A Systems Approach to Violent Radicalization: Closing the Circle around the "Epic Pathway"

Una aproximación sistémica a la radicalización violenta: cerrando el círculo alrededor de la "vía épica"

MIGUEL PECO-YESTE

Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

ABSTRACT: This paper proposes that the model "Epic Way in the Process of Radicalization" (VEPR, after its acronym in Spanish), developed in previous works and based on the context of the self-styled Basque Movement for National Liberation, could also be applied to the current context of jihadist radicalization in Western societies. The latter is characterized by aspects such as the phenomenon of foreign fighters, the possibility of spontaneous generation of cells and local groups, the influence of the so-called "agents of radicalization", the lesser relevance of the religious fact, the social environment that could exist within some Muslim communities, and above all the profuse use of the of Internet. The difficulty involved in a direct comparison between both contexts of radicalization can be overcome by contemplating them as authentic systems, whose main process –individual's radicalization- is seen from a cognitive-behavioral approach as a learning process of violent behavior associated with an ideology or certain beliefs. Functional Behavior Analysis, under the principles of Learning Theory, is especially useful when it comes to explaining the motivation associated with violent radical behavior in the particular environment of Western societies. The VEPR model applied to the context of jihadist radicalization provides accommodation to phenomena such as the so-called "lone wolves", or the spontaneous gestation of autonomous structures. But, above all, the observation that there is a common thread running through contexts of radicalization of different nature shows that the process of radicalization could be structurally and sequentially similar. This, in turn, makes contexts of radicalization, in general, to lose relevance in favor of the individual and the interpretation he makes of each of them, although it is certain that some might be more prone than others to be interpreted in a radical manner by certain individuals.

KEYWORDS: Cognitive-behavioral approach; Functional behavior assessment; Jihadism; Process of radicalization; Terrorism.

To cite the original versión of this article: Peco Yeste, Miguel, "Una aproximación sistémica a la radicalización violenta: Cerrando el círculo alrededor de la "vía épica"", *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, Vol. 4 No. 2. (2018), pp.139-176.

INTRODUCTION

This article is a continuation of two previous works. In the first one, "A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Violent Radicalization, Based on a Real Case" (Peco Yeste, 2014), the phenomenon of violent radicalization was analyzed in the context of the self-styled Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV, in its Spanish acronym) between the years 1987 and 2003. For the purpose of the analysis, the comparative advantage of this context of radicalization with respect to others was the absence of factors that usually contribute or have contributed to generating violence spontaneously.[1] This absence of extraneous variables made the MLNV environment a relatively simple case, free of the usual complexity that characterizes other contexts of violent radicalization, and provided the adequate conditions to carry out an approach based on cognitive-behavioral psychology, a considerable change with respect to the usual approach based on social psychology.

The process of radicalization that was glimpsed in the previous work was developed in detail in "A Functional Approach to Violent Radicalization: Building a Systemic Model Based on a Real Case" (Peco Yeste, 2016). By using functional analysis, both in the context of radicalization and in the behavior of the individuals immersed there, the relevant variables and sub-processes that could take place were identified. As a result, a coherent and feasible radicalization pathway was identified, which integrated the constitutive elements of the context and the sequences [conducted activity-performed function-achieved effects] that could be conducive to individual radicalization. Although it was not intended this pathway encompasses the entire casuistry of the phenomenon, it did allow deducing consequences and formulating predictions. Due to the particular characteristics and circumstances involved in this pathway, it will hereinafter be referred to as "epic pathway in the process of radicalization" (VEPR, in its Spanish acronym) or, simply, the VEPR model. In this article, Annex 1 is dedicated to updating the original version of the model.

Nowadays, one of the most disturbing violent radicalization contexts is rooted in some political interpretations of Islam, and in particular, in what has been called jihadism. This term designates those radical Islamist movements that advocate the use of violence through the exercise of jihad, an idea that has been interpreted in different ways throughout Islamic history.[2] In particular, the radical Islamism originated in the twentieth century emphasizes the interpretation of Islam in its political dimension and therefore the classical meaning of jihad has been distorted and put at the service of this purpose (Halloul, 2015). Even some analysis has pointed out that a "bricolage" work has been done by appropriating and manipulating the Muslim tradition and combining it with western political ideologies of the past century (Tibi, 2012).

---

[1] In particular, it was argued that during this period of time the Basque Country was one of the richest regions with one of the highest levels of self-government in Europe, that the successive political platforms of the MLNV could compete freely for elections, and that there were no typical action-reaction dynamics that in other contexts have prompted violence or its escalation.

[2] Jihad is an Arabic word that can be translated as "effort". In orthodox Islam there are two types of jihad: the minor jihad, which is defensive and addressed to combat those who attack the lands of Islam, and the major jihad, related to the personal and inner effort of each Muslim to overcome and grow as a person facing himself and Allah. In the case of jihadism, the first meaning of jihad is interpreted not only as defensive, but also as the right to go on the offensive to defend territories that are considered Muslim or to people who profess that faith.

In the broad field of jihadist radicalization, organizations such as the self-styled Islamic State (IS) and its failed caliphate in the territories of Syria and Iraq have gained special prominence in recent times. As it will be pointed out below, one of the characteristics of the radicalization context around the IS has been the ability of this organization to carry out terrorist attacks in western societies,[3] either directly through deliberate actions or indirectly by inspiring and encouraging the creation of autonomous cells, due to an effective propaganda apparatus.

The proven existence of this double strand of action in the context around the IS provides considerable support to the conclusions obtained from the study of the context in which the VEPR model was based originally.[4] In that study, at the same time that deliberate attempts of the organization to attract and recruit followers were recognized, the active role of the individual who in certain circumstances radicalized himself by increasing his violent behavior and modifying their beliefs and attitudes accordingly was also emphasized (Peco Yeste, 2014: 23). In particular, is the ability of the IS and its propaganda apparatus to indirectly generate the phenomenon what supports one of the main predictions of the VEPR model: that, under certain conditions, some phenomena of collective radicalization may occur spontaneously, i.e. without prior exhaustive planning, and can evolve over time towards more complex systems (Peco Yeste, 2016: 75).

The previous coincidences between the VEPR predictions and the context of radicalization around the IS suggest that the acquisition of violent radical behaviors by individuals immersed in both contexts of radicalization could respond to a common pattern. In other words, the radicalization process could be structurally and sequentially similar. Specifically, it is proposed as a hypothesis that the VEPR model –a model initially based on a radicalization context with political and nationalist roots- is applicable to the current context of jihadist radicalization in western societies when it comes to explaining the acquisition of violent radical behavior by some individuals.

Proposing the existence of a similarity between radicalization processes developed in such dissimilar contexts means a considerable challenge. This is not only about the differences in the nature of the underlying beliefs, which may be the most obvious aspect, but about other significant differences as the structure and location of the terrorist organization's nucleus, the absence or presence of a radical group operating on the edge of legality, the channels used to disseminate the narrative, as well as others that will be identified in later sections. This disparity is recognized by some authors, who consider radicalization in the jihadist context as a distinctive phenomenon, with specific characteristics, and different from other forms of violent extremism and terrorism carried out by organizations such as:

> [...] the nationalist / separatist Irish Republic Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, and *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) in the Basque Countries in Spain and France, or by the far-left *Brigate Rosse* (BR) in Italy and the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF) in Germany." (Frontini & Ritzmann, 2017: 12).

Nevertheless, the aforementioned challenge can be overcome by using functional assessment. In doing so, the particular characteristics of each radicalization context will

[3] In previous works the name "developed", "democratic", or even "modern societies" has been used. The expression "open societies" has also been used in the literature on this subject. It is believed that the term "western societies" is better suited to the research problem addressed here, while avoiding introducing pejorative nuances with respect to other types of societies.

