

Non-violent Measures for Preventing Violent Extremism: International Resolutions on the Role of Education

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“Our weapon of choice in this fight is a weapon surpassing any that extremists possess, one that delivers a blow that no agent of hate or intolerance can withstand: it is the bright light of education.”

Antony Blinken

Former United States Deputy Secretary of State

1. Introduction

Violent extremism continues to be a serious threat on a global scale, affecting people in underdeveloped, developing and developed societies. Radicalisation, the process towards violent extremism, is a global phenomenon and no society seems to be free of it. Even though it grows from the roots of intolerance and feeds on discrimination and prejudice, violent extremism itself does not discriminate; even if one is not a primary target, at this point in time everyone is facing a potential danger of becoming a collateral damage, which can be witnessed by the multiple terrorist attacks in recent decades that have claimed countless innocent lives. Violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon which is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief.¹ The prevention of violent extremism has become a priority for the global community, as it affects the security and well-being of societies albeit directly or indirectly. The need to address extremism of all kinds on a cross-community basis is paramount.² In general, violent extremism and the challenges brought by this phenomenon are being evaluated primarily through military and security lenses. From 2001 to 2017, the United States government alone will have spent approximately US\$1.78 trillion to fight terrorism³, i.e. federal expenditure on homeland security in the United States has grown on average by US\$360 billion annually. While it is not possible to calculate total EU and Member State spending on countering terrorism with any

¹ *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, Report of the Secretary-General*, presented before the Seventieth session of the UN General Assembly on 24 December 2015, New York, page 1, paragraph 2
http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674

² *Preventing Violent Extremism: Sixth Report of Session 2009-10*, Great Britain, Parliament: House of Commons: Communities and Local Government Committee, 2010, London, page 3
<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/65/65.pdf>

³ *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A guide for Policy-makers*, UNESCO, Paris, 2017, page 10
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002477/247764e.pdf>

precision, EU spending is estimated to have increased from €5.7 million in 2002 to €93.5 million in 2009, whereas the broader 'Security and Citizenship' heading in the EU budget was increased from €2 522 million in 2015 to €4 052 million in 2016.⁴ Security budgets of western countries have experienced perpetual growth, especially after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, which serves as a clear indication of the reality and magnitude of the violent extremism threat. Nevertheless, even though measures for countering terrorism have been placed as a top priority on the security agenda, governments are aware that resources aimed at strengthening security measures alone are insufficient for countering the challenges perpetrated by violent extremists. While the use of surgical instruments, to address a malignant malady in the short term, cannot be ruled out, prudence demands that the efforts should be directed, in the long term, towards finding out the real causes of the disease and its effective treatment.⁵ Countering terrorism is no longer sufficient; a global holistic framework primarily aimed at prevention is necessary to successfully stand up against the perils of violent extremism. There is a need to take a more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only on-going, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism that have given rise to the emergence of these new and more virulent groups.⁶

As the threat of violent extremism evolves, and more youth embrace extremist ideologies, it places a growing burden on the educational system to serve as a "soft tool" but also as a pillar in preventing violent extremism. It is necessary to equip our youth with "self-defence" training which will make them resilient to the eroding ideas of violent extremists and it is precisely through education that these tactics of "self-defence of the mind" must be installed. Disarming the process of radicalisation must start as early as possible, and the educational systems must instil positive values and promote an inclusive mind-set that nurtures diversity, leaving no room for discrimination and hatred into the innocent and knowledge seeking minds of the youth. Schools must remain a healthy environment for learning, personal growth, physical and cognitive development, where collaborative efforts will help youth make informed decisions about the

⁴ Sgueo, Gianluca, *Counter-terrorism Funding in the EU budget*, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2016, page 2

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/580904/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)580904_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/580904/EPRS_BRI(2016)580904_EN.pdf)

⁵ Abbasi, Manzoor Ahmed, *Towards the De-radicalisation of Pakistani Society: The Need for a Balanced and Progressive Education System*, in *The Dialogue – Quarterly Research Journal* (On-Line Edition), a Publication of Qurtuba University, Pakistan, 2014, volume IX, number 3, page 245

http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/9_3/Dialogue_July_September2014_255-270.pdf

⁶ *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, Report of the Secretary-General*, page 2, paragraph 6

impact violent extremism poses to their lives, families, and communities.⁷ This paper will examine the approaches for using education as a tool for the prevention of violent extremism in the frames of promoting diversity and inclusion, with a primary focus on international resolutions in this regard.

