



Youth Extremism as a response to global threats?

A threat-regulation perspective on violent extremism among the youth

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Istanbul Bilgi University, European Institute

Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence

ERC AdG Prime Youth

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About the ERC Advanced Grant Project: PRIME Youth

This research analyses the current political, social, and economic context of the European Union, which is confronted by two substantial crises, namely the global financial crisis and the refugee crisis. These crises have led to the escalation of fear and prejudice among the youth who are specifically vulnerable to discourses that culturalise and stigmatize the “other”.

Young people between the ages of 18 to 30, whether native or immigrant-origin, have similar responses to globalization-rooted threats such as deindustrialization, isolation, denial, humiliation, precariousness, insecurity, and anomia. These responses tend to be essentialised in the face of current socio-economic, political and psychological disadvantages. While a number of indigenous young groups are shifting to right-wing populism, a number of Muslim youths are shifting towards Islamic radicalism. The common denominator of these groups is that they are both downwardly mobile and inclined towards radicalization. Hence, this project aims to scrutinize social, economic, political and psychological sources of the processes of radicalization among native European youth and Muslim-origin youth with migration background, who are both inclined to express their discontent through ethnicity, culture, religion, heritage, homogeneity, authenticity, past, gender and patriarchy.

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Abstract

Violent extremism is rising across the globe as indicated by the growing number of attacks conducted by terrorist organizations. It is known that violent extremism is carried out mainly by youth due to developmental specificities. Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that ideologically motivated violence stems from threat-regulation processes (i.e. aiming to restore significance, control and certainty). Nevertheless, few studies from the threat-regulation literature have focused on youth samples and on the political context in which radicalization processes occur. Here, we demonstrate that one driver of the surge in violent extremism might be globalization. To do so, we review the evidence that shows globalization increases perception of affiliative, economic and existential threats. In return, studies suggest that these kinds of threats promote violent extremism among youth samples. Therefore, we conclude that the threatening context generated by four decades of globalization might be a risk factor for youth extremism in the long run.

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Introduction

Violent extremism – defined as the use of violent means to achieve political goals - is currently a central preoccupation for governments, and state agencies trying to fight political violence and terrorism around the world (Alava, Frau-Meigs & Hassan, 2017). Though the number of terrorist attacks has been declining in the last couple of years, violent extremism is still at an historical high level with an annual number of casualties estimated at around 25,000 people annually (START, 2018). So far, social science research has established that violent extremism is not linked with either strictly social-structural or psychopathological/individual factors *per se* (Arciszewski, Verliac, Goncalves & Kruglanski, 2009), but involves a combination of three groups of factors (Decety, Pape & Workman, 2018; Hafez & Mullins, 2015). Individuals will engage in violent extremism as a) a function of the number of violent extremists in their own social network (i.e., the number of related persons engaged in violent organizations; Sageman, 2004); b) a result of their relatively high frequency of exposure to violence-legitimizing ideologies (Atran, 2016); and c) as a result of their motivation to achieve a meaningful purpose in their life (a higher purpose allowing for self-transcendence and a feeling that one's life 'matters', see *inter alia* Kruglanski et al., 2014). This motivational aspect is particularly important to understand why individuals engage in violent extremism, and constitutes significant part of the psychological literature focusing on the determinants of radical political behaviour.

In fact, psychological research over the past decades has established that individuals react to various threats (death, exclusion, failure etc.) by extremizing their adherence to ideologies, which lead to violent intergroup behaviour through processes pertaining to threat-regulation (Lieberman, Solomon, Greenberg & McGregor, 1999; Kay, Whitson, Gaucher & Galinsky, 2009; Xu & Mc Gregor, 2018). This is because meaning systems (including religions, and political ideologies) buffer anxiety (Greenberg, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Chatel, 1992; Jost, 2017) and provide individuals with feelings of living in an

understandable/controllable environment in the face of a social world rife with uncertainty and chaos (Whitson & Galinsky, 2008; Proulx, Heine and Vohs, 2010; Proulx & Inzlicht, 2012). Consequently, both violent political and religious extremism stem partly from compensatory behaviours aimed at restoring one's sense of purpose in the face of symbolic (e.g. humiliation) and real (e.g. terrorist attacks) threats and the feelings of loss of significance (Schumpe, Bélanger, Moyano & Nisa, 2018). These findings make it clear that a threat-regulation approach to violent extremism is promising (Jonas et al. 2014).

Nevertheless, some issues in the threat regulation literature remain unaddressed so far. First, from radical Islamist organizations (ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Qaida etc.) to extreme-left factions (Anarchists, Black-Blocks, YPG) and neo-fascists movements (EU Identity-Youth, US Alt-Right), a main predictor of engagement into violent extremism remains young age, with young individuals making up the bulk of violent radical organizations (< 30; e.g. Onuoha, 2014; Forscher & Kteily, 2017; Aytekin, 2019). Second, extant literature demonstrates similar reactions to different threats in the laboratory from loss of control to lack of access to material resources, and relative deprivation in terms of ideological extremization. However, few studies - leaving aside studies pertaining to terrorism or economic crises (e.g. Vasilopoulos, Marcus, Valentino & Foucault, 2016) - provide an analysis of how global political phenomena generate these kinds of threats in the real world.