[4] Also, this double strand of action matches well with the top-down and bottom-up trends, respectively, proposed by Sageman (2004), although with some distinctive nuances.

be considered relevant because of the functions they perform, essentially. As a matter of fact, it is in the scope of the functions where more points of agreement than in the scope of either the characteristics or the activities carried out by the different elements involved in that context can be found. For example, the role played by a discourse that justifies violence relates to modifying the convictions of individuals immersed in a process of radicalization, a role that from a qualitative point of view is independent of the political, religious or other nature of that discourse. In this regard, the thesis proposed here is closer to authors such as Olivier Roy, who recognizes that while the jihadist cells do not resemble in their organization those of radical movements inspired by Marxism or nationalism, its members are no different from militants of other movements:

> This is not, then, the radicalization of Islam, but the Islamization of radicalism. [...] The terrorists are not the expression of a radicalization of the Muslim population, but rather reflect a generational revolt that affects a very precise category of youth. (Roy, 2016).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The cognitive-behavioral approach of the radicalization process

As in previous works, Learning Theory, a cognitive-behavioral approach, and functional behavior assessment (FBA) are utilized now. Thus, violent radical behavior continues to be seen as a learned behavior, whose initial adquisition, maintenance, and potential extinction are subject to the principles of Learning Theory. In turn, violent radicalization is contemplated in the VEPR model as a learning process of violent behavior associated with a specific ideology or belief that, while may take place under external influences, is actually driven by the individual himself. [5]

Two aspects that in previous works were deemed as assumptions should be mentioned, since now are considered as facts. The first one is that the terrorist organization –the jihadist group, in this case- can provoke fascination and attraction among certain sectors of the population. This aspect has been sufficiently confirmed in the context of radicalization that is being discussed here by the flow of combatants from western countries who have traveled to territories controlled by jihadist organizations to join their ranks. The second assumption –closely related to the previous one- was that militancy in the radical group, which includes the use of violence to a greater or lesser degree, was a source of internal satisfaction for the individual. Internal satisfactions, such as perceiving the admiration of others, feelings of acceptance in the group, self-esteem, or even consummating a revenge for alleged grievances, can become even more motivating than material satisfactions provided by money or other benefits.[6] In the context of jihadist radicalization, to the internal satisfactions coming from the group it should be added those

[5] This consideration of radicalization introduces technical nuances of the cognitive-behavioral perspective and emphasizes the active role of the individual in his own process. In any case, it is fully compatible with others commonly accepted such as the one used by Allen (2017: 4) "[...] radicalization is the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change".

[6] Maslow's Theory of Motivation (1943) is very useful when analyzing behaviors in environments such as developed societies, in which the basic needs are practically satisfied. Maslow proposes the existence of five basic groups of needs: physiological, safety, love, recognition and self-esteem. According to Maslow, people are perpetually wishing to satisfy these needs and, in addition, they tend to satisfy some before others. Moreover, people are perpetually looking for needs to satisfy beyond those that they have just done.

related to the possibility to fix historical or current grievances, obtaining a strong identity, or achieving transcendence thanks to the religious component.[7]

The cognitive-behavioral approach provides a scientific basis for some of the concepts used in research on radicalization. One of them is the dichotomy between "push" and "pull" factors, whose translation into behavioral terms may correspond to situations in which there exist an expectation that a noxious stimulus is to be withdrawn, or that a satisfaction is to be achieved, respectively.[8] This expectation, once established in the individual, becomes a source of motivation that may explain the appearance of behaviors aimed to meet it. Another frequent dichotomy is between radicalization of opinions and radicalization of actions, which sometimes leads to the idea that there are two different types of radicalization.[9] In this sense, the cognitive-behavioral approach not only analyzes the manifest physical (motor) behavior, but also the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs associated with this physical behavior. All of them, taken together, constitute the individual's response to given stimuli. Thus, it is said that responses –and behavior in general- are manifested in three systems: cognitive, physiological and motor (Lang, 1948). In the VEPR model, a broad distinction has been made between the cognitive and the rest of manifestations of violent behavior, and also the consequences of all them not being in tune have been analyzed in detail. But, in any case, the individual's process of radicalization is considered as a whole.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), under the principles of Learning Theory, is especially useful when dealing with behaviors that apparently are not adaptive in the environment where they are released. This is the case of radical violent behavior in western societies, where violence is not usually necessary to satisfy the individual's basic needs and, on the contrary, law transgressions may imply considerable penalties. The axiom of FBA is that if a behavior persists, despite not being apparently adaptive, is because that behavior is performing a function that translates into benefits for the subject. Technically speaking, it is said this behavior is being reinforced in some way, since otherwise it would have disappeared by mechanisms such as extinction, punishment, or others. Identifying what are these benefits –internal satisfactions, basically-, as well as how they are achieved, is a key step to clarifying the circumstances in which radical violent behavior was adquired in the past and also the reasons why it is maintained at present.

---

[7] See, for example, Maggiolini & Varvelli (2016: 155), or the section "The religious discourse and its influence" in Jalloul Muro & abu Warda (2017).

[8] From a certain point of view, the process of radicalization is seen as "[...] a product of interplay between push- and pull-factors within individuals". Among the first factors, it can be found: "[...] social, political and economic grievances; a sense of injustice and discrimination; personal crisis and tragedies; frustration; alienation; a fascination with violence; searching for answers to the meaning of life; an identity crisis; social exclusion; alienation; marginalization; disappointment with democratic processes; polarization, etc." Pull factors, on the other hand, may encompass: "[...] personal quest, a sense of belonging to a cause, ideology or social network; power and control; a sense of loyalty and commitment; a sense of excitement and adventure; a romanticized view of ideology and cause; the possibility of heroism, personal redemption, etc." (Radicalization Awareness Network, 2016).

[9] The literature on the subject often distinguishes between two types of radicalization. Cognitive radicalization refers to the process through which an individual adopts ideas firmly opposed to the commonly accepted, rejects the legitimacy of the established social order and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a completely different beliefs system. Conversely, violent radicalization takes place when an individual goes a step further and uses violence as a method to progress in the objectives derived from their cognitive radicalization. See, for example, Vidino (2013: 6).

Finally, classical theories have been mostly used to explain the main sequences of the radicalization process, e.g. Bandura's social learning (1977), Skinner's operant conditioning (1938), and Festinger's cognitive dissonance (1957). Although there exist a number of more recent theories that could explain certain aspects of the radicalization process, it is worth mentioning that they are neither necessary to develop this model nor do they conflict with it. Only those theories of general scope that are strictly necessary have been used and, among them, some of the most consolidated. All this contributes to the simplicity of the proposal and, at the same time, respects the principle of parsimony.

The systems approach

As in previous versions, the VEPR model applied to the context of jihadist radicalization in western societies adopts a systems perspective in the sense of General Systems Theory.[10] As a matter of fact, the term "context of radicalization" can be seen as a synonym of "system of radicalization". Within this system, violent radicalization is conceived as a process resulting from the interaction among the structural elements (jihadist organization, extended primary group, and social environment) and the individual. The main dependent variable is the Level of Individual's Radicalization (LoIR), a construct elaborated enough to allow envisaging its variation along a flow diagram. The system of radicalization, therefore, is a system open to influences coming from the outside world, contains a main sub-system –the radicalization loop- and integrates other sub-systems such as de-radicalization and stabilization.

