Intersectional Security Assemblages: Mapping Power, Discourse, and Policy in Counter-Extremism

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Abstract

European Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) policies have come under increasing criticism for their unforeseen effects, specifically the securitisation of French and German Muslim minorities. This study proposes an Intersectional Securitisation Theory (IST) model, building on traditional securitisation theory by incorporating intersectionality to analyse how religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic standing intersect to produce securitisation discourses. Through qualitative analysis, the research discovers that CVE and PVE policies tend to unwittingly perpetuate structural inequalities and stigmatise marginalised Muslim communities. The policies disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups, further solidifying perceptions of alienation and exclusion. Utilising the IST framework, this research presents a differentiated explanation of how layered identities are entangled in security narratives. In addition, it suggests the theory of Intersectional Security Assemblages, which theorises how different actors such as state institutions, media, and civil society work together to build and spread securitisation narratives through interlinked networks of power and discourse.

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Introduction

Securitisation of Muslim minorities within Europe has been at the forefront of counter-extremism measures, especially within France and Germany. The policy implementation of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) has also stirred considerable controversy regarding their discriminatory outcomes and side effects. Buzan et al.'s (1998)[1] Traditional Securitisation Theory provides a benchmark for the consideration of how threats are framed as security issues. It is, however, too generic to account for the intersectional identities that guide the experience of securitisation by diverse groups. This research introduces an Intersectional Securitisation Theory (IST) framework to fill the gap, acknowledging that there are various aspects of identity like religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status that render Muslim communities securitised in different manners.[2,3]

IST broadens securitisation theory to include an intersectional perspective, thus providing a more sophisticated account of how security narratives function within various sociopolitical environments. Through the examination of official texts, media portrayals, and policy narratives, the study points to how CVE/PVE programmes unintentionally reinforce exclusionary approaches to counter-terrorism, resulting in Muslim minorities being stigmatised and surveilled. [4,5]

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[1] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, "*Security: A New Framework for Analysis,"* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998)

[2] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," Chicago: *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139–167.

[3] Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 193–209.

[4] Charlotte Heath-Kelly, "Algorithmic Governmentality and the Regulation of Potential Terrorists," *Security Dialogue* 48, no. 1 (2017): 29–45.

[5] Arun Kundnani, The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror, (London: Verso, 2014).

IST allows for a more complex investigation of the ways that Muslim communities are not only securitised as a religious group but also as radicialised and socioeconomically marginalised groupings. Recent policy, for instance, France's interdiction against religious symbols in public schools and Germany's monitoring of Islamic cultural centers illustrates how intersecting identities are targets of suspicion. Further, CVE trainings in schools and the workplace also perpetuate essentialist assumptions, portraying Muslims as naturally vulnerable to radicalisation. These practices engender a culture of mistrust, in which Muslim visibility is viewed as threatening, further alienating already vulnerable communities.[6] In incorporating intersectionality within securitisation theory, IST offers a holistic perspective through which state practice, media discourses, and public responses may be critically analysed. It brings to light how security discourses might unwittingly reproduce exclusion.

While this research critiques the securitisation of Muslims in France and Germany, it also recognises the growing threat of right-wing extremism, such as white supremacist violence. It argues that CVE policies often fail to address this threat adequately, revealing a double standard in how different forms of extremism are prioritised. Highlighting this imbalance is crucial for creating a truly intersectional and fair security policy.[7,8]

Linking Intersectional Securitisation Theory and Intersectional Security Assemblages

Securitisation theory has been helpful in describing how threats to security are socially constructed, but it is not equipped with the analytical

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[6] Fernando, Mayanthi L., The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism, Duke UP, 2014, pp. 113–115.

[7] Ravndal, Jacob Aasland, "Right-Wing Terrorism and Militancy in the Nordic Countries: A Comparative Case Study," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 30, no. 5, 2018, p. 773.

[8] Sunawar, Lubna and Raza Muhammad, "Securitization of Immigration in Europe and Role of Populist Right Wing Parties," *Margalla Papers*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2020, pp. 83-92.

capabilities required to account for the multiple, intersecting identities of securitised individuals.[9]

Intersectional Securitisation Theory (IST) provides a needed corrective to mainstream securitisation approaches by building on Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality. It recognises that social identities be they of race, religion, gender, or class are not separate and independent but intersect to produce multifaceted experiences of marginalisation.[10] IST theorises that securitisation is an uneven process that varies in its effects according to the ways these identities intersect. Similarly, these policies of counter-extremism in Europe target Muslim minorities not necessarily on grounds of religion, *per se*, but on compounded markers of race, gender, class, and national origin.