2. International and national frameworks

The obligation for providing effective structures, policies and conditions for adequate education is addressed by various international resolutions, covenants, declarations and other documents, as well as by the constitutions and laws of nearly all states.

In this context, the United Nations has acknowledged the importance of preventing violent extremism through education, which is visible through the fact that education is an integral part of all UN documents concerning countering terrorism and prevention of extremism. Relevant UN documents addressing the issue of prevention of violent extremism include: the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy⁸ which has recognized the need for establishing and encouraging education and public awareness programmes that promote a culture of peace, justice and human development, ethnic, national and religious tolerance, and respect for all religions, religious values, beliefs or cultures, and has stressed UNESCO's key role in this regard; the UN Security Council Resolution 2178 on 'Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist

⁷ *Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Partner Engagement, 2016, page 4

<https://info.publicintelligence.net/FBI-PreventingExtremismSchools.pdf>

⁸ With the UN General Assembly Resolution 60/288, the UN adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy on 8 September 2006. The strategy is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism through which all Member States have agreed to a common strategic and operational approach to fighting terrorism, including a wide array of measures ranging from strengthening state capacity to counter terrorist threats to better coordinating United Nations system's counter-terrorism activities. The General Assembly reviews the Strategy every two years, with the latest (fifth) review being made on 1 July 2016, which included an annexed Plan of Action composed of four pillars: addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

UN General Assembly Resolution 70/291 on 'The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review', adopted on 19 July 2016

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/291

Acts'⁹, which underscores the role education can play in countering terrorist narratives; the UN Security Council Resolution 2250, on 'Youth, Peace and Security', which recognizes that disruption of youth's access to education and economic opportunities has a dramatic impact on durable peace and reconciliation and that the lack of access to (adequate) education and employment blocks the transition to adulthood and leaves lifelong effects, such as political, social and economic exclusion¹⁰, and which urges the Member States to support quality education for peace that equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes¹¹; the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/15 on 'Human Rights and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism', which has called upon states and local entities involved in supporting the prevention and countering of violent extremism efforts to continue to facilitate the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including through human rights education and training, as well as due process and the rule of law¹²; the UN Secretary-General 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism', which emphasizes the need for supporting governments in seeking, developing and implementing education programmes that promote civic education, soft skills, critical thinking, digital literacy, tolerance and respect for diversity, including, for example, peace education modules for the use of school-age children, in order to promote the culture of non-violence¹³; etc.

Furthermore, when it comes to preventing violent extremism through education, the key role is placed within the frames of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to cover all aspects of education. Entrusted to lead the Global Education 2030 Agenda through Sustainable Development Goal 4, UNESCO is operating under Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA). Rooted in the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, UNESCO's contribution to the prevention of violent extremism is focused on three pillars: 1) preventing

⁹ *UN Security Council Resolution 2178 on 'Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts'*, adopted on 24 September 2014, page 7, paragraph 19.

http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf

¹⁰ *UN Security Council Resolution 2250, on 'Youth, Peace and Security'*, adopted on 9 December 2015, page 4
<http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2250-annotated-and-explained.pdf>

¹¹ *Ibid.*, page 15, paragraph 12

¹² *UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/15 on 'Human Rights and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism'*, adopted on 2 October 2015, page 3, paragraph 4

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/232/04/PDF/G1523204.pdf?OpenElement>