Updating the VEPR model

Prior to being applied to the jihadist context, the radicalization model proposed in 2016 has been updated (Annex 1). The new version maintains the essential structure and processes, adds the VEPR denomination itself, and includes small modifications, some clarifications in the concepts, as well as improvements in the graphics. For instance, what in the original model were considered as "effects" are now designated as "functions". Actually, this simply means lengthening the chain [activities-functions-effects] to include among the latter the radicalization itself, which previously was seen as a further effect.

Another addition relates to the activities of the radical group. In this sense, "Providing moral sanction to the transgressing behaviors" has been included in order to remark explicitly its importance. Also, the term "symmetric radicalization" has been incorporated, in contrast to "asymmetric radicalization" that will be used in the current context.

Finally, the update deepens into the de-radicalization mechanisms, which had been left almost untreated in the 2016 model, and also refines and integrates the proposal of radicalization mechanisms into the general scheme. All this is supported by improvements in the quality of the graphics, which allows a global view of the process and also provides details when necessary.

The context of jihadist radicalization in western societies

As a general framework to establish the context of jihadist radicalization, it has been used the so-called "[…] fourth wave of militants and aspiring fighters" (Coolsaet, 2016). This

[10] See, for example, von Bertalanffy (1968) or le Moigne, J.-L. (1994).

current wave provides continuity to previous ones such as those related to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan and Algerian groups in the decades of the 70s and 90s, respectively; Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda at the beginning of the century; and shortly after this latter a third wave characterized by jihadists born in western countries (Annex 2).

Within this environment, a special emphasis has been placed on aspects such as the phenomenon of foreign fighters, the spontaneous generation of cells and local groups that might eventually establish links with the organization, the influence of what have been termed as "agents of radicalization", the prevalence of other aspects over religion, the particularities of the social environment in Muslim communities, or the profusely employment of the Internet.

The role of the Internet in the context of jihadist radicalization

The use of new information technologies in violent radical contexts and, in particular, the use of the Internet, has been a reality for several decades, and at present provides unique characteristics to the context of jihadist radicalization. The Internet, on the one hand, provides huge advantages for some organizations in terms of internal management, propaganda release, and incitement to commit attacks. On the other hand, the Net has an enormous potential as a facilitator of individual radicalization due to its capacity to transmit contents and socialize individuals (Annex 3).

METHOD

In order to support the hypothesis that the VEPR model is applicable to the current context of jihadist radicalization in western societies, its more direct consequence will be tested, i.e. the resulting version of the VEPR model, after incorporating the specific characteristics of the aforementioned context and suppressing those that are not applicable, should continue explaining the appearance of radicalization effects.

To do so, it has been necessary a previous, partial elaboration of the aforementioned theoretical framework, which includes the update of the VEPR model, as well a picture of the context of jihadist radicalization in western societies with a special emphasis on the repercussions derived from the use of the Internet. In this sense, extensive use has been made of documentary analysis of current scientific literature, as well as judicial proceedings against individuals accused of terrorist activities in jihadist environments. Both the update of the model and the aforementioned depiction are incorporated in the respective Annexes.

Then, the essential characteristics of the context of jihadist radicalization will be incorporated into the VEPR model, and the structural elements and corresponding activities are identified and contrasted with their equivalents in the original context. After that, the sequences [conducted activity–performed function–achieved effects] are proposed, and whether the new version of the resulting model is effective when it comes to creating radicalization effects is discussed. Finally, potential objections to the model are exposed, as well as some limitations and implications are suggested.

RESULTS

The context of jihadist radicalization in western societies has some features that differ significantly from the context where the VEPR model was initially inspired. Perhaps the

most evident one is that the original VEPR model was based on a political context, essentially, where the binomial [clandestine organization – radical group] professed a revolutionary socialist ideology while actively seeking the establishment of an independent state. This difference is not limited to a mere contrast between political and religious beliefs at the same level, but it expands considerably due to the potential of the latter to grant the individual both identity and a transcendent mission in this world and even in the hereafter. This latter still applies even if religious beliefs have been manipulated through a political discourse in the jihadist context.

The rest of the differences identified below refer to structural elements, i.e. social environment, group, and radical organization, as well as to the activities carried out by each of them. Among these activities, there are some that disappear, others that are modified or added to existing ones, and finally, others that are simply assumed by a different structural element.

A restricted social environment

The close social environment in the current context of jihadist radicalization is arguably much more restricted than the social environment where the VEPR model was originally inspired. This restriction can be attributed to the more or less closed nature of some Muslim communities settled in western countries, a situation that some attribute to the eventual failure of integration policies. Therefore, when identifying the interactions between the jihadist organization, cells or networks, and potential agents of radicalization, the environment that should be taken into account is not that of the western society as a whole, but the sub-environment of Muslim communities and, in particular, the most closed ones.

On the other hand, it was assumed in the original VEPR model that there was a significant social rejection of the use of violence that, however, was being neutralized by the attacks of the organization and the pointing out to the adversaries by the radical group. In the sub-environment of Muslim communities, especially in the more closed ones, there are signs that such a social rejection might not be so intense and that, on occasion, there might even be a degree of complicity. As indicated in Annex 2, there exists in some urban centers a radical environment with a considerable background of support for the jihadist cause, which may vary from mere empathy for the violent radicals to provide them with the logistics required to conduct attacks.

Finally, cyberspace constitutes a true extension of the social environment in which the individual in the process of radicalization is immersed. In this sense, it should be noted the socializing aspect of the Internet and, in particular, its ability to establish social networks susceptible to becoming virtual communities. These communities, in turn, could change into a substitute for the social environment that some individuals lack in the real world. Taking into account some features of these virtual communities, such as the tendency to prioritize extreme opinions, the integration of the individual into them could be decisive when it comes to progressing in the process of radicalization. On the contrary, in case this tendency is reversed, the Internet has the potential to become a source of complementary social rejection either passively, through the availability of free access contents, or even actively, through the participation of individuals critical of jihadism in thematic forums.

The absence of the radical group as a facilitator of the radicalization process

Unlike that the original context, in the jihadist context of radicalization there are no organized, politically-oriented, protest groups that operate on the edge of legality, obtain the benefits enjoyed by citizens of open societies, and apply such advantages to their particular style of "struggle". It is true that networks and cells linked to jihadism may have a considerable degree of organization, and even direct links with groups such as the IS or Al Qaeda. It is also indisputable that its members benefit from the advantages –in terms of security- of living under the rule of law. However, on rare occasions they carry out overt, manifest protests, or other activities aimed at attracting supporters that might alert the State security forces.

In the jihadist context, the traditional extensive radical group is replaced by the primary group. As it happened in the social environment, this primary group could be expanded by the affinities within those virtual communities on the Internet that its members are able to access. Also, the potential presence of an agent of radicalization should be added to all this. This complex shaped by primary group, virtual community and agent of radicalization (if any), may organize a limited number of activities aimed at attracting potential members, but does not harass, points out, optimizes terror, or encourages low-intensity violence, as it happened with the radical group of the original model. Therefore, it would only be able to carry out the following activities:

- (Re) produces a discourse that legitimizes, justifies and exalts violence.
- Facilitates real and virtual interaction among its members.
- Provides moral sanction (or disagreement) to the position of its members, including law transgressions.

In case there exists an agent of radicalization, he/she will adopt the role of both proxy reference and link with the organization, so that:

- Exercises moral authority, aligns beliefs and attitudes within the group, and prepares its members to move into practical action.
- Organizes limited and punctual activities aimed at attracting new members.