However, IST does not adequately capture the structural and relational processes by which securitisation narratives are constructed, consolidated, and normalised. To supplement this, the term Intersectional Security Assemblages is proposed as an extension of theory. This is the idea of dynamic, networked arrangements of state and non-state actors such as government departments, police, media outlets, schools and universities, and civil society organisations. They interact with each other to produce and circulate security narratives. These arrangements are not linear or hierarchical but multidirectional and iterative, inscribing security logics into various domains of public life. The assemblage approach borrows from Deleuzian and Foucauldian theories of power as diffused and productive. It uncovers that securitisation is not so much a top-down activity but is co-made through intersecting power relations and institutional procedures.[11]

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[9] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso Books, 2009).

[10] Crenshaw, Kimberlé, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241–1299.

[11] Abrahamsen, Rita, and Michael C. Williams, "Security Beyond the State: Global Security Assemblages in International Politics," *International Political Sociology*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1–17.

The originality of Intersectional Security Assemblages is its combination of intersectional analysis with assemblage theory. It shows that securitisation stories are not disconnected statements from the state. They are actively remade constantly through media reporting, algorithmic watchfulness, reporting mechanisms at the community level, and ordinary institutional habits. For example, the UK Prevent Programme is enforced not merely through national policy but also through teachers, health professionals, and local community groups, many of whom operate in assemblages organised by presumptions and institutional coercion.[12]

Such a framework also highlights the feedback loops involved in securitisation processes. Muslim populations, already subjected to racial and religious profiling, are made to experience compounded effects when media representation, predictive policing, and legislative structures all feed into reinforcing the idea of Muslims as suspect subjects.[13] These narratives are then used to justify further exclusion and surveillance, creating a self-reinforcing cycle integrated into security assemblages. The gendered aspects of this process are especially stark: hijab-wearing Muslim women can be constructed at one and the same time as victimised oppressors and prospective radicals, excusing both patriarchal state overreach and Islamophobic policing.[14]

Through the incorporation of IST into the theory of security assemblages, this study contributes to securitisation studies in several important ways. First, it broadens the analytical scope from speech acts and elite-led policy to discursively mediated, relational, and decentralised processes. Second, it brings center stage the daily lives of securitised subjects, particularly Muslim minorities in Europe, and the multiple categories through which they are targeted. Third, it offers a critical framework for assessing and

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[12] Asim Qureshi, *A Virtue of Disobedience*, 2019.

[13] Lyon, David, *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*, Polity Press, 2007.

[14] Fadil, Nadia, and Mayanthi L. Fernando, "Rediscovering the 'Everyday' Muslim: Notes on an Anthropological Divide," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2015, pp. 59–88.

reconfiguring counter-extremism policies, pointing the way toward more inclusive and equitable security governance.

Instead of reaffirming national unity, existing counter-extremism policies threaten to further exacerbate alienation, debase democratic values, and disintegrate civil trust. The IST and Intersectional Security Assemblages conceptual framework elucidates that any viable strategy against extremism will not only need to counteract violence but also undermine the structural disparities which present exacerbated securitisation practices.

The intersectional identities in securitisation are not only influenced by race, religion, or gender but also by socioeconomic status. For example, more affluent Muslims in white-collar professions are less monitored compared to working-class Muslims, demonstrating how economic positions influence visibility. These class lines, though, are usually blurred, particularly in multicultural urban centers. Furthermore, outsider and insider viewpoints influence the ways in which various groups perceive themselves as well as others, and how individuals become perceived, told about, and targeted by counter-extremism policies.[15]

Malaysia is a useful case to apply Intersectional Securitisation Theory in a non-Western democracy. Though it is a Muslim country, Malaysia also experiences severe intra-Muslim and inter-ethno-religious tensions. These are governed through plural legal systems and favourable policies but create a securitised environment with inequality and distrust. The state securitises groups such as Shia Muslims and civil rights activists under anti-extremism legislation, demonstrating that members of the dominant group can also be securitised. Malaysia's utilisation of religious authority, state policing, and nationalist media underscores how identity hierarchies are created and sustained in a multicultural society.[16]

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[15] Fadil, Nadia, and Mayanthi L. Fernando, "Rediscovering the 'Everyday' Muslim…, p. 63.
[16] Saleena Saleem, "State Use of Public Order and Social Cohesion Concerns in the Securitisation of Non-Mainstream Muslims in Malaysia," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 3 (2018): 314–15.

