



DeRadicalisation  
in Europe and Beyond:  
Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate



# TIME PASSES, NARRATIVES STAY, OR DO THEY FADE?



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Building on the comparative findings on the legal and policy de-radicalization framework (<https://dradproject.com/reports/>), Veronica Federico and Paola Pannia of the UNIFI D.Rad team have contributed to the 2023 IMISCOE Spring Conference on “Postcolonial, migrations- heritages, specificities, mobilization” with a presentation titling “TIME PASSES, NARRATIVES STAY, OR DO THEY FADE? Exploring traces of postcolonial representations in counter-radicalization laws in

Europe". The Conference was hosted by the *Université Cote D'Azur* in Nice, 15-17 March.

## ***Current trends in anti-radicalization and de-radicalization legal frameworks in Europe***

Building on D.Rad evidences, gathered in 17 national European and extra-European contexts, including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria[1], the anti-radicalization and de-radicalization legal and policy frameworks can be clustered in three de-radicalization strategies namely repressive, integrative and mixed. In the first case, the strong criminal law apparatus primes whilst security and intelligence activities embody its core strategy, strengthened by a robust legal framework concerning terrorism and related offences. In the second approach, an integrative policy oriented design features, playing a crucial role in preventive strategies based on the proactive role of institutions and civil society actors in detecting situations at risk or vulnerable groups. In this case, social integration is deemed essential in challenging drivers that can subsequently lead to radicalization or foster grievances. Hence, repression and criminal provisions represent an *extrema ratio*, rather than the main and ordinary response. Systems with a mixed pattern, in contrast, are characterised by a strategy combining and merging repressive and integrative measures involving securitization approaches and active integration policies coexisting and mutually reinforcing each other. Interestingly, many countries involved in the project have emphasized an increasing awareness of institutions and governments about the inadequacy of exclusive counter-terrorism agenda (*inter alia*, Israel, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey) as well as repressive tools, engaging in improving preventive and integrative strategies in turn.

All systems have adapted their legislative framework to their own unique grievances that are prone to exacerbate extremist and radical causes in each national context. Particularistic challenges can refer to historical heritages/legacies of ethnic conflicts, political extremism, authoritarian experiences and socio-political cleavages. Among these categories, however, a recourse to the colonial past of some countries, more strongly characterised by the colonial experience, is not evident, and at a first glance a division between those countries with a postcolonial history[2] and those without is not the most relevant for the analysis of their de-radicalization related legal framework, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

### **Table1-Postcolonial divide and deradicalization approach**

	Repressive	Integrative	Mixed	
Postcolonial	Italy		France, Germany, the UK	
Non- postcolonial	Turkey, Israel, Hungary, Iraq, Jordan; Slovenia	Finland	Austria, Bosnia i Herzegovina, Kosovo, Poland, Serbia	

If we move to the level of the analysis that considers the policy domain, however, the postcolonial/non-postcolonial divide would appear more striking. This level combines anti-terrorism legislation and policies, anti-jihadism and the post-colonial narratives of “otherness”, raising a hypothesis that bridges de-radicalization (in the sense of fighting violent challenges to democracy brought by “the other”) and laws as manifestos, creating and reinforcing narratives such otherness.

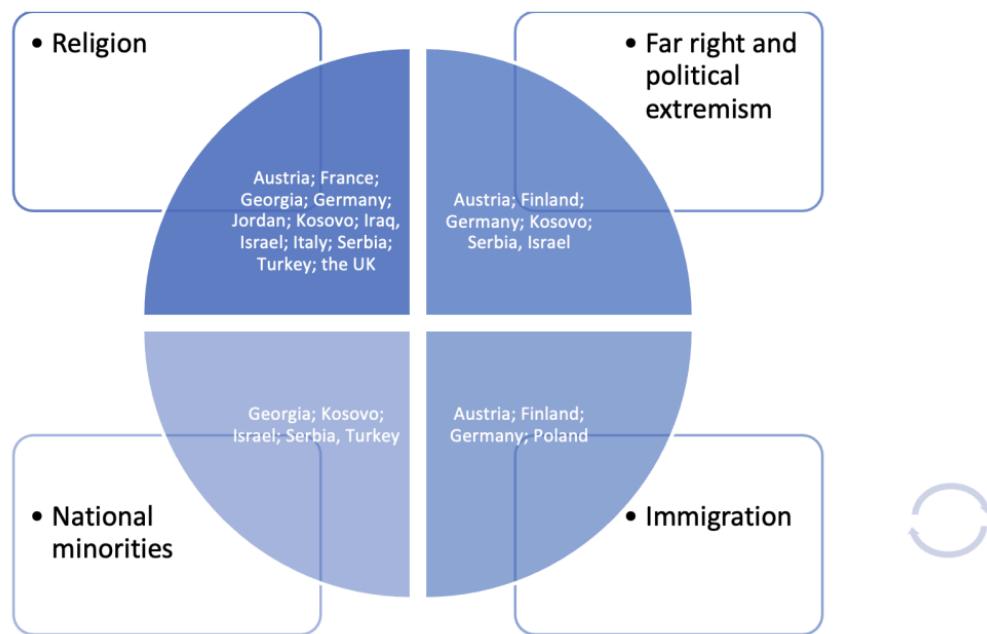
Henceforth, a common trend emerges where? Suggesting an overwhelming reliance on anti-terrorism agenda in a number of post-colonial powers that have subsequently amended or updated their criminal code provisions when faced with new threats put forward by radicalization. Thus, certain security measures have strengthened over time, for instance in countries with higher rates of foreign fighters per capita, or in “border” states facing massive forced-migration flows from war settings including Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Jordan. Moreover, almost all interventions to combat extremism and radicalism have stemmed from certain political and emergency related sentiments involving panics that have expanded the spectrum of what is conceived as “terrorist” offences (Italy, France, Germany, Turkey, etc.).