In this paper, we will argue that the observed rise in youth perpetrated extremism across the globe could be partly due to the way developmental specificities of youth (in terms of greater sensitivity to threats, and poorer emotion regulation skills) interact with exposure to specific threats generated by either globalization's tangible effects on societies or its use within political discourse. To do so, we will provide a brief description of the developmental specificities of the youth. We will then describe the likely threats that change in societies over the past thirty years have been likely to generate. After reviewing the extant literature on threat's effects among youth, we will turn to a discussion of how a threat-regulation perspective might highlight novel research foci for understanding youth extremism, specifically regarding the global and dynamic nature of societal threat-defense cycles.

Here, we will be interested in both violent and non-violent (i.e. ideological) extremism, which we will refer as extremism or youth extremism when pertaining to youth populations. If ideological extremism does not necessarily lead to violent extremism because of the fact that attitudes do not straightforwardly predict behaviour (Kruglanski, Jasko, Chernikova & Milyavsky 2018), political extremism is nonetheless correlated with violent extremism and constitutes a risk factor for engagement in violent extremism (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). In this study, we will repeatedly use the following terms: extremism, violent extremism, and radicalization. Extremism refers to the extremity of one's ideological views while violent extremism pertains to one's enactment of violent ideologically driven behaviour. We will use the

term radicalization to describe the process by which one is lead to extremism and/or violent extremism (Doosje et al., 2016).

From violent extremism to youth extremism

As previously mentioned, the fact that most individuals who engage in violent extremism are young individuals is of utmost importance (García-Coll & Marks, 2017). Indeed, because of biological and social-psychological factors linked with maturation, young individuals (children and adolescents up to 18 years of age) have been found to be particularly sensitive to propaganda efforts from violent organizations' recruiters (Heinke & Persson, 2016). This observation therefore calls for bringing in some insights from developmental psychology when studying the effects of threat-regulation processes upon engagement in political violence. In fact, young individuals (from 12 to 25) differ from their older counterparts in some crucial aspects.

First, and foremost, there is considerable evidence that shows adolescents experience more extreme and variable affects (Larson, Csikszentmihalyi & Graef, 1980; Larson, Moneta, Richards & Wilson, 2002). However, recent evidence suggests that, contrary to some popular beliefs, the variability in affect among adolescents might be attributable to both deficits in emotion regulation and emotion reactivity (sensitivity), which are stronger as regards social than non-social threats (social exclusion vs. physical harm for instance, see Silvers McRae, Gabrieli, Gross, Remy & Ochsner, 2012). This is because adolescent development implies major changes in cortical structures such as the amygdala, the brain area that plays a major role in mediating fear and aggression (Doyère, Dèbiec, Monfils, Schafe & LeDoux, 2007). Magnetic Resonance Imaging studies have shown that amygdalar volume peaks around 12 and 14 years (Goddings et al., 2014). As such, a converging body of research have revealed some specific deleterious effects of chronic exposure to stress during adolescence, specifically concerning emotion regulation (McCormick & Mathews, 2010; McCormick and Green, 2013; Romeo, 2017).

In addition to greater threat/stress sensitivity because of emotional maturation, youth are particularly sensitive to social stimuli, leading to seemingly irrational risky behaviour. In fact, considering that for youth, the risk of peer ostracism outweighs other negative decision outcomes (Blakemore, 2018), one can understand that they may be especially prone to extreme compensatory behaviour to resolve threats with the motivation to be socially included by their peers (from significance/humiliation to economic threats that prevent achieving a desirable social status). This is supported by recent imaging studies highlighting a continuous, sustained development of brain regions involved in social cognition during adolescence, which has consequences on adolescents' sensitivity to social rewards for instance (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005). Thus, developmental factors underlie youth sensitivity to peer influence /rejection and

it seems that stress regulation skills after ostracism keep maturing from adolescence to adulthood (Sebastian, Viding, Williams & Blakemore, 2010).

Because of these developmental specificities regarding threat regulation skills (and social threats more so), it is possible to highlight that the common extremization pathways among the youth form organizations with objectively diverging political objectives. Furthermore, youth as an age group commit more violence than other age groups (Malti & Averdijk, 2017). For instance, recent work suggests similar developmental factors among German school attackers and Jihadi fighters (Bockler, Leuschner, Zick & Scheithauer, 2018), which pertain threat regulation mechanisms (e.g. performing an attack publicly where victims are attacked because of their symbolic meaning). Other lines of work on more collective level outcomes have also highlighted a causal link between demography and extreme regime change. Investigating data obtained from 110 countries between 1972 to 2009, Weber (2013) found that democratic countries with larger male youth cohorts were more likely to become dictatorships than those with smaller proportions of young men (because males are more prone to aggressive behaviour due to both biological and socialization factors, Buss & Schackelford, 1997). All of these reasons have led researchers to call for research focusing on youth extremism, and to identify the issue of young individuals self-engaging to carry out violent extremism as the main extremism-related threat to societies currently (Stern, 2016).