Impact of CVE and PVE Policies: Exacerbating Social Stigmatisation

One of the most impactful outcomes of contemporary CVE and PVE policies is how they contribute to reinforcing social stigmatisation. Securitisation of Muslim minorities generates an environment of suspicion and distrust that extends into private as well as public domains. This section looks at how such policies, even if preventive in nature, lead to alienation and marginalisation in a cycle.

By disproportionately targeting Muslim communities, CVE and PVE policies risk perpetuating current prejudices and structural inequalities. Policies that focus on surveillance and early intervention tend to work on the premise that some cultural or religious markers are evidence of a radicalisation predisposition. This premise is seldom supported by empirical evidence and instead acts to institutionalise stereotypes. Consequently, people with these markers are placed in the role of potential security risks, irrespective of their own belief or behaviour.[17] Feeling under constant surveillance and judgment, citizens lose trust in state institutions, and a hurdle to social integration and political engagement is formed. [18]

Further, the stigmatisation produced by such policies goes beyond the personal individuality. It constructs the group identity of Muslim communities. Media portrayals, political discourse, and public opinion come together to project an image of the "radical Muslim" as simplistic and misleading. This portrait is also reproduced through social networks and community encounters, which enhance a feeling of otherness and exclusion.[19] Thus, the policies aimed at securing national security actually weaken the same social resilience that they purport to strengthen.

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[17] Arun Kundnani, *The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia….*

[18] Floris Vermeulen, "Suspect Communities—Targeting Violent Extremism at the Local Level: Policies of Engagement in Amsterdam, Berlin, and London," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 2 (2014): 286–306.

[19] Francesco Ragazzi, "Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation: Securitising Social Policy?" *Critical Social Policy* 37, no. 2 (2017): 163–179.

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In addition, the efficacy of these policies is brought into question when examining their effects on social trust and intercommunity relations. Research has shown that securitisation policies tend to undermine cooperation between the Muslim community and security forces, as individuals hesitate to cooperate with authorities for fear of being stigmatised.[20] The collapse in confidence has profound effects on national security, as it discourages true attempts at forestalling radicalisation by precluding open communication and community-led interventions.

It is evident that the prevailing strategy, prioritising security at the expense of social justice, has important consequences for democratic governments and trust within communities. The challenge, thus, is to create approaches that successfully counter extremism without turning to the type of broad-brush stigmatisation that undermines social cohesion.

Policy Reports on CVE and PVE in Europe

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) have become key elements of European security policies, especially in reaction to the growing threats of radicalisation and terrorism. According to Sunawar and Muhammad, the securitisation of immigration in Europe is directly connected with the populist right-wing agenda that uses public fear as a vehicle to justify exclusionary politics.[21]

European Union (EU) member states, as well as institutions like the European Commission, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), and national governments, have come up with an array of policy papers intended to counter violent extremism through a mix of preventive, rehabilitative, and law-enforcement strategies. The papers set out strategic goals, radicalisation indicators, and interagency cooperation, community outreach, and deradicalisation programmes.

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[20] Imran Awan, "Islamophobia and Prevent Duty: Teachers' Perceptions of the Prevent Strategy in Schools," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 12 (2018): 2050–2067.

[21] Sunawar, Lubna and Raza Muhammad, "Securitization of Immigration in Europe …, p. 84.

