

Advancing Community Cohesion: Towards a National Compact Conference

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AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS AS RADICALISED 'OTHER' AND
THEIR EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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Negative Consequences of CVE



- One of the serious consequences of this is that Muslims end up experiencing enhanced discrimination and marginalisation through an imposition of a complex web of social, cultural, economic, and political barriers in their everyday living. Muslim net experience particularly in relation to their participation in social processes becomes a socio-spatial challenge and an experience of social exclusion and “Othering”.

Discrimination



- The process of discrimination acts as a barrier for Muslims in a variety of socio-economic, cultural, and political processes and no doubt discrimination in society operates through practices which may be either intentional or unintentional, overt or covert, conscious or unconscious and may operate at the individual level or at the institutional level or at the social level.

Politics of Radicalisation and the Definitional Conundrum



- The concept of radicalisation in recent years has been grossly politicised.
- The politics of radicalisation is deeply embedded in the risk management paradigm.

Muslim Radicalisation



- Muslim radicalisation to mean a dynamic process whereby a Muslim individual or a group develops, in a context of political polarisation, an intolerant and uncompromising attitude towards an “outgroup” or “others” compounded by an ill-informed and narrow understanding of Islam as a way of life and adopts socio-cultural and political ideals and aspirations that seek to challenge the legitimacy of established institutions, norms, values, policies and the prevailing state of affairs.

Australian Government and Countering Violent Extremism



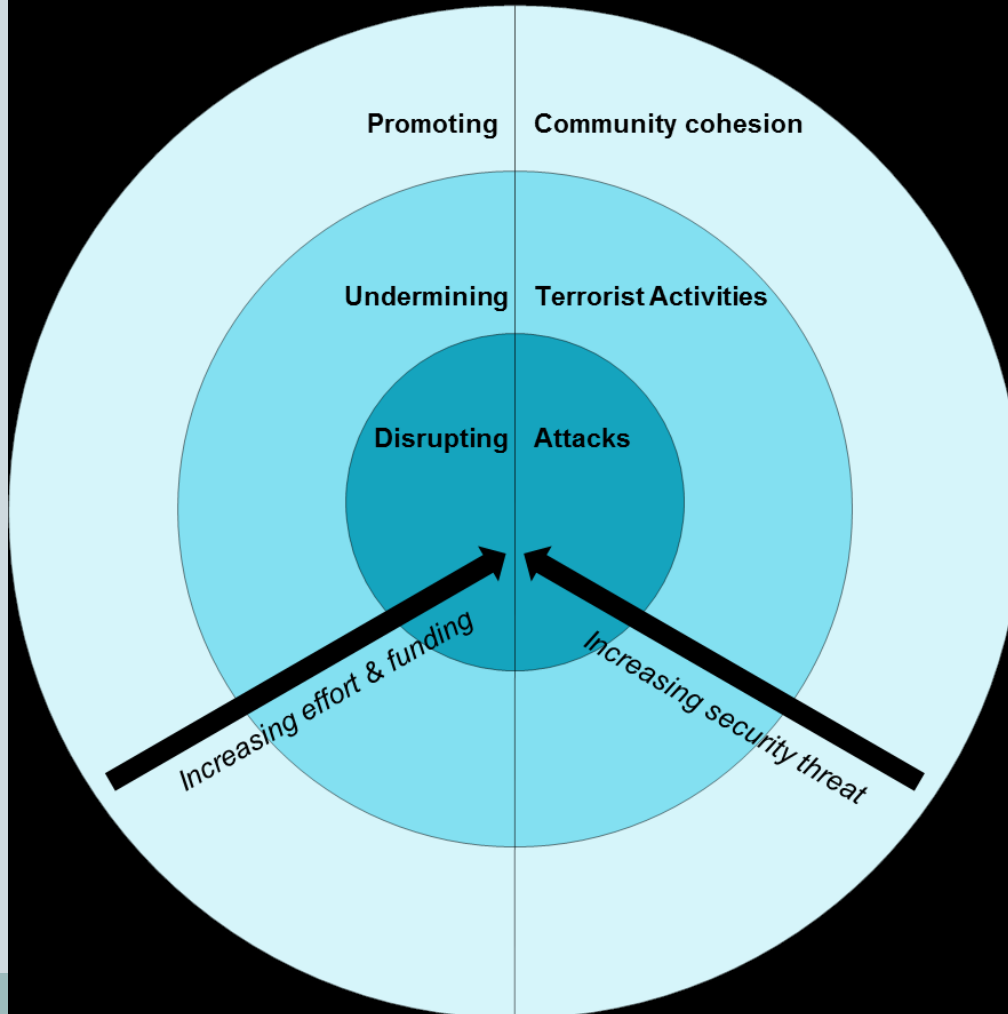
- The Countering Violent Extremism program operates under the umbrella strategy known as the Australia's Counter-Terrorism Machinery and was launched by the Commonwealth in 2010.