As we have seen, it seems that the study of violent extremism from a threat regulation perspective might benefit from assessing moderator variables due to the specific developmental stage of youth (children and adolescents). However, we think that youth extremism in response to threat should also be understood by looking at the social ecology of today's youth, especially regarding their exposure to threats. In addition, one political science concept is key to understand the societal context in which extremization processes currently take place: *globalization*.

On globalization and globalism

In political science, globalization refers to contemporary patterns of growing magnitude and intensity of global flows (e.g. populations, economic exchanges, information), in such a way that societies are becoming more and more interconnected and interdependent (Giddens, 1990; Held & Koenig-Archibugi, 2003; Harvey, 2006). As noted by social scientists, this phenomenon would bear on an increase in both density and pace of changes, as rendered possible by the exponential growth in technological advances over the past decades (Held & Koenig-Archibugi, 2003). These changes have both a material and psychological impact (in the beliefs and representations individuals hold), constituting ethnoscapescapes (produced by flows of people), technoscapescapes (the machinery and plant flows), finanscapescapes (produced by the rapid flows of money and stock exchanges), mediascapescapes (images of information) and ideoscapescapes,

(flow of ideas and ideologies; Appadurai, 1997). However, the exact nature of globalization is the object of many debates among political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists. In fact, three main theoretical stances characterize globalization studies.

A first approach (the so-called 'hyperglobalist' thesis) considers globalization as a new era of human history, in which nation states are considered obsolete because they obstruct globalized economies. For the hyperglobalists, globalization is therefore an essentially economic phenomenon which implies the growing borderless character of economic exchanges, along with the decline of ideologies and nation-states, which in their view ought to be (or are progressively) replaced by global governance institutions (UN, NATO, IMF etc.). For these researchers, globalization marks the beginning of a new world order for a global, free-market civilization (Perlmutter, 1991; Strange, 2015; Gill, 2016).

As opposed to the hyperglobalist argument, a second theoretical approach considers that, far from being a mere economic phenomenon, globalization is the main driving force behind the rapid socio-political and economic changes that shape modern societies. The transformationalist thesis argues that rapid development in communication and transportation technologies have led to a blurring of geographical, economic, political and cultural boundaries among nations. However, far from homogenizing cultures, the transformationalists insist on globalization's effect upon nation states and intercultural relations, which still perpetuate and sometimes revive nationalisms and intergroup conflicts (Hannerz, 1992; Friedman, 1992; Giddens, 2000 and more specifically Appadurai, 1997, on the link between globalizations and intercultural relations).

Finally, a third branch of political science theories (the 'skeptical' thesis) contend that globalization is merely an economic phenomenon, but that it is mostly non-existent. In fact, the skeptical approach to globalization claims that the contemporary world is even less interconnected than it was in the 19th century when imperial powers occupied 9/10 of the world's surface. Stressing the increasing regional gaps and growing inequalities between the rich and the poor, the skeptical thesis considers globalization to be an ideological construction. Some skeptics argue that globalization is sometimes used as a label for 'Americanization', which would serve to mask its influence as a hegemonic power (Hirst & Thompson, 1996).

For the purpose of our argument, we assume that the various theoretical conceptualizations of globalization do not have much empirical effects in terms of threat generation, and this for three main reasons. First, there is an evidence that growing global financialization can bring adverse economic effects such as deindustrialization, unemployment and relative socio-economic deprivation (Kaya, 2012; Tori & Onaran, 2015; Gambarotto, Rangone & Solari, 2019), thus realistic threats (unemployment, relative deprivation) which all have the potential to generate compensatory responses, and, have we argue, especially among the youth. Second, as some political scientists argue, if globalism is not a phenomenon

in and of itself, there is a growing prevalence of political discourses arguing for its existence and emphasizing its supposed effects and/or benefits. This ideology is known as *globalism* (Habermas, 2000; Steger, 2005). Its emphasis on economic openness, the need to keep up with the pace of change if one wishes 'not to be left behind' as well as on global competition between national workforces is very likely to generate perceptions of threats even in absence of tangible material effects of globalization.

Third, there is ample evidence in favour of some societal changes over the past decades whether we label those as globalization or not (Manners & Whitman, 2000; Kinnvall, 2002). As a matter of fact, Kinnvall (2004) observed that changes have happened in terms of scale (social connections/exchanges beyond geographical borders increased), speed (the pace of life has increased as well as the possibility to travel faster in more and more distant places; Virilio, 1991) and cognition. This last domain - affected by rapid societal changes - is of particular interest to us. Indeed, as this Kinnvall noted, '*there is an increased perception of the globe as a smaller place-that events elsewhere have consequences for our everyday political, social, and economic lives, affecting individuals' sense of being*' (2004: 743; Giddens, 1990).

A globally threatening environment?