Perhaps the most important policy framework in this area is that of the European Union's Counter-Terrorism Strategy, established in 2005 and continuously updated to combat new threats. The strategy consists of four pillars: prevent, protect, pursue, and respond.[22] The pillar of prevention is directly aligned with CVE and PVE activities, and it aims to decrease radicalisation and recruitment by solving core grievances, encouraging social inclusion, and countering the propaganda of extremists. In 2020, the European Commission launched the EU Security Union Strategy (2020-2025), which again lays strong emphasis on addressing radicalisation through online and offline interventions.[23]

France: The Action Plan against Radicalisation and Separatism Law

France's counter-extremism strategy has traditionally been influenced by its secularist values (*laïcite*) and state interventionism. In response to the 2015 terrorist attacks, the government launched an Action Plan against Radicalisation, integrating legal, social, and intelligence measures to combat extremism. The plan enhanced state surveillance capabilities, such as monitoring places of worship, schools, and Internet platforms where radical rhetoric could be spread.

One of the most contentious developments on France's CVE scene was the 2021 "Law on Reinforcing Republican Principles," also referred to as the Separatism Law.[24] The bill allows the government to dissolve groups perceived to be radicalising and spreading extremist ideas, limit foreign financing for religious establishments, and tighten control over Islamic schools and mosques. Though the government rationalised these steps as necessary for national security, human rights groups condemned them as

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[22] Council of the European Union, *The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy,* (Brussels: Council of the EU, 2005).

[23] European Commission, *EU Security Union Strategy 2020–2025,* (Brussels: European Commission, 2020).

[24] Ministère de l'Intérieur, Law on Reinforcing Republican Principles, 2021.

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criminalising Muslim civic participation and creating an atmosphere of suspicion.[25]

At the national level, France's Plan *de lutte contre la radicalisation violente* (Plan to Fight Violent Radicalisation) offers a strong model for confronting extremism. The policy brings together education, social work, intelligence, and community partnerships to stem radical influences among vulnerable groups.[26] Likewise, Germany's National Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy, launched in 2016, includes multi-stakeholder action and bottom-up initiatives to enhance social cohesion and challenge extremist narratives.[27]

France's strategy has involved legislative efforts like the 2017 Anti-Terrorism Law, extending emergency powers into ordinary law, and the 2021 Separatism Law, against groups suspected of promoting radical ideologies. The strategy focuses on surveillance, the closure of institutions suspected of being sites of radicalisation, and the incorporation of social services into counter-extremism.[28]

France's counter-radicalisation strategy also signals a shift towards preemptive government, targeting not just acts of violence but also ideologies incompatible with the values of the Republic.[29] Initiatives such as civic engagement charters for religious groups and bolstered training requirements for *Imams* follow.[30] Local authorities have also been authorised to take action against cultural or religious groups suspected of

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[25] Amnesty International, *France's Separatism Law: Discrimination in the Name of Security,* 2021.

[26] Ministere de l'Interieur, *Law on Reinforcing Republican Principles*, 2021.

[27] Bundesministerium des Innern, *National Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy,* (2016)

[28] Assemblée Nationale, *Action Plan Against Radicalization,* (2021).

[29] Bowen, John R. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 156.

[30] Amghar, Samir, "Religion and Security: France's Counter-Radicalization Strategy," *Religions*, vol. 9, no. 10, 2018, p. 307.

promoting sectarian withdrawal.[31] The establishment of specialised prefects to watch over hotbeds of radicalisation attests to a territorialised surveillance model.[32] Critics are concerned that these policies risk inadvertently alienating Muslim youth by confusing religious conservatism with extremism, thus eroding confidence in state institutions.[33]

Nonetheless, supporters argue that these measures are essential to preserve the integrity of *laïcité* and public order within a pluralising society.[34] The ongoing development of French CVE policy is evidence of the dilemma between protecting national security and preserving civil liberties in pluralistic democracies.[35]

Germany's Prevention Strategy and the 'Strong Cities' Approach

Germany focuses on community-based interventions and deradicalisation initiatives under the "Live Democracy!" campaign and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees' deradicalisation initiative. In contrast to France, Germany's approach is decentralised with high participation from local authorities and NGOs. Given the scope of such policies, controversy continues to rage over their workability and ability to cause harmful side effects.

Germany's decentralised CVE approach also focuses on building resilience at the community level via the "Strong Cities Network" (SCN), an international campaign initiated by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

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[31] Cesari, Jocelyn, *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies*, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 219.

[32] Ragazzi, Francesco, "Suspect Community or Suspect Category? The Impact of Counter-Terrorism as 'Policed Multiculturalism,'" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 42, no. 5, 2016, p. 725.