¹³ *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, Report of the Secretary-General, page 21 paragraph 58 (h)

violent extremism through education; 2) promoting the positive role of the media in preventing violent extremism; and 3) celebrating cultural diversity alternative narratives in social media.¹⁴ Since the interest of this paper is to examine the role of education in preventing violent extremism, it is important to analyse the actions taken under the first pillar of action. UNESCO seeks to assist countries to deliver education programmes that build young people's resilience to violent extremist messaging and foster a positive sense of identity and belonging, which is undertaken within the framework of Global Citizenship Education. UNESCO's key initiatives in this regard are the "Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A guide for Policy-makers" and the "Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education". The UNESCO's guidance tool for policy-makers aims to help policy-makers within ministries of education prioritize, plan and implement effective actions for the prevention of violent extremism through education, and contribute to national prevention efforts¹⁵, whereas the guide for teachers seeks to provide practical advice on when and how to discuss the issue of violent extremism and radicalisation with learners and help teachers create a classroom climate that is inclusive and conducive to respectful dialogue, open discussion and critical thinking¹⁶.

When it comes to the European Union and the prevention of violent extremism through education, one of the main steps taken in this direction is the 'Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and the Shared Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination through Education'¹⁷, known as the 'Paris Declaration' through which the European Commission substantially enhanced its support for inclusive education. The declaration aims to boost EU-level cooperation on four overarching priorities: ensuring young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competencies, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship; enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the Internet and social media, so as to develop resistance

¹⁴ Singh, Jagtar, Kerr, Paulette, Hamburger, Esther, *Media and Information Literacy: Reinforcing Human Rights, Countering Radicalisation and Extremism*, MILID Yearbook 2016, UNESCO, 2016, page 15

¹⁵ *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A guide for Policy-makers*, UNESCO, page 2

¹⁶ *Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education*, UNESCO, Paris, 2016, page 9
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002446/244676e.pdf>

¹⁷ The 'Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination through education' (Paris Declaration) was adopted at the Informal Meeting of the EU Education Ministers in Paris on 17 March 2015, upon the initiative of the French Minister of Education Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and the European Commissioner Tibor Navracsics
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

to of discrimination and indoctrination; fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs; and promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.¹⁸ In terms of activities in this area, the European Commission has already started with the implementation of a series of concrete measures, including mobilization of funding; creation of a better knowledge base and reinforced policy support related to inclusive education as well as to the teaching of social and civic competences; publishing the annual Education and Training Monitor aimed at capturing the evolution of Europe's education and training systems; conducting a study on citizenship education across Europe; publishing the report on examines how European education systems can better prepare future citizens for tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility; enhancing the use of eTwinning¹⁹; establishing a network under the Erasmus+ programme to allow direct contacts with positive role models for young people; expanding the European Toolkit for Schools²⁰; encouraging more teacher training courses on citizenship education through Erasmus+ etc. Following the signing of the declaration, in 2016, two dedicated expert groups were launched – one focusing on education and training and the other on youth work, with the aim to accelerate the exchange of good practices, inspire policymakers on issues listed in the Declaration and prepare concrete policy guidance tools.²¹

In addition to the international framework of documents, governments worldwide have been focused on developing national policies aimed at prevention of violent extremism, and all currently existing national policies in this regard have accentuated the importance of education as a crucial measure in building resilience. The United States alone have a multitude of national strategies for countering terrorism and prevention of violent extremism. For the purpose of this

¹⁸ *Promoting Inclusion and Fundamental Values through Formal and Non-Formal Learning, EU level Measures to Implement the Paris Declaration*, European Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/news/2016/docs/inclusion-fundamental-values-leaflet_en.pdf

¹⁹ Reaching over 300,000 teachers, the online e-Twinning platform is the largest teacher network in the world, aiming to connect educators and classrooms across Europe, to step up support to teachers and foster exchanges, in particular with the aim of promoting fundamental values and citizenship.
<https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

²⁰ The European Toolkit for Schools is an online platform which offers good practice examples and resources on how to introduce collaborative approaches in schools to improve inclusiveness and achieve success for all.
<http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/europeantoolkitforschools>