The clandestine organization assumes tasks

The "clandestine organization" structural component of the original VEPR model was identified with the nucleus of an illegal organization that operated manifestly against the legal order of the Spanish and French States and that, for this same reason, was actively pursued by the security forces. On the contrary, the IS has been characterized by building up a proto-state that has served as a permanent base for developing its activities. The obvious advantage of this situation with respect to the previous one is the potential to obtain resources and develop its own organizational and propaganda apparatus without the security forces successively dismantling organization embryos. Thanks to the safe management of the information flow through the Internet, organizations such as the IS have succeeded in delivering their discourse and narratives directly to a large number of potential followers, in maintaining a strict control over the orthodoxy of the contents, and also in inspiring many to follow their guidelines. On the other hand, also unlike the original VEPR model, the jihadist organization not only assumes responsibility for its members' actions, but also for those carried out spontaneously and autonomously by its supporters.

In doing so, the jihadist organization continues performing its main role as a reference of radicalization and, in the absence of the traditional radical group, carries out the following activities:

- Uses violence and causes terror methodically.
- Assumes responsibility for the violent actions that its supporters may conduct.
- Produces discourse that legitimizes, justifies and exalts violence.
- Internal management of the organization itself.

DISCUSSION

The changes in the nature of the structural elements with respect to the original VEPR model, as well as the subsequent addition or redistribution of activities conducted by them, give rise to certain peculiarities in the performed functions that, in turn, are to cause some alterations in the achieved effects. This discussion is about clarifying whether these effects, even with alterations with respect the original model, can also provoke the appearance of a process of radicalization, as well as identifying the resulting peculiarities, if any.

The functions keep essentially unchanged, but slightly adapted

Fascination, attraction (and inspiration)

On the basis of the number of foreign fighters identified, there is no doubt that the jihadist organization by itself continues performing this function in the absence of the radical group. Unlike the original VEPR model, advances in information technologies have enabled the IS and other groups to directly disseminate their propaganda to an exponentially larger audience without having to rely on radical groups on the legal side that, acting as an interface, conducted the activities contributing to this function.

Additionally, the IS has shown an unusual ability to encourage the more or less spontaneous emergence of autonomous local structures. These structures, often based on primary groups, assume the organization strategy as their own and collaborate actively with it, although tend to maintain a strong autonomy. Therefore, it can be said that the jihadist organization also performs an "inspiration" function, an aspect that is added to the previous ones.

Neutralization of the (weak) social rejection

The identification of the binomial social rejection and its corresponding neutralization is relevant to the extent it provides a line of action for interrupting the radicalization loop. In effect, promoting the latent social rejection by combating the factors that are neutralizing it constitutes an effective way to thwart the phenomenon of radicalization, according to the original VEPR model.

In the case of the Muslim communities, which in the present context constitute the social environment of individuals in the process of radicalization, this binomial could also exist, although to a lesser extent and therefore not be so relevant for the aforementioned purposes. On the one hand, the existence of a radical environment more or less favorable to the jihadist cause directly implies that social rejection, if any, is structurally weak. On the other hand, reported evidence of public threats, visible pointing out, etc. against

members of these communities that may oppose violent actions, is not frequent, at least to the extent that was reported in the original context of radicalization. All this leads to presume that neutralization of social rejection in the jihadist context, if exists, occurs through diffuse social pressure, and not through explicit threats and subsequent actions that could spread terror among the members of those communities.

On the contrary, the binomial identification-neutralization of social rejection can arguably be fully identified in the virtual Internet communities, where moderate positions are quickly overshadowed by the most extreme ones. Adding to this phenomenon the possibility of selecting personal friendship links in social networks, a potential social rejection would in principle be unable to function, and radicalization supported by the Internet could take place without further external restraint. However, there is a real potential to introduce rejection via encouraging individuals to disseminate anti-violence discourse, a course of action that is easier to be implemented in virtual communities than in real ones.

In summary; although weakened with respect to other contexts of radicalization, the existence of the binomial social rejection and its corresponding neutralization cannot be excluded. Even being certainly more virtual than real, this binomial and its correct estimate allow preserving room enough to develop lines of action to fight the phenomenon.

A (restricted) environment conducive to violent radicalization

Both the impossibility of exercising militancy in a large and organized group and, above all, the absence of opportunities to conduct low-intensity violence safely, make it impossible to create an environment conducive to violent radicalization similar to the original context where the VEPR model was based. In effect, this low-intensity violence was a true *practicum* to settle ideas, reduce cognitive dissonance, and ultimately, for the individual to progress in the process of radicalization while maintaining a symmetry between cognitive and behavioral manifestations of that violence.

However, the prolonged exposure to an exalting-violence discourse, the interaction with other members of the primary group expanded across virtual networks, as well as the availability of moral sanction for transgressive behaviors, could lead the individual to a radicalization where the cognitive manifestations prevail initially over the rest. Thus, the individual could continue increasing his extremism with regard to ideas, postures, emotions, etc., although without prospects of opportunity to put them into practice.

Far from subtracting potential, it should be noted that this type of radicalization could be significantly stronger than a political-rooted one because of the ability of jihadism to provide identity and a transcendental mission to the individual. In addition, if an agent of radicalization appears, he/she could attract and facilitate the integration of new members in group activities, strengthen the functions performed by the cell, establish a reliable link with the jihadist organization, and above all, provide both the infrastructure and the ability needed to plan, control and execute violent activities. In short, an agent of radicalization could play a true catalytic role with respect to the process of radicalization of group members, which would imply a considerable increase in the likelihood that they will move into violent action. A global view of the sequences [activity – function – effect] is shown in Figure 1.

An "asymmetric" radicalization effect

The approach effect, in line with what has been previously mentioned with respect to the function "Fascination, attraction and inspiration", is also a fact that is reflected in the counted foreign fighters. It should be noted that, unlike what happened with the original context of the VEPR model, the costs and risks associated with traveling to the theaters of operations where the IS is deployed are significantly greater than those resulting from being involved in low-intensity violent activities close to the individual's home. For all these reasons, it can be said there exist a real approach effect whose main exponent is a visible and quantifiable phenomenon. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume there are many more individuals attracted by jihadist organizations that might be willing to collaborate in some way to a greater or lesser extent.

However, before traveling to the operation theaters of the terrorist organization, which constitutes a possible culmination of the process, other "softer", either real or virtual approaches, as discussed above, usually facilitate that isolated individuals or primary groups get exposed to jihadist propaganda and start interacting with other individuals. This interaction with a selected audience of individuals, which may include some agent of radicalization, is an essential condition of the process because the individual is to receive through this way both moral sanction and internal satisfactions that will reinforce the incipient violent behavior. The relevance of virtual interactions with respect to real ones should not be underestimated. On the one hand, because of the socializing potential of the Internet and its capacity to disseminate information, as previously mentioned. On the other hand, since the Net has become a suitable field of action for some to develop their activism taking into account the difficulty of doing so in the operation theaters where the jihadist groups deploy, as indicated in the corresponding Annex.

In the absence of social rejection, the process of jihadist radicalization shares arguably similar mechanisms with the original VEPR model, although some peculiarities derived from the lack of low-intensity violent activities are expected. Thus, under prolonged exposure to jihadist environments and propaganda, it is proposed that the mechanism for learning incipient violent behavior continues to be observational learning, which includes the acquisition of an expectation of reward. This reward, even being internal and immaterial in nature, could reach an exceptional magnitude due to the transcendence that the religious aspect conveys. From this point on, it is reasonable to assume a progressive intensification of the cognitive manifestations of behavior –i.e. increasingly extreme thoughts, attitudes, and postures- that, after being reinforced through interactions with other partners, will become consolidated behavior. At this stage, however, the difficulty in putting into practice such violent behavior will arguably generate dissonance between thought and action, with the consequent appearance of the motivation needed to reduce it. Figure 2 shows how the individual enters a loop where his level of radicalization manifested through the cognitive system increases as long as he remains in the jihadist context.