[33] Fassin, Didier, "Why Muslim Youth in France Are Turning to Radicalism," *The Nation*, 2015, p. 14.

[34] Kepel, Gilles, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 98.

[35] Fernando, Mayanthi L., *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014, p. 231.

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German cities such as Hamburg and Berlin have embraced SCN strategies aimed at building trust between police and society, specifically youth outreach and intercultural engagement.[36] This prevention-through-inclusion approach stands in contrast to more punitive or surveillance-oriented policies evident elsewhere in Europe. Concurrently, German policymakers are criticised for failing to tackle structural imbalances that fuel radicalisation, including socioeconomic inequalities and alienation from culture.[37] While the German media continues to cover success and failure stories in community engagement, civil society actors hold that successful peace-building over the long-term calls for more than erasing online content or monitoring radical speech, it requires consistent investment in social cohesion and empowerment of minorities.[38] These ongoing issues reflect the intricacy involved in striking a balance between security interests and democratic freedoms and inclusive government.

Germany's CVE approach is more decentralised compared to France, with the regional governments being instrumental. The Federal Ministry of the Interior leads efforts through initiatives such as "Live Democracy!" and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees' deradicalisation programmes.[39] They focus on educational interventions, psychological counseling, and community-based approaches. Germany has also recognised the threat posed by right-wing extremism, particularly in the aftermath of incidents like the 2019 Halle synagogue attack. As a result, the government has invested resources in addressing far-right radicalisation among law-enforcement and the armed forces.[40] Yet, critics hold that while Germany has been swift to respond to far-right extremism, Muslim populations remain subject to disproportionate scrutiny through CVE policies.[41] A

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[36] "Strong Cities Network," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2023, p. 7.

[37] Muller, Tanja, "Counter-Radicalization and Social Justice in Germany," *Journal of European Security Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2022, pp. 145–146.

[38] Becker, Lars, "Civil Society and CVE in Germany: Local Solutions and Structural Constraints," *European Journal of Counterterrorism*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2023, pp. 88–89.

[39] Bundesministerium des Innern, *National Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy*, (2016)

[40] Deutsche Welle, *Far-Right Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Policies,* (2023).

[41] *Tagesspiegel*, "Debates on CVE and Refugee Integration," 2023.

further essential element of Germany's CVE framework entails the engagement of schools in supporting democratic values and the prevention of extremism. Schools are becoming frontline battlegrounds for detecting radicalisation threats early on and promoting civic education through curriculum renewal and teacher education.[42] A number of federal states launched pilot schemes that embed intercultural competence, digital literacy, and critical thinking to combat hate narratives among students.[43] Concurrently, mosques and interfaith associations at the local level are being prompted to work with public institutions to foster dialogue and build trust in communities.[44] Nonetheless, this partnership model is hampered by practical restraints, such as erratic funding, shortages of standard evaluation procedures, and isolated public pushback against the perceived politicisation of education.[45] In spite of these barriers, Germany's focus on multi-stakeholder partnership, spanning municipal authorities, education, religious communities, and civil society bodes well for a changing paradigm that upholds long-term resilience rather than short-term enforcement measures.

Media Discourses

Media reporting is a key factor in influencing public opinion about counterterrorism policies, such as CVE and PVE programmes. Media discourses on counter-extremism policies have been centered on securitising Muslim minorities. Representations of radicalisation, extremism, and state reactions are major determinants of public attitudes and policy discourses. European media, such as *BBC*, *Le Monde, Der Spiegel*, and *The Guardian*, regularly cover trends in radicalisation, terrorist

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[42] Kohler, Daniel, *Education Against Extremism: The Role of Schools in CVE*, Springer, 2020, p. 52.

[43] Schmid, Alex P, "Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education," *Radicalisation Awareness Network*, European Commission, 2019, pp. 14–15.

[44] Aslan, Ednan, and Rauf Ceylan, *Islamic Religious Education in Europe*, Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 102–103.

[45] Minkenberg, Michael, "Religion and Counter-Extremism Policies in Germany," *German Politics*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2017, pp. 517–518.

attacks, and official countermeasures. These reports tend to reflect wider public anxieties over security, integration, and civil rights.