Despite the lack of consensus on the exact source of changes over the past three decades, there seems to be a consensual diagnosis as regards the perceived and real transformations that have been affecting societies throughout the World since the last 30 years. We will now review these transformations in accordance with the general model of threat/defense (Jonas et al., 2014), to highlight how they may affect individuals in terms of perceived/experienced threat. We will argue these globalism generated threats to include three different domains: economic (e.g. unemployment, downwards social mobility), social affiliative (e.g. identity threats, marginalization) and existential (e.g. feelings of powerlessness, uncertainty about the World).

Major economic changes in most of the developed countries have occurred from the end of the 1970's onwards. These economic policy changes were characterized by a rapid shift away from Keynesian macroeconomic policies to more neo-classical and monetarist ones focusing on job market flexibilization, privatization of public companies/services, decreased State intervention in the economic affairs and structural adjustment measures throughout the 1980's and 1990's (Hurrell & Woods, 1999; Kinnvall, 2004). Though this policy shift intended to increase job creation and increase civil society's economic/political freedom (Kinnvall, 2004), adverse impacts were actually observed in many countries (Hoogvelt, 2001; Kinnvall, 2004). Among these, economists have raised concerns regarding the rapid growth of wealth inequalities both between and within countries, even though global GDP has demonstrated constant growth (e.g. Piketty, 2015). More recently, it was observed that in 2018, bottom

half of the world population in terms of wealth have become 11% poorer while the wealth of billionaires has displayed a rise in 12% (OXFAM, 2019). Whatever the economic justification might be, this global trend of rising inequalities has a number of negative psychological consequences.

In fact, it is a well-known fact that economic inequality is directly, and causally linked with increased levels of violent extremism (Kennedy, Kawachi, Prothrow-Stith, Lochner & Gupta, 1998; Wilkinson, 2002; Wilkinson, 2004; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015). Therefore, inequality may generate more social unrest and instability that can generate further perceptions of a threatening social environment, thus leading to compensatory responses in terms of increased violent extremism. Second, the effects of economic inequalities generally increase anti-minority and anti-immigrant prejudices, as it increases threats linked to perceptions of intergroup competition for access to scarce resources (Sherif 1966). Accordingly, current research on so-called relative gratification (i.e. benefiting from increased access to material resources)/deprivation processes point at higher prejudice levels among both gratified (i.e. beneficiaries of the inequality) and deprived (i.e. the economically disadvantaged) individuals following exposure to actual or perceived inequality (Guimond & Dambrun, 2002; Urbanska & Guimond, 2018; Mols & Jetten, 2017). This is because prejudice helps individuals rationalize intergroup competition to maintain (among the gratified) or secure (among the deprived) access to resources (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994). Thus, global economic threats are likely to cause surges in violent far-right extremism and nationalist-ideologically driven violence. Even increased nationalistic sentiments due to economic threats may be sufficient to generate more threat perception, since the link between nationalism and prejudice is mediated by increased perceptions of immigrants/minorities as both culturally and socio-economically threatening (Badea, Iyer & Aebischer, 2018).

This perception of threat coming from minorities with immigrant backgrounds (regardless of ethnicity or religion) then has ripple effects on societies in terms of threat and defense. Increases in perception of symbolic threats (Stephan, Diaz-Loving & Duran, 2000; Verkuyten, 2018) render assimilation attempts from cultural minorities even harder (Kunst, Sadeghi, Tahir, Sam & Thomsen, 2016), and lead to increased intergroup conflicts as minorities themselves feel more and more threatened by the native background majority groups (Doosje et al., 2016; Kteily, Hodson & Bruneau, 2016). And the more oppressed minority groups feel, the more likely they become supportive of political violence and radical action (including terrorism) in the name of their group to demand/defend civil rights or restore a sense of justice (Pfundmair, 2018; Pretus et al., 2018; Lobato, Moya, Moyano & Trujillo, 2018). Recent research even demonstrates a clear causal positive effect of far-right wing votes/demonstrations (i.e. anti-Muslim resentment) upon support for ISIS and prevalence of ISIS activists across the globe (Mitts, 2019). In return increased intergroup conflicts through acts of terrorism/political violence are further deleterious in terms

of discrimination and prejudice (greater ingroup bias, Fritsche et al., 2013; increased anti-immigrant attitudes, Weise, Arciszewski, Verhac, Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 2012). Some side effects of these intergroup conflicts may even have global consequences through increased support for war/retaliatory policies (Pyszczynski, Abdollahi, Solomon, Greenberg, Cohen & Weise, 2006) which may 'export threats abroad' so to speak.

Besides the realistically threatening consequences of the neo-liberal policies of the 1970s, other effects may be due to more socially and existentially driven concerns, which Kinnvall (2004) already identified as a form of '*ontological insecurity*' (in terms of how individuals perceive their selves and national identities). Not only degrading intergroup relations, the decrease in job security for the lower and middle classes (i.e. Hoogvelt, 2001) also directly impacts perceptions of threat regarding control and meaning (linked with uncertainty) motives. In addition, indeed, findings from the threat-defense literature in social psychology during the past three decades converge in providing abundant evidence for increases in violent extreme response in the face of control; safety or meaning threats (Jonas et al., 2014). Such responses include increased extrinsic (radical) religiosity (Kay, Gaucher, McGregor & Nash, 2010), political extremism (Pyszczynski, Solomon & Greenberg, 2015), left (Napier, Huang, Vonasch & Bargh 2017; Lambert, Eadeh & Hanson, 2018) or right-wing shifts (Jost, 2017).