It should be noted that, in the absence of deterrents or moral barriers, the individual with a high degree of cognitive-in-nature radicalization is ready to conduct acts of considerable violence since the distance between tough and (lack of) action, as well as the motivation to reduce the corresponding dissonance, are also considerable. At this point, under the appropriate circumstances, the individual alone or the whole group may decide to move into action. These circumstances could be related to the appearance of a direct link with the jihadist organization, the availability of material and logistics to conduct attacks, the appearance of an agent of radicalization, or others. If this finally

happens, the completely radicalized individual would go into hiding and the model would cease to be applicable.

This process of "asymmetric" radicalization can be interrupted by the individual's decision, at a certain moment, to joining the jihadist organization and to traveling to its operation theater. If this is the case, the model would cease to be applicable as well, since joining other fighters and exercising violence much more easily would lead to processes closer to those proposed in the original model. Also, the process can arguably be stabilized if the partially radicalized individual turns his activism on the Internet, for example, and either integrates himself or converts his group into an active recruitment network. Finally, it is also feasible that, as happened in the original VEPR model, factors incompatible with radicalization will appear and revert or freeze the process. Figure 3 provides an overview of the VEPR model applied to the context of jihadist radicalization.

Possible objections

As the dissonance between convictions, attitudes, feelings, etc. and (lack of) consistent behavior increases, the motivation for carrying out violent actions and the probability that it happens also does. At some point, it is feasible that the range of violent actions that the asymmetrically radicalized individual is willing to carry out includes large-scale attacks. In principle, it seems that engaging in the latter without having conducted previously lower-intensity violence is extremely unlikely, mainly for two reasons. First, because of the increasing importance of deterrent factors with respect to motivational ones as the radicalization progresses, as indicated in the original VEPR model, which eventually refrain most individuals from completing the process. And second, due to organizational, technical and logistical difficulties that a spontaneous cell without prior qualification may experience when it comes to moving into action.

However, some features of the jihadist radicalization context can overcome the aforementioned drawbacks. On the one hand, the religious component inherent to jihadism, although manipulated with respect to its original nature, still retains its capacity to grant the believer one of the greatest internal rewards he may aspire: a clear mission in the present life and the conviction that his actions will transcend beyond this world. Given this, the effectiveness of deterrent aspects such as being imprisoned or even dying in the attempt lose their value significantly. On the other hand, the low probability that appropriate conditions to move into action are met could be balanced by the possible appearance of a competent agent of radicalization. Moreover, even without the latter, that low probability could also be widely balanced assuming that there are a considerable number of individuals undertaking a process of radicalization in a more or less advanced degree. This latest aspect is really disturbing when is considered in its reverse mode. In effect, since there are actually a number of cases related to either cells or individuals that spontaneously take action, even it being extremely difficult, this implies there might be an extensive "gray area" of individuals in the process of radicalization that is going unnoticed.

CONCLUSION: SUPPORT FOR THE HYPOTHESIS, SCOPE, AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL

The new version of the VEPR model resulting from the integration of the specific characteristics of the jihadist context, as well as the suppression of those not applicable, continues to provide a feasible explanation of how some individuals may develop a process of radicalization. The model also maintains a structure of essential elements

similar to the original context, with its own nuances, and is capable of generating its own sequences [conducted activity – performed function – achieved effects]. In short, maintaining an epic thread in the process of radicalization, the VEPR model constitutes a functional scheme capable to move without essential changes from an original context of radicalization with political, revolutionary and nationalist roots to another context with religious, jihadist ones. Identifying a common pathway applicable to different contexts of radicalization is a confirmation of its validity and contributes significantly to understanding the phenomenon as a whole.

In order to prevent taking a reductionist position, it is necessary to establish clearly the scope of the VEPR model. Violent radicalization is a very complex phenomenon where many variables and processes are involved. Far from trying to explain all the feasible ways by which a person may become a violent activist and even a terrorist, this work is only intended to account for one of them. Determining the prevalence of the "epic pathway" with respect to other pathways in different contexts of radicalization is a task for subsequent research.

Nevertheless, if there is an "epic pathway" based on the search for internal rewards in the form of feelings of belonging, a cause to fight for, commitment, etc., i.e. closely related to the aforementioned “pull” factors, this leads to presume there is also a similar radicalization pathway closely related to the “push” factors, i.e. identity crisis, marginalization, social exclusion, outrages received, etc. The identification of this new pathway, parallel to the "epic pathway" and both potentially concurrent in the same individual, is reserved for upcoming works.

The VEPR model has a number of implications that illustrate its usefulness. First of all, it provides scientific support for the empirical observation that in the jihadist context of radicalization there exist autonomous structures that may appear spontaneously. In its original version, the model already predicted that phenomena of collective radicalization could occur spontaneously without the need for prior planning and that they could evolve over time towards more complex systems. Again, the application of the model to the context of jihadist radicalization suggests that neither the radical group nor the agent of radicalization is strictly necessary for certain individuals to develop their process.

Secondly, the VEPR model applied to the context of jihadist radicalization provides accommodation for phenomena such as the so-called "lone wolves", while helping to focus the controversy on the different interpretations that it has been subjected to. In effect; on the one hand, the idea that radicalization is a social phenomenon is maintained, although pointing out that this social aspect is relevant due to its capacity to provide the individual with behavioral models to follow and reinforcement of the incipient radical behavior, essentially. On the other hand, the possibility of using the Internet, both to access propaganda and to become part of virtual communities, makes real groups expendable when it comes to feeding the system with those behavioral models and reinforcements. In conclusion, individuals isolated but influenced by virtual environments may develop their own process of radicalization, and in certain circumstances could be utilized by the jihadist organization or even dare to commit attacks by themselves.