²¹ *Education and Radicalisation - the Paris Declaration One Year On*
https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20160316-paris-declaration-education_en

paper, it is important to mention that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has published a guide for schools and educators, which aims to educate school personnel about at-risk behaviours and activities that assist students with reducing social and psychological commitment to violence as a method of resolving a grievance²². The ‘Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools’ guide is designed with the intent to be a powerful tool for empowering schools and local communities who play prominent roles in building resilience and providing influence for youth. For the most part, states worldwide have developed national strategies that focus on teaching school subjects that promote tolerance, understanding and citizenship. Most western countries and a significant number of other countries from the rest of the world have developed compulsory school curricula which include citizenship education, civic values and cultural diversity. For example, in recognition of schools as influencers when it comes to preparing young people to challenge violent extremist influences, under its Prevent Strategy, the United Kingdom’s has developed a variety of activities primarily focused on “developing a positive and inclusive ethos that championed democratic values and human rights”²³. Nevertheless, it is worth to mention that, when it comes to the UK, the strategy encountered stern disapproval and critics argued against its isolating character. For example, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights argued that “the programme, which is developed to stop children and young people from being drawn into terrorism, risks isolating the communities whose cooperation is most needed to fight violent extremism”²⁴. Indeed, this has pointed out a different dimension of the importance of how educational policies are structured; states need to adopt national policies which are preventive, but not repressive, in the course of their counter-terrorism efforts.

Upon analysing the abovementioned international and national frameworks, one can conclude that although they may vary in detail, proposed practices and solutions, they unanimously portray that efforts towards the prevention of violent extremism are unlikely to achieve significant results without a cohesive education system based on inclusive and equitable policies and practices.

²² *Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools*, FBI, page 4

²³ *Prevent Strategy*, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department By Command of Her Majesty, Stationary Office Limited, 2011, page 68

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

²⁴ *Commissioner on UK 'Prevent' Strategy and Education*, Strasbourg, 2016

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/-/commissioner-on-uk-prevent-strategy-and-education?desktop=true>

3. The role of education

The spread of violent extremism, known as radicalisation, is one of the main global challenges of modern society; it is influenced by a number of factors, among which an unbalanced education system plays a major role. Education (or the lack of such) plays a key role in the behaviour of individuals. A cohesive, purposeful and well planned/organized education system produces a responsible citizenry, whereas, a divisive, ineffective and disjointed education system produces confused and directionless citizenry.²⁵ If a society is educated, enlightened and economically prosperous, the prospects of extremism, transforming into militancy, radicalisation, violence and terrorism become proportionately dim. But, if the society is backward, underdeveloped and illiterate, the challenge of extremism becomes serious.²⁶

When analysing the role of education within national and international strategies aimed at preventing violent extremism, one can recognize five common key components: the need for inclusive education policies which will address diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem; the need for building resilience through equipping learners with socio-emotional and behavioural skills in addition to cognitive skills; the need for education policies that will address the specific drivers of violent extremism both directly and indirectly; the need for equipping educators with proper skills and training in both prevention and deradicalisation; and the need to promote the importance of establishing close connections and partnership between the schools and all other relevant factors which influence the youth, such as their families and the wider community.

3.1 Educational policies and procedures

Some analysts argue that there is no clear link between education levels and extremism and that the lack of education is not among the primary causes of violent extremism, pointing out to the existence of highly educated extremists coming both from countries with low and high

²⁵ Abbasi, Manzoor Ahmed, *Towards the Deradicalisation of Pakistani Society: The Need for a Balanced and Progressive Education System*, page 257

²⁶ Moonis Ahmar, *The Challenge of Extremism in Pakistan: Are there Lessons to be Learnt from the Experience of Singapore?*, IPRI Journal, 2011, Volume 11, Number 2, page 44

