. Terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction seriously undermine national security. Hotbeds of historical and identity in various regions of the nation are still smoldering. The situation of the world is far from stable indeed. We should not forget that the reality and philosophy that wherever there is killing, we are all being killed. The multicultural, multiconnection, multi-linguistic reality has allowed the people of Cameroon to become fully aware of the necessity for dialogue. Each individual is and should be respected as a person,

because he or she is a pillar and holder of human rights and freedoms. He or she is the cause and reason for the realization of all the freedom and dignity of the human society in general. A free society can be created only upon human existence of free individuals, who are sovereign in choosing their political status and in following their own economic, social and cultural development. The imperative of affirming the principal of dialogue is more present than ever before. It is a fact that hierarchical relations that would put some above others, or that would affirm some and discredit others cannot and must not be established. There are no superior or inferior cultures, there are no superior or inferior civili-

zation, and there are no superior or inferior tribes, races, ethnic groups, languages or religions. This is because there are no superior or inferior human beings. This is the reason why we must accept the essential equality of each culture tradition and recognize the value of each civilizing experience as an invaluable and integral part of universal human values. Common task can be achieved and the highest ideals of the actual times followed, not through assimilation but through integration, and not through force but through dialogue. This is the reason why dialogue is the corner stone forward for mankind, who needs to live, aware of the starry sky above him and the moral law within him. Throughout all this assertion, women in Cameroon have understood that, we have all the necessary elements for creating a culture of peace, while providing safe and nurture environment for all of the peoples of this earth; yet we find half of the world population living unless than two dollars a day. We have intelligence, yet we lack wisdom. We have science and technology, yet much scientific endeavor is dedicated to destruction and weapons, rather than benefiting humankind. Medical marvels are inequitably distributed leaving many people to die of otherwise treatable diseases. We understand human development and the needs for nutrition and healthful living conditions, yet children the world over are starving by the millions. We know enough about psychology to recognize the roots of hatreds and fears, yet we continue to find ourselves manipulated into the dangerous and outmoded, "we/they" manner of thinking, rather than considering our whole human family, and acknowledging that we are alike than we are different. We understand and even sign declarations agreeing that there are universal Human Rights and inherent freedoms, yet somehow the manifestation interests of power and moneyed interests, and the reversion to militarism as a method of problem solving, continue to defy all logic and prevent us from creating the peaceful society we all long for. that have such a profound impact on human well being. If the heads of corporations and governments financial and military institutions, and other vested interests that have such a profound impact on human wellbeing, would consider and incorporate values into decision making, then we would begin to see a moral awakening. We all have various values instilled in us by our upbringing and our life's experiences; we have many different belief systems; we have many different ethnic, racial and religious traditions, but the values which most of us share are those that ensure safety and happiness for our loved ones and ourselves. If these values became the criteria by which we evaluate our human well-being and became the primary focus of human activity, putting aside short-term self-centered gains, as well as re-thinking old enmities and fears, there might be a happier future for all of humankind. Violent extremism increases fragility, it weakens communities, and it fuels migration. We should agree that when security authority need to respond, we

have in fact already failed in our logging for peaceful existence. When we were forced to respond through security measure, it was because we have failed to deal with the factors that lead first from alienation to radicalization, and then from radicalization to acts of mass violence. Women NGO's representatives in Cameroon widening in the areas of actions society's knowledge of the subject.

Understanding the Research Problem

Terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization have been liberally used as concepts in the post-9/11 environment. However, assumptions within the use of these concepts has led to a reductive focus on women. This causes tensions in terms of the role of government in producing national security initiatives that not only protect its borders but also protect the minority of women who are citizens.

However, the literature on violent extremism, radicalization, and terrorism, countering violent extremism and social cohesion largely focuses on women communities. It would be a mistake however, for government to take a narrow view of what violent extremism or terrorism might look like. For instance, in the various terrorist related cases heard in Cameroon it is worth noting that at least one of these cases (Vinayagamoorthy and Anor v DPP (C'th) (2007) VSC 265 (17 July 2007) was not related to women extremism or their networks. Thus, there is no reason to ignore that other ideological, ethnic or religious groups may also pose a threat to Cameroon national security.

Structural overview of the report

The report explores various definitions, conceptualizations and theorization of violent extremism, terrorism, radicalization, countering violent extremism and social cohesion. Problems arising from a lack of clarity and consensus in the literature are considered.

The report examines also the root causes and consequences of violent extremism, terrorism and radicalization. It addresses this by examining various disciplinary views and approaches. These include: politics and sociology, socio-economic approaches, psychology, and media and communications. In turn, within each of these disciplines various views and approaches exist which will be covered according to the literature review findings.