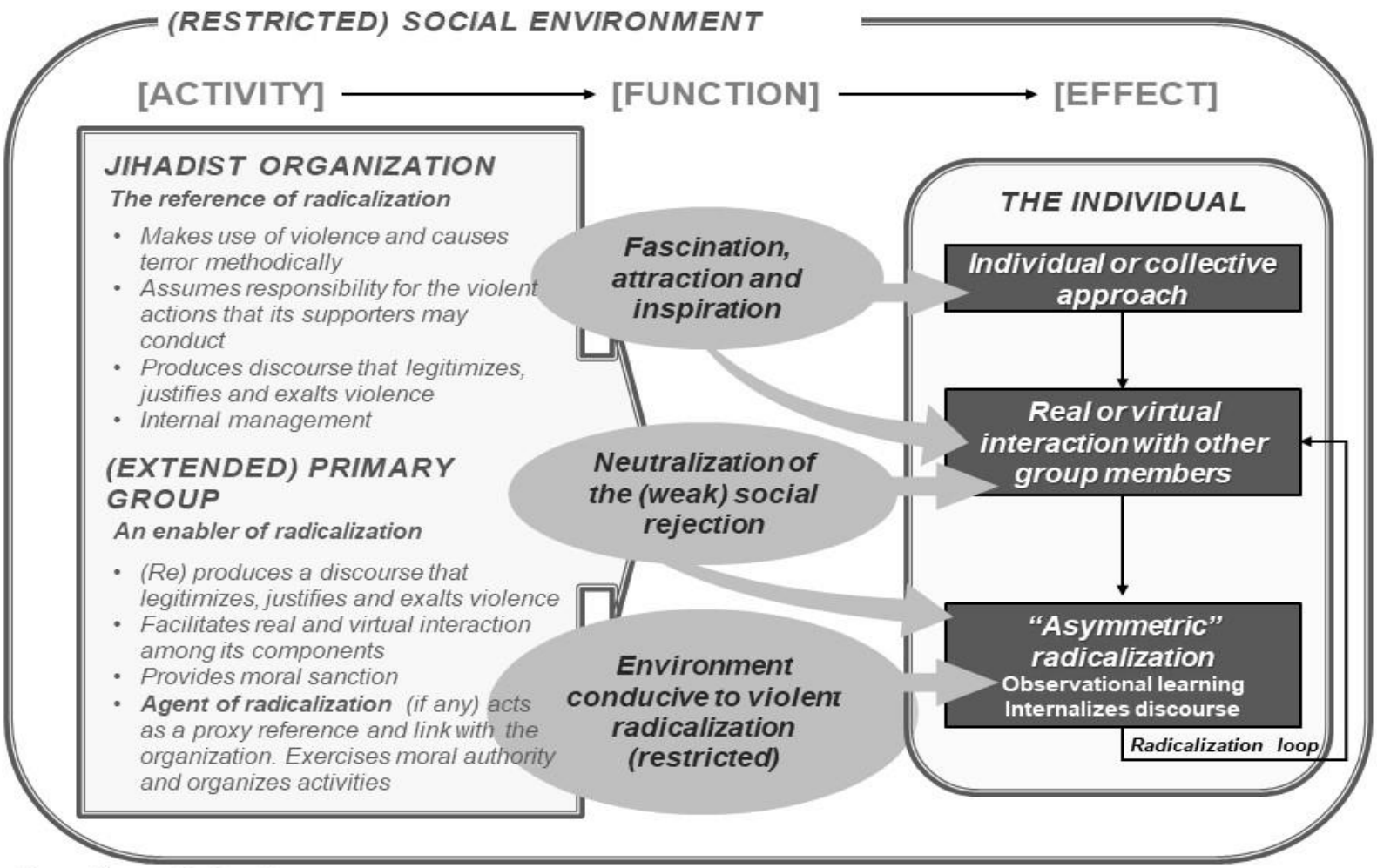
Finally, the successful application of the VEPR model to different contexts clarifies to some extent the role of ideology and beliefs in the process of individual radicalization. While it seems clear that underlying ideologies or beliefs are needed, the fact that they are based on politics, religion or other grounds only introduces technical differences in the process of radicalization. In other words, the different political, religious, etc. contexts

where the process of radicalization is rooted lose their relevance in favor of the individual and the interpretation he makes of each of them. The latter, however, does not exclude the possibility that certain contexts could be more prone than others to be interpreted radically by certain individuals.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: ***Miguel Peco Yeste*** *holds a BSc and an MSc in Psychology, and a Ph.D. in International Security. E-mail: mpeco.research@gmail.com*