provisions of education. They argue that there is an absence of statistical correlation in general terms between levels of education and involvement in extremism, substantiating their claim with the deficiency of quantitative empirical data. Nwafor and Nwogu, for example, argue that most Western recruits are ‘from middle-class families with secular upbringing, and with high school education’²⁷, whereas Sageman argues that investigation of transnational terrorists shows that ‘over 60 percent had some higher or further level education’²⁸. Nevertheless, even though the fact that education does not pose a “bullet-proof” barrier against the influence of violent extremism, it is certainly a strong asset in building resilience towards this social evil, especially if the educational programs and policies are inclusive and equitable, and in addition to cognitive skills, also focus on nurturing socio-emotional and behavioural skills that support respect for diversity and responsible engagement. Furthermore, it is important to accentuate the long-term character of the role of education in the prevention of violent extremism; quantitative empirical data in this regard could only be available in several years or decades when the education policies would have had time to show results. One should also not disregard the available qualitative data which, albeit their case specific character, show a positive impact of the inclusive educational policies both in terms of prevention and in terms of deradicalisation. For example, the Sabaoon Project in Pakistan, aimed at deradicalising and rehabilitating former militant youth involved in violent extremist activities, has shown that the target group was composed mainly of children who have dropped out of school or been truant and are largely illiterate.²⁹ Through their three-step model of assessment at induction, intervention and reintegration, the project has successfully

²⁷ Nwafor, Naboth H.A., and Nwogu, Godpower, A. I., ‘*Implication of Radicalisation for Nigerian Education: A Philosophical Analysis*’, Journal of Education and Practice, 2015, Volume 6, Number 21, page 204
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079143.pdf>

²⁸ Sageman, Marc, Understanding Terror Networks, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004, quoted in Silke, Andrew, Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalisation, European Journal of Criminology, Volume 5 (1), European Society of Criminology and SAGE Publications, 2008, page 107
http://archives.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/SILKE_2008_Holy_Warriors_-_Exploring_the_psychological_Processes_of_Jihadi_Radicalisation.pdf

²⁹ The Sabaoon Project, initiated by the Pakistan Army and run by the Social Welfare Academics and Training organization (SWAaT) since 2009, has been implemented to deradicalise and rehabilitate former militant youth who were involved in violent extremist activities and apprehended by the army in Swat and surrounding areas in Pakistan.
 Peracha, Feriha, Khan, Raafia Raees, Ayub, Asma, Aijaz, Kanza, *Improve Critical Education, Improve Prevention: Lessons from Deradicalising Young Taliban Fighters (Case Study: Pakistan)* in *How to Prevent: Extremism and Policy Opinions*, edited by Koser, Khalid and Thorp, Thomas, from the Global Perspective Series, Tony Blair Faith Foundation, 2015, page 49-54
http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/sites/default/files/How%20to%20Prevent_Global%20Perspectives%20Vol%2020.pdf

reintegrated 164 individuals so far, and there has been no recidivism. Furthermore, according to the Report of the UN Secretary-General for the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, while some highly educated individuals have played significant roles in violent extremist organizations, many members are poorly educated, often not having completed secondary education.³⁰ As stated in the report, a large number of those individuals have only rudimentary literacy levels and almost no religious knowledge or education, making them vulnerable to indoctrination.

According to UNESCO's "Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A guide for Policy-makers", for effective impact, education policies and practices must, directly and indirectly, address the specific drivers of violent extremism with a mix of short, medium and long-term educational measures. Education policies must, therefore, be aimed at disarming the drivers of violent extremism through educational contents and learning approaches which will enhance learners' resilience to radicalisation. In this regard, fostering the ideals of diversity, inclusion, and tolerance is essential towards building an "inclusive" mindset. A balanced education would equip learners with skills such as socialization, tolerance, forbearance, the sense of justice, personal integrity and uprightness; it is character building in its essence. The emphasis on character building links education strongly with ethics because every educational system has to decide what kind of character is its deal.³¹

Discussing the importance of a comprehensive holistic approach towards using education as key measure for preventing violent extremism, the Global Counterterrorism Forum has published a report³² focused on three broad themes: people, programs, and policies. The report encompasses recommendations following expert and high-level meetings and discussions, and underscores that, in building community resilience against violent extremism, utilizing existing networks,

³⁰ *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, Report of the Secretary-General, page 9, paragraph 34

³¹ Qureshi, Ishtiaq Hussain, *Education in Pakistan: An Inquiry into Objectives and Achievements*, MA'AREF Publishers Limited, Karachi, 1975, page 200