A number of media reports show how CVE initiatives target Muslims, perpetuating negative stereotypes. French media has reported instances of Muslim groups being closed down under the 2021 Separatism Law, with critics contending that this criminalises religious expression instead of violent extremism. Likewise, German media reported on fears regarding how surveillance practices affect Muslims.[46] Although the majority of CVE policies target Islamist extremism, media attention has highlighted increasing right-wing radicalisation in Europe. Incidents indicate that responses from the government to far-right violence have been relatively weaker despite reports of an increase in white supremacist attacks.[47]

One of the most important areas of media attention has been the efficacy and moral implications of state-initiated CVE initiatives. Equivalent criticisms have also been leveled in France, where secularism-driven counter-radicalisation policies have at times been seen as discriminatory.[48] The public discussions around CVE and PVE also intersect with wider debates on migration, freedom of expression, and social cohesion. Increasing far-right and nationalist party politics in Europe has created more rhetoric that contextualises radicalisation as a consequence of immigration policies.[49] This has fostered polarisation in public debate, such as CVE and PVE policies are either perceived as essential protections or as tools of state intrusion.

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[46] *Le Monde*, "Muslim Organizations and the Separatism Law," 2023.
[47] *Deutsche Welle*, "Far-Right Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Policies," 2023.
[48] John R. Bowen, *Why French Islam Is Different: French Cultural Challenges and Muslim Responses,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017).
[49] Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

Social media has been influential in framing CVE discourse. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have been criticised for both carrying extremist content and enabling state propaganda on radicalisation.[50]

Political Rhetoric and Discourse

The political rhetoric on CVE and PVE in Europe is framed by contesting narratives on security, integration, and civil rights. Political figures, policymakers, and party leaders employ rhetoric to legitimise counter-extremism policies, set national security agendas, and rally public support. The political rhetoric employed in political orations, parliamentary debates, and policy reports reflects deeper ideological fault lines and impacts policy implementation.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron has pressed for a rigorous response to radicalisation, and he has linked it to overall questions of *laïcité* (secularism) and national identity. His government passed its 2020 separatism law to strengthen state control of religious groups and civic associations to prevent radicalisation.[51] In Germany, CVE and PVE political debates tend to be framed in terms of democratic resilience and civic engagement, with policymakers supporting education and social work as essential prevention tools.[52] Macron has associated extremism with Islamic separatism, calling for more restrictions on religious organisations and foreign funding. His rhetoric has been criticised as confusing religious conservatism with radicalisation.[53]

German politicians have generally eschewed belligerent securitisation language, opting for community outreach instead. Political discourse has, however, at times portrayed Muslim immigrants as a security issue, such as

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[50] European Commission, *EU Security Union Strategy 2020–2025,* (Brussels: European Commission, 2020).

[51] Angelique Chrisafis, "Macron's War on Separatism," *The Guardian*, 2020.

[52] Philipp Holtmann, Germany's Prevention of Extremism: Civic Engagement and Policy Approaches (London: Routledge, 2019).

[53] Assemblée Nationale, *Action Plan Against Radicalization,* (Paris: Assemblée Nationale, 2021)

with the integration of refugees.[54] Counter-extremism discourse tends to emphasise Islamist radicalisation, but the threat from far-right extremism has increasingly been noted. Political leaders in Europe have recognised the increasing power of nationalist and neo-fascist movements, which has resulted in policy changes to combat extremism in all its manifestations.[55] Far-right political parties have used CVE discussions to advance anti-Muslim policies. Germany's AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) and France's National Rally (Rassemblement National) claim that counter-extremism policy should be targeted at Islamist threats only, downplaying right-wing radicalisation concerns.[56] The rhetoric of radicalisation prevention further consolidates discriminatory behaviour by mixing religious piety with extremist inclinations.[57] The analysis of CVE and PVE policies in France and Germany needs to be deeper and incorporate the opposition party positions, parliamentary debate, and governmental documents. For France,[58] parliamentary debates on the 2021 Separatism Law exposed fierce opposition, with *La France Insoumise* being particularly vociferous in its criticism of the law as anti-Muslim and Islamophobic. Parties in Germany[59] such as *Die Linke* and *The Greens* have condemned the Prevent strategy for its surveillance methods and discriminatory impact on Muslims.