Another consequence of globalization (in developing countries), and the collapse of the Soviet Union (in former Soviet countries) has to do with the dismantlement of pre-existing social structures. Even though there are positive effects to democratization and liberalization of societies, a negative side effect has been the dislocation of traditional, societal orders (whether post-Soviet collapse or due to rising equalitarian/progressive norms, Kolodner, 1995). In fact, when analysing suicide behaviour, Durkheim (1897) already insisted on the social factors that underlie extreme behaviours. Introducing the concept of anomie as a social disorder, he argued that societies undergoing rapid shifts (economic or normative) could lead individuals to detach themselves from society and to reject the social norms prevailing in their communities. A societal state of anomie thus leads to perceived 'normlessness' (Durkheim, 1897; Teymoori et al., 2016). However, further investigations have demonstrated that societal anomie could generate further psychological consequences in the form of feelings of anomia (also labelled 'alienation'; Seeman, 1975). Anomia occurs whenever one's values conflict with the values and norms of their society (Travis, 1993; Srole, 1956; Meier & Bell, 1959, Zhao & Cao, 2010). It includes feelings of normlessness, but also of meaninglessness, powerlessness, self-estrangement and social isolation (Seeman, 1959; Smith & Bohm, 2008, Levina, Perejolkina, Martinsone, Mihailova & Kolesnikova, 2018). It can lead to individual situations of social disaffiliation (Castel, 2000) or '*alienation in the modern sense*' (Travis, 1993). In line with this analysis, recent social psychological research has established that anomia is a cross-cultural predictor of extremism (Troian et al., 2019). Moreover, there is a growing visibility of nostalgia

even among young people under 25 (de Vries and Hoffmann, 2018). Socio-economic conditions, pace of life, diversity and mobility as causes of instability in everyday life may lead individuals to become more nostalgic about the past. Another existential reason behind the revival of extreme ideologies might be the decline of left-wing ideological utopias for promoting social change, which makes individuals to susceptible to populist or extremist discourses (De Certeau, 1984, Huysen, 1995).

Finally, one of the pernicious consequences of increased intergroup tensions and reciprocal threat processes lies in the observation that the growing flow of populations and migration patterns contribute to the decline in support for redistribution and welfare policies (Alesina, Murard & Rapoport, 2019). Notwithstanding the economic consequences of this phenomenon (increased inequality, thus intergroup conflicts), welfare states may provide individuals with a sense of safety and control, and its decline may fuel even further existential concerns, and threats to existential motives among citizens leading to compensatory responses, (Whitson & Galinsky, 2008). This phenomenon is corroborated by the growing electoral successes of populist parties around the World. These parties propose authoritarian policies, use a civilisationist rhetoric, which directly addresses individuals' concerns of meaning, safety, and order (Kaya & Tecmen, 2019). They often use socio-economic sensitivities of deprived segments of the society and their anti-elitist stance combined with extensive utilisation of the politics of fear appeals to individuals' loss of significance (Kaya, 2016; 2017; Kaya & Tecmen, 2019).

In this section, we established several important contextual considerations. First, we argued that societies in general have experienced consequent changes within the last thirty years. These changes pertain to economic factors but also to societal norms, and prevailing social orders. Second, though beneficial in certain respects (increased individual freedom, decreased poverty rates, more equalitarian norms...), these changes have generated a number of threatening elements that can potentially explain the current revival of nationalisms across the world (populist votes, BREXIT, increasing numbers of so-called 'illiberal democracies'). Third, these threats generate compensatory extreme responses that feed on each other to generate more threat perceptions. This context could partially explain the appeal of violent extremism to youth in different countries. We will now review the body of evidence that has directly examined the effects of threat among youth populations to assess the empirical corroboration for our claim.

Youth extremism as a response to global threats

Scholars commonly argue that engagement into violent extremism –specifically for youth individuals – is a process that begins with a 'sensitivity' phase (i.e. a motivational trigger due to exposure to a threatening event interacting with individual characteristics; Doosje, Moghaddam, Kruglanski, Wolf, Mann & Feddes, 2016; Bélanger et al., 2019). And as we have noted earlier, the socio-economic changes that have

affected societies in the past three decades have likely generated threats pertaining to three main domains: economic, social-affiliative and existential. And so far, the literature on youth responses to these threats provide yet another net of converging evidence for their impact in terms of violent extremization (Ramli, 2005; Pretus et al., 2018; Scheithauer, Leuschner, Bockler, Akhgar & Nitsch, 2018; Lösel, Kinga, Bendera & Jugla, 2019; Bélanger et al., 2019).