³² The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and Hedayah—the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, which are among the most relevant institutions working in the field of countering violent extremism, frequently organize expert, as well as high-level meetings to discuss the role of education. On 18-19 September 2013, they co-hosted an expert roundtable on the "Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism", where policymakers, researchers, and practitioners discussed challenges and best practices in this area, which was followed by a high-level meeting on 25 September 2013 on the sidelines of the 68th UN General Assembly. Conclusions and recommendations were published in their *Global Counterterrorism Forum report on The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism*, 2013
http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dec13_Education_Expert_Meeting_Note.pdf

resources (human and material), and programs, which should be further strengthened by informed, well-designed, and inclusive policies, is of crucial importance.

Furthermore, schools must be based on good quality education to provide learners with relevant skills for their future, and they need to promote social cohesion as well as knowledge regarding sensitive issues, such as local and global conflicts and tensions, in order to help learners be informed in this regards. The FBI also points out to the importance of increasing learner's awareness about the forms and dynamics of violent extremism. Regarding educational projects for increasing awareness in this regard, one example is the 'Beyond Bali Education Resource'³³ in Australia, which represents a five-module program for schools that is specifically designed to build social cognitive resilience to violent extremism by engaging self-sanctions and preparing students to challenge the influence of violent extremism that can lead to moral disengagement. Moreover, focusing on the importance of a well-rounded educational experience that encourages creative thinking and curiosity for a diverse range of interests, aimed at increasing exposure to diversity, critical thinking, and collaboration, the Global Counterterrorism Forum report underscores that including a civic education and citizenship responsibility component in curricula could equip students with the social and communication skills necessary to address their grievances in a positive, nonviolent way, and it may help build a shared sense of culture within a society that consists of a diverse mix of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.³⁴ Enhancing logic, problem solving, and critical thinking skills of young people was also seen as a vital element in preventing violence and extremism, as well as cultural learning which may enhances self-awareness and identity, while also opening learner's minds to different customs, practices, and traditions.³⁵ Finally, the report points out the positive impact of sports in terms of

³³ The Beyond Bali Education Resource, funded by the Australian Governments' Building Community Resilience Grants of the Federal Attorney General's Department, applies a conceptual framework grounded in moral disengagement. The theory of moral disengagement has been applied to the study of radicalisation to violent extremism to explain how individuals can cognitively reconstruct the moral value of violence and carry out inhumane acts. The mechanisms of moral disengagement through which individuals justify violence, dehumanise victims, disregard the harmful consequences of violence and absolve themselves of blame have been used in the construction of violent extremist narratives. However, they have not been applied to the development of intervention strategies that aim to counter the radicalising influences of violent extremist narratives.

Aly, Anne, Taylor, Elisabeth, and Karnovsky, Saul, *Moral Disengagement and Building Resilience to Violent Extremism: An Education Intervention*, Curtin University, Perth page 2

https://espace.curtin.edu.au/bitstream/handle/20.500.11937/6270/199424_199424%20Anne%20Aly.pdf?sequence=2

³⁴ *Global Counterterrorism Forum report on The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism*, page 4

³⁵ Ibid.

building teamwork, social, and leadership skills, and instilling a sense of identity and belonging.³⁶

3.2 The role of educators

In addition to family and peers, educators are the third group of people who have direct and substantial impact on the development of children. Therefore, they are in a unique position to contribute to the prevention of factors that enable radicalisation, as well as to facilitate intervention activities for those who have already taken or are on a path towards getting involved with violent extremism. Regarding prevention, as stated in FBI's guide for "Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools", educators should impart affirmative messaging and support students in developing strong social and emotional well-being as essential components for preventing violent extremism and other types of violent acts. These preventative measures would diminish the likelihood of youth falling in the claws of violent extremism. As stated in the Paris declaration, teachers have a key role: they need to be prepared to see diversity as an opportunity in the classroom.³⁷ According to UNESCO's "Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through education", teachers should seek to reinforce as much as possible the full range of skills that enable learners to participate more generally in civic life as informed global citizens, which implies that learning objectives should cover three domains of learning: the cognitive, the socio-emotional and the behavioural. Furthermore, according to the FBI, when it comes to deradicalisation, the daily interactions with students allow educators to observe and assess concerning behaviours and communications and raise the alarm when students embrace extremist ideologies or progress on a trajectory toward violence. In its Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, the Global Counterterrorism Forum recommends that rehabilitation efforts and programmes include cognitive skills programmes and basic education courses, as well as vocational training.³⁸ On the other hand, their report on "The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism", the Global Counterterrorism Forum cautions that teachers who do not have the proper support or