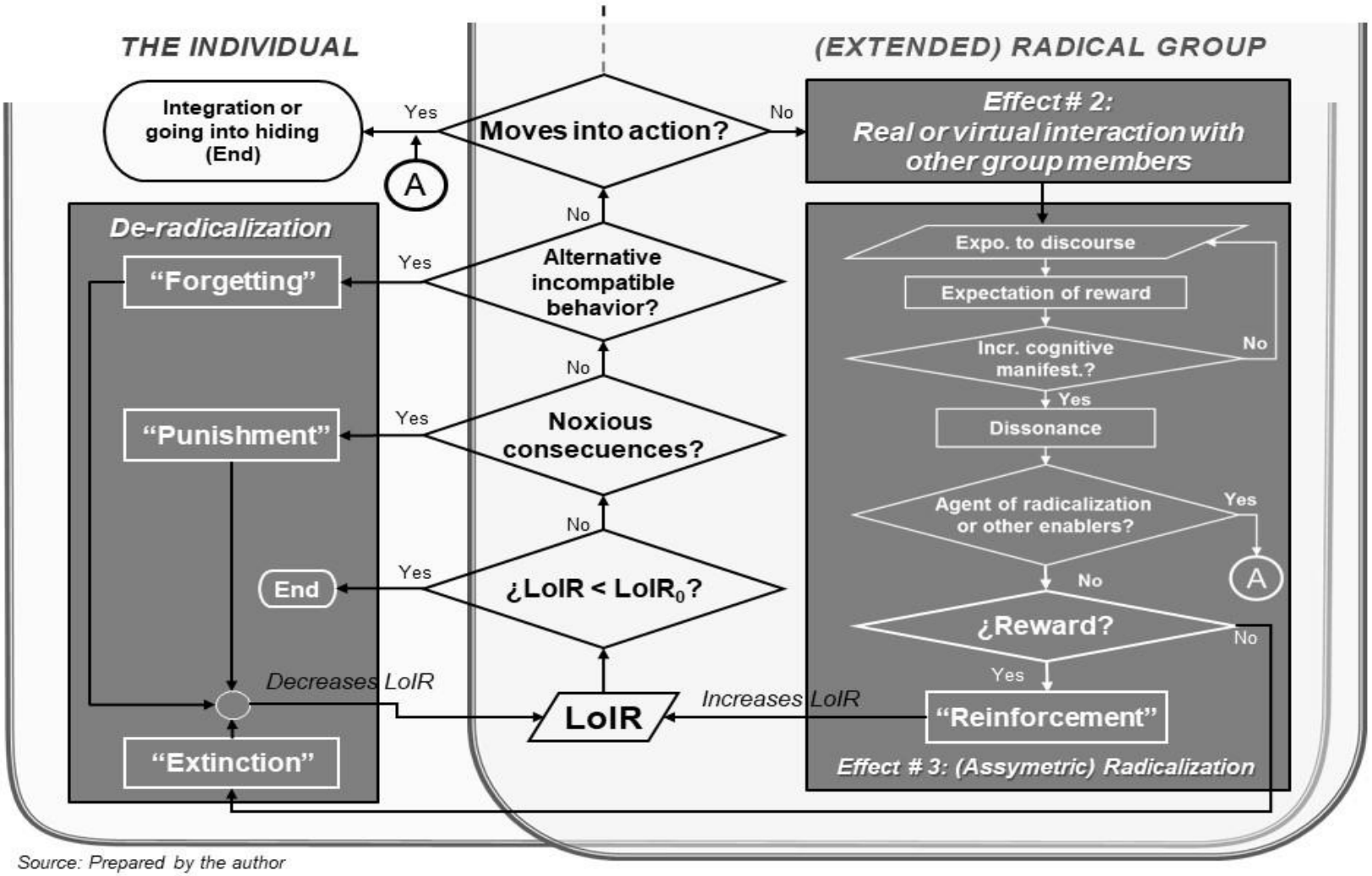
orcid.org/0000-0001-7638-7334

Figure 1. The VEPR Model Applied to Current Jihadist Context. Sequences



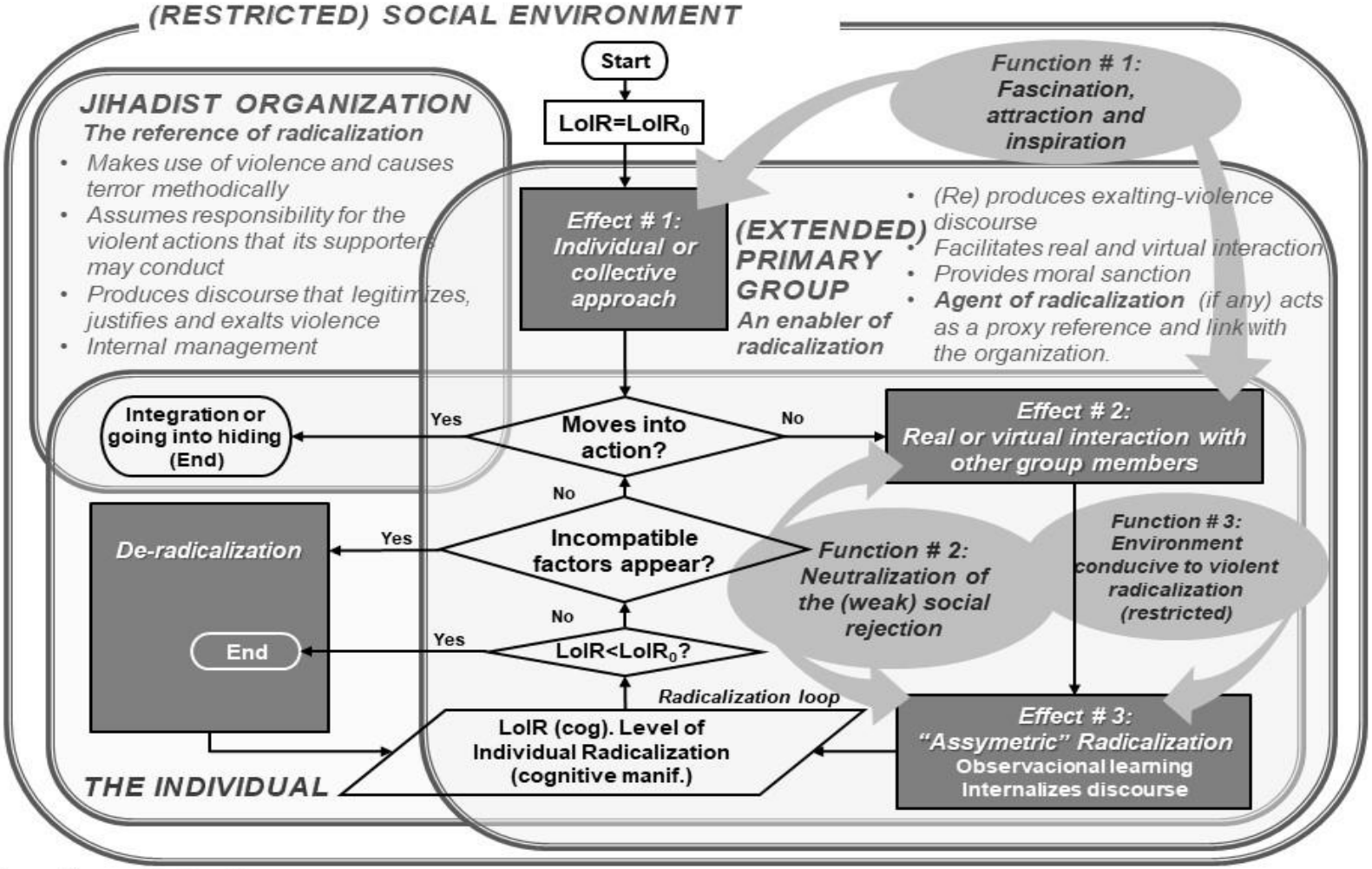
Source: Prepared by the author

Figure 2. The VEPR Model Applied to Current Jihadist Context. Details



Source: Prepared by the author

Figure 3. The VEPR Model Applied to Current Jihadist Context. Overview



Source: Prepared by the author

ANNEX 1

UPDATING THE ORIGINAL MODEL TO THE VEPR MODEL

The model of radicalization proposed in 2016 was inspired by the nationalist, revolutionary socialist-rooted context led by the self-styled Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV, in its Spanish acronym), in particular by some of its youth organizations, in the period between 1987 and 2003 (Peco Yeste, 2016). The transition to the present model maintains the essential structure and processes, adds the VEPR denomination itself, and includes small modifications, some clarifications in the concepts, as well as improvements in the graphics. For example, what in the original model were considered as "effects" are now designated as "functions". Actually, this simply means lengthening the chain [activities-functions-effects] to include among the latter the radicalization itself, which previously was seen as a further effect. Another addition relates to the activities of the radical group, where "Providing moral sanction to the transgressing behaviors" has been included in order to remark explicitly its importance. Also, the term "symmetric radicalization" is incorporated, in contrast to "asymmetric radicalization" that will be used in the current jihadist context. Finally, the update deepens into the de-radicalization mechanisms, which had been left almost untreated in the 2016 model, and also refines and integrates the proposal of radicalization mechanisms into the general scheme. All this is supported by improvements in the quality of the graphics, which allows a global view of the process and also provides details when necessary.

SEQUENCES [ACTIVITY – FUNCTION – EFFECT]

The model considered as structural elements of the radicalization context the following: the nucleus of the clandestine organization; the radical group, which operates at the edge of legality; the individual experiencing the process of radicalization (or candidate for); and finally, the social environment where all these elements are immersed. The first two, conducting their usual activities, are able of performing functions that will affect both the social environment and the individual, ultimately producing the effect of increasing the individual's level of radicalization. These functions are:

- Fascination & attraction. It causes some individuals to approach the radical group, start integrating and participating in its activities.
- Neutralization of social rejection. Violence conducted by the clandestine organization, once justified by the narratives and optimized through the harassment and pointing out of political adversaries, can neutralize a social rejection that would otherwise occur naturally. This lack of rejection, in turn, facilitates and consolidates the integration of the individual in the radical group and allows the process of radicalization to develop without resistance.
- An environment conducive to violent radicalization. These are situations created by the radical group where favorable circumstances converge for individuals to develop and deepen their process of radicalization.[11]

[11] From a technical point of view this "Environment conducive to violent radicalization" may be described as an environment where the individual has the possibility of conducting violent actions safely, has available rationales to overcome possible moral barriers, there is a clear primacy of contingencies of reinforcement of incipient violent behavior and, in addition, the appearance of an expectation of noxious consequences is hampered by a sense of impunity within the group.

The diagram [activity – function – effect] is included in Figure 4.

A "SYMMETRIC" RADICALIZATION

Once the approximation occurs, the probability that these individuals begin to participate in the radical group activities and be exposed to its influence increases. From here on, the process of radicalization can be explained from a cognitive-behavioral perspective through a combination of the following paradigms and classical theories: social learning (Bandura, 1977), operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938), and cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). The aforementioned environments conducive to violent radicalization contain the necessary conditions for the processes described in these paradigms to take place. Thus, it is proposed the mechanism of acquisition of incipient violent behavior is observational learning. After that, the escalation in intensity and frequency can be explained by the upward adjustment between cognitive and behavioral manifestations of that behavior. As it will be detailed below, this adjustment is driven by an expectation of reward previously acquired. Finally, the maintenance of violent behavior can be explained based on the primacy of potentially reinforcing contingencies within radical environments (Figure 5). These mechanisms are detailed as follows:

Initially, incipient violent behavior can be acquired through observational learning by merely participating in the activities of the radical group and getting exposed to both discourse and violence. As an intermediate step, it is proposed the individual acquires an expectation of reward in the form of pride, acceptance, belonging, achievement, etc. simply observing how the violent behavior of other members makes them more accepted, popular, praised, etc. by the group.

After that, the escalation in intensity and frequency of violent behavior can be explained by imbalances and following adjustment between cognitive and behavioral manifestations of that behavior, i.e. by the appearance of a cognitive dissonance and its subsequent resolution. Arguably, in the incipient violent behavior, cognitive and emotional manifestations are to prevail over the motor (hereinafter "behavioral") ones. However, it is not excluded that in certain circumstances the individual takes action without being fully convinced of it, especially if such action does not far exceed their beliefs. Be the behavioral manifestations adjusting to the cognitive ones, or vice-versa, it gives rise to two feasible and interchangeable mechanisms by which the same individual can progress in his process of radicalization.