As regards economic conditions, a study analysing responses to the 1990 EU Barometer Youth survey showed that, compared to employed youth, unemployed youth reported less confidence in politics, talking less about politics, and more frequently supported revolutionary political ideologies (Bay & Blekesaune, 2002). These results show that economic threat directly generates political extremism among the youth. Moreover, it decreases confidence in politics, hence political efficacy which is a positive predictor of intentions to engage in normative collective action but a negative predictor of engagement in non-normative (including violent) collective action (Tausch, Becker, Spears, Christ, Saab, Singh & Siddiqui, 2011; Barrett & Pachi, 2019). Youth unemployment is also directly linked with engagement with terrorist organizations. Studies have shown this to be the case for a wide range of organization across different geographical areas (e.g. Kaya, forthcoming, 2019; Akanni, 2014; Baotha & Abdile, 2014; Onuonha, 2014). This is because, for youth, economic threats and lack of livelihood opportunities block the transition to adulthood. It keeps them from being able to afford a house or a dowry (which is prevalent in most parts of the World) let alone a wedding, which can lead them to display a host of negative social behaviours (e.g. criminal activities) but also to engage in violent extremism for financial or ideological/existential reasons (Hilker & Fraser, 2009).

Besides realistic economic threats (e.g. unemployment), perceived economic threats also play a key role in generating violent extremism and xenophobia (Mols & Jetten, 2017). In line with the findings from investigations of relative deprivation's effects on general population samples, investigation of perceived economic inequalities among youth populations show that they also trigger extremism among them. For instance, a multilevel analysis of data from more than 5000 Icelandic adolescents in 83 communities (Bernburg, Thorlindsson & Sigfusdottir, 2009) showed a significant effect of economic deprivation on both violence related outcomes (delinquency and violence, which predict subsequent violent extremism, Harpviken, 2019) and psychological antecedents of violent extremism (anger, see Mashuri & Zaduqisti, 2019; normlessness, see Troian et al., 2019; relative family status see Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011). Similarly, hierarchical self-interest (a construct linked with social comparison, individualism, materialist goals of success, and acceptance of social inequality, see Hagan, Rippl, Boehnke & Merkens, 1999), has been found to explain why relatively deprived East German youth expressed more xenophobia than their Western German counterparts and to be predictive of far right-wing attitudes (Boehnke, Hagan & Hefler, 1998; Hagan, Rippl, Boehnke & Merkens, 1999).

Perceived relative deprivation underlies adherence to radical right-wing ideology among samples of Dutch youth, which comprises feelings of ingroup superiority, perceived outgroup threat, illegitimacy of authorities and social disconnection (Doosje, van den Bos, Loseman, Feddes & Mann, 2012; Mierina & Koroleva, 2015). This effect of relative deprivation on support for radical right-wing ideologies is increased by a liberal welfare state context, which is responsible for increased levels subjective socio-economic insecurity (Mierina & Koroleva, 2015). Other lines of research in the US have highlighted the key role of group-based (as opposed to individual-based) relative deprivation in mediating the effects of socio-economic status on prejudice among youth samples (Pettigrew, Christ, Wagner, Meertens, van Dick & Zick, 2008). Finally, these effects of relative deprivation on xenophobia among young individuals hold across at least twenty-eight countries with an estimated global prevalence of 30% of the youth population (Edelstein, 2003).

In addition to these actual or perceived economic threats, globalization brought about changes that affect directly perceptions of social-affiliative threats. The change in social structure directly affects social capital and integration, which are known predictors of violent extremism. In fact, family and community structures are protective factors against violent extremism (Weine, Horgan, Robertson, Loue, Mohamed & Noor, 2009). For instance, data from 6000 of 14 years-old-Palestinians gathered at the end of the 1994 Intifada clearly show that the effects of exposure to Intifada violence on antisocial behaviour and depression are moderated by social integration in family, school and peer relations (Barber, 1999, 2001), with neighborhood disorganization being one of the most potent predictors of youth problematic behaviours (Barber, 2001). Similarly, family and acquaintances play an important role in motivating youth to join Colombian guerrilla groups (Florez-Morris, 2007). This is because human beings have a fundamental need to belong to social groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and, as seen earlier, youth even more so for developmental reasons.

This exacerbated need to belong may well be a potent driver of the desire to achieve collective identity in response to the ontological insecurity brought about by globalization's effects (Kinnvall, 2004, Bauman, 2001; Habermas, 1999). In addition, this social identity 'striving' is what motivates partly young individuals to join terrorist organizations across the globe (Botha, 2014; Botha & Abdile, 2014; Onuha, 2014). Accordingly, religious, peer, family but also political affiliation was found to be linked with radicalization among a sample of 1116 Jordanian youth (Alhasan & Almawajdeh, 2016). Marginalization from formal, organized political structures as well as socialization processes both impact violent extremism (Hilker & Fraser, 2009). These effects of integration are not limited to left-wing or Islamist terrorism. Indeed, it seems that lack of social capital also leads to right-wing extremism, at least among German youth samples (Hagan, Merkens & Boehnke, 1995; Boehnke, Hagan & Merkens, 1998). Ethnic nationalism predicts youth extreme right-wing attitudes in fourteen EU countries with a one unit increase

in ethnic nationalism (out of five points scales) leads to a .13 unit increase in negative attitudes towards minorities and a .2 increase in xenophobia, welfare chauvinism and exclusionism even among youth with an immigrant background who were born in the host country (Mierina & Koroleva, 2015). Nationalistic feelings increase intergroup threat perceptions (Badea et al., 2018) which themselves increase right-wing extremism (e.g. among Dutch youth samples Doosje, van den Bos, Loseman, Feddes & Mann, 2012).