Progressing Towards Inclusive and Community-Led Measures

With the negative effects of existing CVE and PVE policies on Muslim communities, it is an urgent necessity to rethink counter-extremism policy in terms of being inclusive, participatory, and socially just. This section

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[54] *Tagesspiegel*, "Debates on CVE and Refugee Integration," 2023.

[55] Jacob Aasland Ravndal, "Right-Wing Terrorism and Militancy in the Nordic Countries: A Comparative Case Study," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30, no. 5 (2018): 772–792.

[56] *Deutsche Welle*, "Far-Right Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Policies," 2023.

[57] Asim Qureshi, The "Prevent" Strategy and the War on Terror: Redefining Muslims as 'Terrorists', (London: Pluto Press, 2018).

[58] Assemblée Nationale, *Action Plan Against Radicalization*, 2021, p. 12

[59] Bundesministerium des Innern, *National Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy*, 2016, p. 6.

examines alternative policy strategies that put community engagement at the forefront and create mutual trust between citizens and state institutions. Inclusive counter-extremism policies call for a shift away from securitised policies to community-led approaches. Such approaches highlight the significance of dialogue, transparency, and co-production of security. By engaging local citizens in the development, implementation, and assessment of counter-extremism initiatives, governments can ensure that policies become more sensitive to local requirements and less likely to alienate the very groups they are intended to safeguard. Participatory policymaking not only increases the legitimacy of security policies but also empowers marginalised communities by providing them with a voice in public policy.[60]

Community-led initiatives have been implemented effectively in a number of contexts, offering promising examples of how inclusive counter-extremism policies can function in reality. These initiatives tend to include collaborations between local governments, civil society groups, and grassroots community organisations. These partnerships promote trust and enhance the sharing of information, which helps in the early detection of suspected issues without the need for intrusive monitoring.[61]

Another essential element of an inclusive strategy is ensuring policy openness and accountability. When counter-extremism policies are created and enforced in secret, they can have the unintended consequence of perpetuating feelings of injustice and exclusion. Transparency in policymaking also makes it possible to have continuous critical evaluation of security measures to ensure that they are constantly being perfected to serve the interests of all citizens and not just special political interests.[62]

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[60] Christopher Baker-Beall, Charlotte Heath-Kelly, and Lee Jarvis, eds., *Counter-Radicalisation: Critical Perspectives,* (London: Routledge, 2015)

[61] Tufyal Choudhury and Helen Fenwick, "The Impact of Counter-Terrorism Measures on Muslim Communities," *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* 25, no. 3 (2011): 151–181.

[62] Arun Kundnani, The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror, (London: Verso, 2014).

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Additionally, inclusive policies need to target the wider socio-economic drivers of radicalisation. Economic marginalisation, restricted educational opportunities, and social exclusion are all drivers that can provide fertile ground for extremist narratives.

A key but frequently neglected aspect of inclusive counter-extremism is the part that education plays in the development of critical awareness and civic participation. Education initiatives focused on media literacy, intercultural competence, and conflict resolution are likely to enable citizens to counteract extremist rhetoric.[63] Formal education institutions and universities are key sites for the creation of inclusivity, facilitating dialogue, and encouraging active citizenship, hence, decreasing vulnerability to radical ideologies.

Moreover, the contribution of digital spaces to contemporary radicalisation requires creative, community-based digital interventions. Social media has been used for recruitment and propaganda, but they can also be used to challenge extremist narratives. Community-based digital literacy programmes and counter-narrative campaigns, developed and deployed by community organisations, can offer alternative narratives and engage vulnerable individuals positively.[64] By incorporating digital resilience measures into counter-extremism strategies, policymakers can maximise community-based responses to online radicalisation.

Lastly, the integration of the findings of Intersectional Securitisation Theory (IST) in policy-making can guarantee that counter-extremism policies are attuned to the varied experiences of various members of a community. IST reminds us that pragmatic security policy cannot ignore the intersecting identities and everyday realities of the affected. Through an intersectional perspective, policymakers can formulate programmes that are

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[63] Wilfred Said, "The Unintended Consequences of Counterterrorism Policies," *Security Studies* 24, no. 4 (2015): 523–548.

[64] Imran Awan, "Islamophobia and Prevent Duty: Teachers' Perceptions of the Prevent Strategy in Schools," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 12 (2018): 2050–2067.

not only fairer but also more effective in confronting the multi-faceted nature of contemporary extremism.