Counter-Terrorism Machinery Aims



- **Disrupt attacks**
- **Undermine terrorist activities and support by:**
 - obstructing the flow of support such as finances, commodities, and people to or from terrorists and their networks,
 - hampering the expansion of terrorist capability by targeting their tactical and operational security training in every practical way possible, and
 - debasing ideological support for terrorist activities.
- **Promote community cohesion**

Counter-Terrorism Machinery



Countering Violent Extremism



- The Commonwealth is committed to:
- increasing Australia's national commitment to this work,
- establishing community and public-private partnerships to better reach at-risk or radicalised individuals,
- challenging extremist narratives, and
- addressing the underlying causes of violent extremism (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015: 30).

National CVE Framework



- Review of Australia's Counter-Terrorism Machinery (page 31).
 1. Identify and divert violent extremists and, when possible, support them in disengaging from violent extremism;
 2. Identify and support at-risk groups and individuals to resist and reject violent extremist ideologies;
 3. Build community cohesion and resilience to violent extremism; and
 4. Achieve effective communications that challenge extremist messages and support alternatives (www.livingsafetogether.gov.au).

Islamophobia and Alienation



- The stereotype of the Islamic terrorist has a particularly strong currency in public discourses, and has had an effect on public attitudes. This is seen as a strong influence upon the perceptions that non-Muslims have of Muslims.

Islamophobia and Alienation



- Fifty-three per cent of NSW and Queensland respondents said they would be concerned if a close relative were to marry someone of the Muslim faith.
- On-going work in Sydney, including surveys (n: 345) of Muslims at mosques and community events (during 2011-2), found that the rates of experience of racism in settings like the workplace (60%) were three times the national average (17%).

Negative Impact of Countering Violent Extremism on Muslims



- But if I'm a young person who's been radicalised, what makes you think I'm willingly going to participate in a program run by the same government that I'm radicalised against? (Ghaith Krayem, Islamic Council of Victoria)

Negative Impact of Countering Violent Extremism on Muslims



- One concern is that CVE policies have the potential to divide Muslim communities because they embrace questionable notions of what it means to be 'moderate' or a 'radical', preferencing and seeking to 'deputise' the former in order to keep the latter in check.

Negative Impact of Countering Violent Extremism on Muslims



- Community critics of the CVE strategy also emphasise that law enforcement leadership of CVE outreach programs is problematic, firstly because it indicates that the Government has 'securitised' the Muslim community, and secondly because such outreach strategies have the tendency to be experienced as an extra layer of unwanted scrutiny on a community of predominantly law-abiding citizens.

Negative Impact of Countering Violent Extremism on Muslims



- The Australian governments' progressive policy approach to countering violent extremism at home has disproportionately focussed on the Australian Muslim communities. In an environment where Muslims are viewed with suspicion and as having the primary responsibility as both perpetrators and gatekeepers of terroristic ideologies, Muslims in diaspora communities have been forced to make legitimate claims to their innocence.

Negative Impact of Countering Violent Extremism on Muslims



- Shortly after the release of a horrific image on social media showing Australian jihadists proudly flaunting the severed heads of their victims, the Australian government reacted with an even bolder move to introduce legislation that would see the government cancelling the welfare payments of persons “identified by national security agencies as being involved in extremist conduct.” According to the Government the reforms would “enable the Department of Human Services to cancel a person’s welfare payment if it receives advice that a person has been assessed as a serious threat to Australia’s national security.”(Prime Minister of Australia) The move was criticised by several groups including academics who argued that it would not only alienate the already disenfranchised Muslim communities, but could also result in greater radicalisation (Ireland).

Risk Management



- An alleged threat is blown out of all proportion as the pretext, further "tightening" of the laws is claimed necessary and rushed through, without proper national debate or community consultation. The reality of the alleged threat is also exposed by the lack of correspondence between the official 'terror threat' level, which has remained the same since 2001, and the hysterical rhetoric from government ministers. (ABC News, "Australian Muslims")

Concluding Remark



- All these demonstrate that Countering Violent Extremism strategy either directly or indirectly affect everyday living of all Muslims and this eventually leads to Muslims feeling as the radicalised “Other” and socially marginalised manifesting in a sense of non-belongingness.