In reaction to this increased nationalism, intergroup tensions and xenophobia, violent extremism rises among minority populations. Exposure to discrimination thus constitutes a supplementary threat that has been found to predict youth Islamist radicalization (for an example in the Netherlands see Doosje, Loseman & van den Bos, 2013). Feelings of ostracism among minority youth in Western countries lead to greater resentment and radicalization (Pretus et al., 2018) while also fuelling a sense of detachment from their host nation's culture. This detachment from Western culture is also linked with greater likelihood of radicalization occurrence (e.g. among Somali youth in Western countries see King & Mohammed, 2011). On a more cognitive level, psychosocial phenomena such as social identity threat generated by exposure to right-wing propaganda have been found to lead to decreased cognitive resources (Appel, 2012), which can constitute a risk factor for radicalization in the face of exposure to violent ideological material or recruitment attempts (Weine, Horgan, Robertson, Loue, Mohamed & Noor, 2009). All these observations are in line with work showing that situations of social alienation among the youth can generally lead to violent political or religious, extremism (Bélanger et al, 2019), which itself is capable of promoting further violence through simple exposure effects (Perrya, Wikstrom & Roman, 2019).

The last (but not least) class of threats susceptible to trigger violent extremism among youth populations pertain to existential motives. As we have seen, recent socio-political changes have affected more than social structures. The growing complexity of modern politics and economic systems generates uncertainty and the increasing number of international instances of governance (EU commission, NATO, UN...) is likely to lead citizens to feel that their 'destiny' is no longer under their control (hence the appeal of rhetorics focused on national sovereignty, and nativism for instance). To a considerable extent, the context of ontological uncertainty (Kinnvall, 2004) can generate threats pertaining to meaning, control and epistemic motives. In line with the general model of threat regulation (Jonas et al., 2014), personal uncertainty is a direct predictor of Islamist radicalization among the Dutch Muslim youth (Doosje, Loseman & van den Bos, 2013) while anomic aspirations (which include perceived normlessness, hence uncertainty) underlies right wing extremism among German youth samples (Hagan, Merkens & Boehnke, 1995). Similarly, the identity and cultural uncertainty experienced by minority youth in Western countries due to exposure to social exclusion is linked with increased support for radicalism to achieve goals linked with meaning and purpose (Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq & van Egmond, 2015; Frounfelker, Frissen, Vanorio, Rousseau & d'Haenens, 2019). In line with these findings, recent research suggests

that perceived oppression leads to higher increased violent disinhibition, and that this link was exacerbated by identity and cultural integration related variables among samples of both Muslim and non-Muslim youth (Lobato, Moya, Moyano & Trujillo, 2018).

In fact, the existing literature on 'homegrown' radicalization suggests that personal feelings of uncertainty and injustice (i.e. humiliation, unfair treatment, thus Loss of Significance) are potent predictors of violent extremism among the youth (Verkuyten, 2018) both in Europe and other parts of the world (King & Mohammed, 2018). Furthermore, the existential underpinnings of violent extremism seem to be rather consistent across the ideological spectrum. For instance, thrill-seeking (i.e. the search for adventure and excitement) is an established predictor of violent extremism and stems from the motivation to restore meaning and purpose under loss of significance among young individuals (Schumpe et al., 2018). Moreover, a study on more than 6000 Belgian youth (from 15 to 31 years old) found that thrill-seeking consistently predicts endorsement of political extremism across various measures of left-wing, nationalist/separatist and religious extremism (Pauwels & Hardyns, 2018). What this last line of evidence suggests is that existential motivations are susceptible to lead youth towards violent extremism independently of the type of extreme ideology. Thus, these existential threats can be thought as common mechanisms underlying engagement in various violent extremist organizations.