The Crossroads of Security and Pakistan

The securitised counter-extremism policies, such as Pakistan's National Action Plan (NAP) was developed after the terrorist attack on Army Public School, Peshawar, in 2014. A multi-pronged strategy of military action, law-enforcement measures, social and economic interventions were devised to counter extremism. Although NAP has tamed militancy, it has also resulted in heightened surveillance. Those, however, can bear exclusionary consequences in line with those in Europe. As a collateral damage, those actions may threaten to undermine confidence in state institutions and strengthen social cleavages. Generally, the comparison across the societies demonstrates that in the absence of inclusive, rights-based protections, counter-extremism policies in various contexts can perpetuate cycles of exclusion and marginalisation.[65]

Conclusion

This research adds to current discourse on the effectiveness and ethics of CVE and PVE policy in Europe. Through the application of the Intersectional Securitisation Theory (IST), it presents a new analytical approach to the crossroads of security, identity, and power.[66] Based on a critical examination of policy documents, media depiction, and securitisation networks in France and Germany, the study also emphasises the imperative need for counter-extremism policies that do not further exclude marginal communities but serve to empower inclusive, participatory approaches.[67]

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[65] Tanveer, Rana. "No Country for Minorities: 'National Action Plan Has Failed," *The Express Tribune*, 21 May 2016, www.tribune.com.pk; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Conference Report.

[66] Fadil, Nadia, et al, "Radicalization and the Security/Liberty Nexus," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 50, no. 6, 2019, pp. 503–521.

[67] Ragazzi, Francesco, "Governing through Prevent? Regulation and Contested Practice in the UK Counter-Terrorism Strategy," *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2017, pp. 403–422.

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As the evidence indicates, re-thinking securitisation is not only a policy imperative but also a matter of moral obligation for democratic politics and social justice.[68] Intersectional Security Assemblages is an idea that gives an important framework to examine how social hierarchies are reinforced through co-production by different actors, state agencies, media, and civil society.[69] In spite of the efforts of CVE and PVE policies to decrease radicalisation, they tend to have unintended consequences that strengthen differences and heighten Muslim community securitisation.[70]

The securitisation of Muslim minorities in nations such as France and Germany demonstrates the inherent conflict between national security and civil liberties. The repeated demonisation of Muslims only reinforces stigmatisation but also undermines trust, upon which building cohesive and resilient societies depends.[71] It is thus critical that policymakers rethink the existing paradigm of counter-extremism and shift towards more inclusive and community-focused models.[72]

These models should prioritise transparency, democratic engagement, and social justice. Solving the underlying causes of extremism, economic exclusion and social isolation instead of just its manifestations, can make security policies more humane and efficacious.[73] Programmes aimed at education, economic empowerment, and intercultural dialogue present realistic avenues for preventing radicalisation without compromising civil freedoms.[74] Furthermore, taking a human security perspective, which

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[68] Arun, *The Muslims Are Coming!: Islamophobia, Extremism…* 147–172.
[69] Abbas, Tahir, and Imran Awan, *Islamophobia and Radicalization: A Vicious Cycle*. US: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 102–125.
[70] Schuurman, Bart, "Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 31, no. 6, 2019, 1104–1126.
[71] Kundnani, Arun, *The Muslims Are Coming!...*, 2014, pp. 147–172.
[72] Ragazzi, Francesco, "Governing through Prevent? Regulation and Contested Practice in the UK Counter-Terrorism Strategy," *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2017, p. 414
[73] Abbas, Tahir, and Imran Awan, *Islamophobia and Radicalization: A Vicious Cycle*. US: Oxford University Press, 2018. 122
[74] Fadil, Nadia, et al, "Radicalization and the Security/Liberty Nexus," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 50, no. 6, 2019. 515

focuses on the welfare and rights of individuals, can shift policies from seeing an entire community as a threat to security.[75]

As Europe remains faced with the changing dynamics of extremism, it is important to retool counter-extremism efforts to foster solidarity instead of further dividing societies. Future studies should continue to examine how intersectional approaches can streamline security frameworks to achieve both justice and protection in democratic societies.[76]■

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[75] Schuurman, Bart, "Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 31, no. 6, 2019, p. 1110

[76] Arun, *The Muslims Are Coming…* 171

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