In almost all of the countries examined, research has underlined a specific focus on Islamism – in all its facets – and on jihadism, in some occasions with an evident anti-Muslim bias. On the contrary, even though right-wing extremism as well as white supremacist movements were regarded by experts and scholars among the most dangerous actual trends of radicalization, effective legislative and policy tools to tackle their specific features, especially in online contexts and in off-line socio-

political polarizations were still rare (Mudde, 2019; Abbas, 2017; Vidino and Brandon, 2012).

As illustrated in Figure 1, there are some policy domains that attracted more attention and are perceived by policy-makers as the most relevant radicalization drivers. First and foremost, religion, mainly applying to Islam. In the large majority of D.Rad countries, the de-radicalization policies targetted jihadism and therefore tend to focus on Muslims in an essentialising manner. This had a number of consequences in terms of discrimination, freedom of religion, social inclusion, but also policy effectiveness. Even though not openly referring to postcolonial histories and threat perceptions, an anti-Muslim legal and policy attitude appears to relate to the ex-colonial Muslim as still the overbearing threat. This is not just because historical colonial dynamics are reproduced in contemporary postcolonial environments, but because the process of qualifying Muslims is tightly connected with Islamophobia and ultimate by-product of postcolonial social, political and legal frameworks (Meer, 2014).

**Figure1- Fields of legal and policy intervention**



### *Migration policies and colonial legacies*

For a long time, the existence of an overarching, direct and strict relationship between the colonial past and integration policies of a given country has been widely accepted and reproduced by many observers (Katznelson, 1976; Joppke, 1999; Favell, 1998). Over the years, this link has been subjected to more attentive

and sectorial analysis and toned down. Authors have shown how migrant integration policies, far from being coherent or consistent, were not significantly affected by colonial institutional and theoretical structures (Bleich, 2005). Nonetheless, the same authors have also reckoned that some specific aspects of integration approaches were undoubtedly related to the colonial past, and, above all, applying to the legal regime of immigration and citizenship in particular.

### ***Counter-radicalization and postcolonial legacy: a research agenda***

In both deradicalization and immigration policies the colonial past has remained under the radar for too long. The purpose of our research is to explore the feasibility of a triangulation between colonial past, current migration policies and de-radicalization policies. This, in our perspective, leads to a promising research agenda.

The ample array of policies and strategies related to the migration-security nexus enacted by the European member States and Europe itself have been widely theorized and analyzed by scholars. On the contrary, research concerning the impact of colonial and imperial legacies of the migration governance on former colonials or former colonized countries is still poor (Deridder, Pelckmans and Ward, 2020). In particular, the colonial matrix informing the EU externalization approach require further insights. Similarly, the connection between postcolonialism and the depiction of migrants as terrorist threats and the narrative related to the “migration crisis” as vehicle of both radicalized “wolves” and radicalized (i.e. jihadist) ideologies is an unexplored and uncharted research field.

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[1] The paper builds on evidence produced in the EU H2020 research "De-Rad. Deradicalisation in Europe and Beyond : Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate" (Grant Agreement n.959198). All details and data are available, open access at:  
<https://dradproject.com/>

[2] For the purpose of this study, we narrow the definition of colonialism (and therefore postcolonialism) as being strictly connected with capitalism, the invention of traditions and Eurocentrism, therefore Turkey and Austria will not be considered postcolonial countries. Moreover, colonial experiences vary a lot, and equating for example Italian and French colonial histories might be challenging per se, and yet, it is justifiable when discussing the production of colonial narratives concerning safety and security.

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