³⁶ Ibid, page 5

³⁷ *Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination Through education (Paris Declaration)*

³⁸ *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A guide for Policy-makers*, page 24

tools to address the prevention of violent extremism could actually cause more harm than good. Furthermore, it is also pointed out that teachers are already burdened with many challenges, and adding a complex topic such as countering violent extremism to their curricula may actually hinder their ability to recognize signs of radicalization and therefore suggests integrating lessons on preventing violent extremism into existing curricula in an intelligible and easily digestible way³⁹. The report also stresses that building effective partnerships between the education sector and the greater community, as an important factor in developing resilience to divisive narratives, may help to develop opportunities for learners to engage in positive activities in their communities, and may create a sense of shared responsibility for their safety and development. Furthermore, it states that educational institutions should also play a role in facilitating community dialogue and strengthening the relationship between institutions and their communities, with emphasis that involving families and the broader community in the education system is crucial. Along with building effective partnerships, it is pointed out that there is a need to build and strengthen trust between governments and educational institutions, and between schools and communities. Programs for the prevention of violent extremism should be viewed as a means of supporting the well-being of the community, rather than as means of monitoring or gathering information against communities⁴⁰ (which was, for example, the major criticism against the UK's "Preventive Strategy").

4. Conclusion

"By arming young minds with a world perspective rooted in respect, social justice, diversity, and critical thinking, we can counter radicalisation as it arises and even prevent its growth in the first place. By investing in their future, we secure ours. The alternative is too tragic to even contemplate. Without a quality education, these children are in danger of being exploited, forced to work, pressured into early marriage, conscripted as child soldiers, or become prey to the siren song of violent extremism."

Antony Blinken

Former United States Deputy Secretary of State

³⁹ *Global Counterterrorism Forum report on The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism*, page 4

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, page 2

Without making adequate arrangements for a balanced and inclusive education, no nation can expect progress. Underscoring the role education can play in countering terrorist narratives in its Resolution 2178, the UN Security Council emphasizes the importance of efforts towards the development of non-violent alternative avenues for conflict prevention and resolution by affected individuals and local communities in order to decrease the risk of radicalisation to terrorism, and of efforts to promote peaceful alternatives to violent narratives espoused by foreign terrorist fighters⁴¹. As stated above, regardless of their variances, all current international and national frameworks on this issue unanimously agree that efforts towards the prevention of violent extremism are unlikely to achieve significant results without a cohesive education system based on inclusive and equitable policies and practices.

Education alone can have only a limited impact on the prevention of violent extremism if it is not framed within a holistic approach to preventive measures on the local, regional and global level. In addition to providing quality education, more broadly effective education policies and interventions with the specific goal of countering violent extremism should be focused on communities where youth are vulnerable to violent extremism and specifically tailored to fit the local context.⁴² As stated in the Global Counterterrorism Forum report, when building community resilience against violent extremism, utilizing existing networks, resources (human and material), and programs, which should be further strengthened by informed, well-designed, and inclusive policies, is of crucial importance.

To conclude, the growing number of studies show that education, as a "soft tool", is the pillar of non-violent alternative measures both in the prevention of radicalisation and in deradicalisation. Proper short, medium and long-term educational measures can have a crucial impact on countering the drivers of violent extremism, which is why such educational policies, complemented with all-level support and cooperation, are vital in the battle against the perpetual threat of violence and terrorism.

⁴¹ *UN Security Council Resolution 2178 on 'Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts'*, page 7, paragraph 19.

⁴² *Global Counterterrorism Forum report on The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism*, page 2

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