The report provides indeed an overview of the literature on ways of responding to violent extremism. It does this by identifying and describing strategies that emerge from offensive, defensive, ideological, communicative, political and social policy frameworks for countering violent extremism.

And the report examines literature that critiques approaches to countering violent extremism on the basis that strategies can be counterproductive by eroding democratic principles and social cohesion, increasing radicalization and through the incitement of fear, conflict and violence.

At last, the report will provide a number of research and policy recommendations that have emerged as a result of the literature review undertaken herein.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research team that conducted this project was made up of social scientists from the University of the University of Yaounde II Soa. All researchers have significant experience interrogating large bodies of research literature and metadata for the purpose of understanding various social phenomena relevant to countering violent extremism. This research team was coordinated by the Asmac (Advanced School of mass Communication) regular research meetings were organized to workshop key findings.

The literature was searched using internet search engines such as Google, Google Scholar, and electronic databases. The databases were both disciplinary (sociology, politics, history, psychology, criminology, policing, law and religious studies) as well as interdisciplinary (security and terrorism studies, globalization etc.). Combinations of the key words 'countering violent extremism', 'violent extremism', 'terrorism', 'social cohesion', 'radicalization' and 'deradicalisation' were used for the searches. This process yielded over hundred articles.

To select articles for the literature review, purposeful sampling strategies were used. The logic of this sampling approach is to deliberately select data sources that are information rich (Patton, 2002). Information rich articles were those "from which one can learn a great deal about matters of importance and therefore worthy of in-depth study" (Patton, 2002: 242). To determine whether an article was information rich, all the abstracts generated by the searches were read to ascertain the level of relevance according to: heuristic significance; currents, issues and discourses surrounding countering violent extremism; applicability to the Australian context; critique of existing literature and suggestions for future research; countering violent extremism strategies and policy implications.

Through this methodology many relevant articles were selected. The literature reviewed comprises unclassified material including academic journal articles, articles archived on websites, government policy and non-government reports and books. The majority however are academic journal articles.

Communicative approaches to countering violent extremism

'New' forms of violent extremism are understood as having entered into communicative, information and symbolic terrain and action (Chowdhury and Krebs, 2010; Richmond, 2003; Schmid, 2001) and the relationship between the media and terrorism is often characterized as symbiotic (Cvrtila and Perešin, 2009; Frey and Luechinger, 2008). Following a violent attack, the media is a strategic tool that terrorists depend on for generating publicity and creating and spreading an atmosphere of fear (Cvrtila and Perešin, 2009; Frey and Luechinger, 2008; Kalu, 2009; Shapiro, 2002) (Also see part 2: Media and Communications). However, violent extremists and terrorist organization also use the media for "critical processes such as recruiting, training, propaganda, planning, surveillance, and coordination and communication" (Pollard, 2007: 236).

Communicative approaches to countering violent extremism aim to disrupt the narratives and representations generated by terrorists and promote counter-narratives and representations of the 'west' through public diplomacy strategies to win over the 'hearts and minds' of real and potential constituents and sympathizers. In this 'war of ideas', states and violent extremists struggle over legitimacy and credibility upon a communicative terrain (Chowdhury and Krebs,

This communicative terrain is situated within the context of what is understood as an 'information society', characterized by global communication networks and new media. As a result 'new' approaches to countering violent extremism and terrorism are increasingly oriented to networked communication technologies such as the internet and World Wide Web (T. Stevens, 2010). In the UK for example, the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) is "actively exploring the potential of new media platforms like blogs and social networking sites to propagate counter-narratives as part of the broader countering violence extremism project" and have "commissioned specific research on audience segmentation, online behaviors of women.

Throughout many strategies such as: -campaigns to raise awareness that involves disseminate information on the problem and encouraging women to break the silence and deprivation with the help of various media; -Improving the infrastructure that leads to provide equipment, setting up drop-in centers, crises lines and centers where women could find someone to talk to; -mediation, that ensures the efficiency of programmes set up to fight or prevent violence. It has taken several forms, for example, national mediation, also be under taken by women organizations. Relatively to trends and characteristics of violent extremism, it was clear enough that:

- efforts prevent violent extremism had been acknowl-

edged the primacy of politics political decision and development at national and local levels as key drivers of violent extremism;

- efforts prevent violent extremism was profoundly counterproductive because they curtail basic political human civil rights;

-They did avoid to focus only on the religious extremism to consider the fuel range of extremism discourse and behavior;