Conclusion: A global perspective on youth extremism

To summarize, we have been able to demonstrate a consistent line of argument. First, the general model of threat and defense (Jonas et al., 2014) predicts that realistic, identity and existential threats generate violent extremism as compensatory responses. Second, it seems that the socio-economic and political changes that have been affecting societies for the last three decades did generate a range of threats pertaining to realistic, identity and existential concerns. Third, there seems to be a growing (but still too small) set of empirical investigations supporting the claim that realistic, identity and existential threats trigger consequent violent compensatory extremism among the youth. Fourth, this evidence robustly converges across countries, ideologies and violent organizations. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that the observed prevalent youth extremism in several countries leading to a still high number of terrorist acts (START, 2018) across the globe could be partly due to globalization's (and globalism) effects on societies:

This observation has a number of implications that help clarify the processes underlying violent extremism. To begin with, this non-exhaustive scan of the available literature on youth extremism highlights the high commonality and symmetry in processes at play behind different sorts of extreme ideologies (whether left-wing, nationalist or religious). A direct consequence of this reasoning is that one should be suspicious of evidence claiming a specificity or 'novelty' in violent extremist phenomena, such

as ones pertaining to Islamist terrorism. It may appear that ideological contents take newer forms, but the motivations that predict engagement in those organizations remain stable. Similarly, the findings from youth samples in terms of threat regulation do echo those found among older, adult samples. This also suggests that claims about the specificity of youth might be inaccurate. In fact, young individuals may have developmental predispositions that render them more sensitive to threats and more likely to display exacerbated compensatory violent ideological responses, nevertheless, these responses seem to be different in a quantitative (increased likelihood) than qualitative (different type of extremism).

Accordingly, misguided arguments (whether political or academic) emphasizing the qualitative (hence 'essential') specificity of some populations (e.g. Muslim youth, Mc Donald, 2011; Brown & Saeed, 2015) are likely to generate even more violent extremism by contributing to threat perceptions among both essentialized minority groups and the majority group. Similarly, if threat perceptions generate violent extremism among the youth which are direct effects of globalization (hence socio-economic shifts), one could argue that neo-liberal forms of governmentality appealing to a constrained version of multiculturalism in Europe distorted by securitisation and stigmatisation of migration and Muslim minorities, framed as a source of fear (Kaya, 2013) might paradoxically be used to culturalize (or 'religionize') the consequences of policy decisions to mask their socio-economic underpinnings. Nonetheless, by doing so, Western neo-liberal and/or populist political parties/movements may fuel even further social tension and threats, leading to an actual increase in violent extremism. As we can see, an important outcome of our analysis is to highlight the way a global perspective on youth extremism can inform us on intergroup factors that foster violence.

In fact, taking into account the political ecology of social-psychological processes leading to violent extremism, one can study the dynamics of co-radicalization processes occurring between the different social groups that make up societies in a generally threatening context, or systemic instability (Vallacher et al., 2013). This allows researchers to thereby understand that youth right-wing extremism might be a response to economic deprivation that in turn increases youth Islamist extremism already prevalent in marginalized areas, which can generate increased compensatory anti-native population responses, which, at first glance, may not be directly related. This dynamic theorizing is on the rise in social psychology and has recently been used to feed agent-based models to predict intergroup attitudes under terrorist threat (Huet, Deffuant, Nugier, Streith & Guimond, 2019).

Besides theoretical perspectives, the present contribution also offers some useful insights for policy makers. In fact, socio-economic factors such as the consequences of globalization seem to drive the motivations at play behind youth extremism. That is why, an important target of policy should be to remedy socio-economic disparities along with social-affiliative and existential motives. For instance, there is now evidence that reinsertion programs, which aim to provide detained terrorists with significance such

as offering employment outside the prison and integrating into a community, may help lowering their ideological extremism (Webber and al., 2018). However, these findings are relatively new and decades of field experience from governments across the world point at the difficulty of implementing such a thing as an efficient 'deradicalization program' (Doosje, Moghaddam, Kruglanski, De Wolf, Mann & Feddes, 2016). Sometimes individuals leave their extreme group without dropping their ideological commitment and *vice versa* (Doosje et al., 2016). Furthermore, radicals often discredit state agents' interventions for obvious reasons. While waiting for more empirical assessments to draw a truly evidence-based policy regarding de-radicalization, it seems that a shift of focus from 'cure' to prevention might yield interesting results. Policies aiming at making individuals feel that they matter (vs. feel safer) might help lower the spread of extreme ideologies and conspiracy theories if not political violence. Perceptions of relative deprivation and collective humiliation should be lowered, either through symbolic political acts, PR (i.e. stop using condescending expressions or expressions likely to be perceived as condescending when referring to the people) or by objective measures aiming to restore a sense of retributive and/or procedural justice or to redistribute material resources more equitably among citizens.. In terms of societal policies, we suggest that any policies successfully promoting social integration, fighting discrimination, unemployment, poverty and material inequality is likely to have a positive effect in terms of reduced levels of violent extremism (Kennedy, Kawachi, Prothrow-Stith, Lochner & Gupta, 1998; Wilkinson, 2002; Wilkinson, 2004; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015). Other community level interventions could be successful in preventing adherence to radical right-wing/Islamist ideologies for marginalized youth from the rural and urban peripheral (suburb) areas. An important implication to acknowledge when designing the program is that violent extremism stems from adaptive feelings and concerns of individuals. The responses they enact, however, might not be adequate. It is therefore important to keep in mind the goal of 'redirecting the Quest for Significance' (Webber and al., 2018) through the program rather than trying to work on emotions, suppressing anger, using positive framing and so on.

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