-they acknowledged people that, violent extremism is not new, but the challenges faced today are more complex owing to globalization of the politic and spillover effects across borders;

-they also made mention of local grievances that was rapidly and easily manipulated into violent extremism modern communication technology and the ease of travel;

-the nexus of fragility, conflict, migration and violent extremism is complex and worrying. The number of states, civil societies showing severe strains and this possibly providing fertile ground for violent extremism that is increasing. However, concerning the role, comparative advantage and constraints of development in preventing violent extremism,

-prevention is not an alternative to security actors responses; it complements those efforts and reduces the need for them;

- the development partners must focus on understanding and addressing the causes of violent extremism as part of a prevention and agenda;

- much already known about the drivers of violent extremism from a range of fields. While more context specificity is needed, evaluation of violent extremism can benefit from comparative analysis, especially drawing on decades of criminology research and radicalization studies;

-Extensive knowledge and experience of what works and what does not work already exists in the field of preventing programming what is certainly needed is better local contextualization;

-low levels of funding for prevention (including gender considerations) the securitized nature of current approaches to addressing violent extremism;

-development actors must navigate a highly securitized space around a violent extremism. They also have to work with partners, uncomfortable in the (often politicized) domain of violent extremism. Pragmatic language and honest partnerships are therefore needed. Then development actors must develop and sustain partnerships with stakeholders by acknowledging that:

-young people are not the problem, they are part of the solution. Violent extremism groups often target the young because society has failed to make feel safe acknowledged, empowered and included;

-radicalization is not necessarily a problem. It can be a force for good when the urge for social change has positive, peaceful and constructive outlets;

-it is essential to recognize and support the vast majority of young women and men who reject violent extremism and work for peace;

-women play a critical and aorta, yet disregarded role in understanding, preventing and of providing to violent extremism;

-participation and leadership of women and women organizations in strategy development and programming to address violent extremism is critical, but funding remains inadequate;

-moderate religious leaders and interfaith networks should be supported and strengthened to confront narrative exploiting their own traditions to promote violence, hatred and division, and should address inflammatory rhetoric within their insist

-Women of faith have compelling and alternative religious, historical and culture narratives and visions to offer;

-to governance community, including donors needs to strengthen independent, free and protected media as a component of good governance strategies and in support of non-violent, free and incentive dialogue. Henceforth, initiatives for peace and conflicts prevention conceived and implement by women at local, national are so few whereas there are actors for both violence and peace. Understanding and supporting the efforts in the area of prevention are primordial factors for a prevention inculcate in their children from tender ages ,value of peace and tolerance ,sharing, the sense of honesty, not leaving out of extent a political role. As such, the female folk should be at the center of violence prevention strategies.

The accomplishment of their prevention role would strongly depend on the correction of the image society has of them.

The state has to create social, economic and legal conditions enabling women to fully play the role which is theirs. There is also need to set up a support system for women who have suffered trauma, so that they can play a more active prevention role as individuals or as a group social actor. It is therefore indispensable to give them a chance to express themselves and be part of all initiatives aimed at providing appropriate assistance and protection not for themselves alone, but for their children and families as well. Their involvement in the protection and consolidation of peace is a key factor for success, social and economic change.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the celebrated Pastor Martin Luther King Junior used to say more than 50 years ago that: *'we must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools'*; His message is still valid, may be more than ever, and that is why such a workshop on the women participation and countering violent extremism is so

crucial. Dialogue does not mean negotiation; rather, it means openness, a readiness to respond to a whole range of situations and points of view. Any lasting sustainable undertaking aimed at stabilizing and rebuilding the southern Cameroon makes of the North and the South West requires the unreserved commitment of all to democratic principles of respect of human rights and the rule of law. Together, you are going to make the commitment. Together, you are going to succeed.

The culture of dialogue must be in this country the most genuine values. In this spirit of dialogue and understanding, the government has to undertake all necessary measures not only to pave the way for the future in the shared homeland of all its citizens, but also to heal the wounds from the past, where a special place is given to the program of renewing and reconstructing the hearts damaged by the military actions of in and five years time. Let this gathering in Douala drive our mission to bring together our nation and cultures in the name of eternal tenets of humanism, a mission which fills us with pride and faith in the future. An honest and open dialogue is a basic pre-condition for successful termination of negotiations, for bringing different views closer and reaching acceptable solution. It is only through dialogue that is possible to overcome differences and to reduce the level of dispute and resolve conflicts. Conflicts and hostility build up walls and distrust between people and aggravate dialogue between confronted parties, so that many dialogue attempts very often resemble a Sisyphean task or myth.

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