- Say the incipient violent behavior is the result of an increase of cognitive manifestations of violent behavior due to observational learning, as it was advanced above. This increase implies that behavioral manifestations are overcome and therefore dissonance between thought and action appears. Since the aforementioned expectation of reward persists, dissonance tends to resolve upwards, i.e. behavioral manifestations tend to equate with the cognitive ones and not the other way around. In addition, environments conducive to violent radicalization, in particular activities that include low-intensity violence, provide the opportunity to put into practice the acquired ideas in a safe and also acceptable manner to the individual. The result is an increase in manifest violent behavior until it equals the cognitive side and, from the point of view of the individual, ideas and actions are congruent already. In this mechanism, therefore, it is the violent action that accommodates the new ideas in a way that can be labeled as rational.

- In certain circumstances, however, an inverse mechanism cannot be excluded (in Figure 5 it is represented by a dashed line). When exposed to situations of low-intensity violence, small violent actions that may be not too far from individual's convictions can be elicited by mere peer pressure, local action-reaction dynamics, fear, or other causes. Once these actions are carried out, behavioral manifestations surpass the cognitive ones and dissonance appears. The expectation of reward being present, as in the previous mechanism, this dissonance tends to resolve upwards. Environments conducive to violent radicalization are also appropriate for this since radical discourse provides the necessary arguments for the individual to self-justify his own violent actions. This way, the individual assimilates violent discourse and the result is an increase in cognitions related to violence. The new thought accommodates the action and both become congruent.

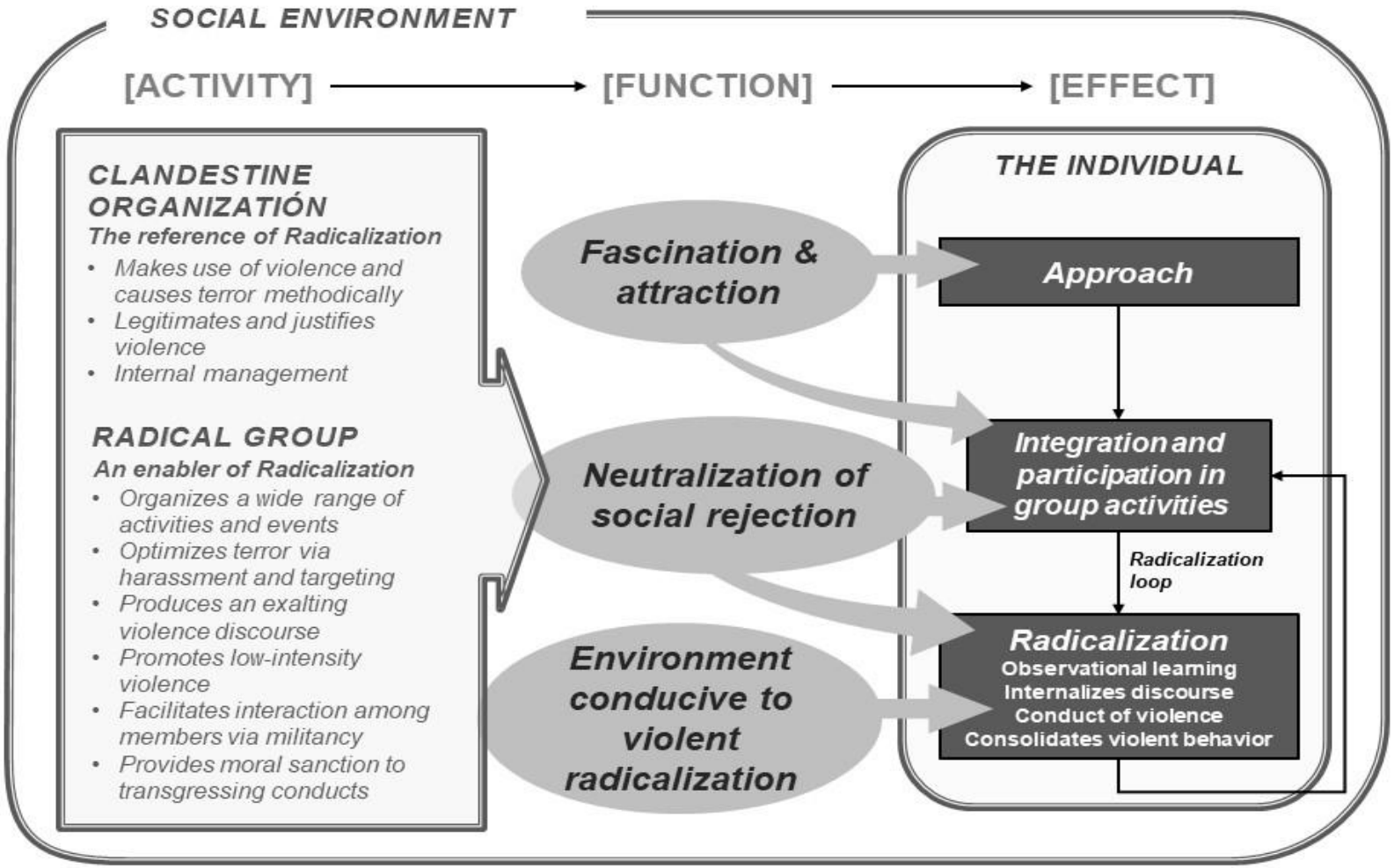
It is proposed these two mechanisms to be intertwined when it comes to progressing in violent behavior. This way, any of them that may be activated implies that a small step in the process of radicalization has been made. Finally, violent behavior just carried out will probably be rewarded in the form of recognition by other militants, with the consequent appearance of the aforementioned internal satisfaction. The interaction between individuals that occurs in environments conducive to violent radicalization provides the appropriate space-time contingencies for these rewards to become reinforcers of violent behavior, and therefore the probability for that behavior to be released in the future increases. In short, what began as an incipient violent behavior becomes consolidated behavior.

The process is repeated cyclically, leaving the individual immersed in a spiral of radicalization in which thoughts, feelings, and action adjust each other following an upward trend. Ethical barriers regarding the use of violence, if any, are falling one after the other. The individual, immersed in his process of radicalization, self-justifies his new lifestyle as a result of a commitment to a cause. Violence is clearly seen as a legitimate way to reach an idyllic final situation and he himself is seen as a chosen one to carry out such a transcendental mission. Throughout the process, it is important to highlight the availability of low-intensity violent activities. This availability enables that progresses in violent behavior intensity and frequency occur smoothly and gradually, accompanying the advances in the cognitive side and avoiding gaps. This progression with both manifestations of violent behavior together allows terming the process as "symmetrical" radicalization.

To account for the degree of radicalization of the individual at a given time, the Level of Individual's Radicalization (LoIR) continues to be used. It must be seen as a conceptual variable that relates to the individual's potential to conduct violent behavior, in general. The progressive acquisition and consolidation of violent behavior, as well as the consequent increase of LoIR, are represented as a cyclical trajectory within the flow diagram ("radicalization loop"). Thus, once the individual begins participating in the group activities, he acquires and consolidates violent behavior and progressively increases his LoIR. In principle, this increase can occur indefinitely unless the rewards based on internal satisfactions cease, noxious consequences appear, or circumstances that might be incompatible with the process arise, which will originate the individual entering a de-radicalization loop. In addition, as the process progresses deterrent factors –e.g. the possibility to be pursued by security forces- are probably to gain value at the expense of the motivating factors, and a point of equilibrium that can vary according to the individual's particular circumstances may be reached. This latter deduction, as suggested in the original model, seems to be useful in clarifying the well-known question of why

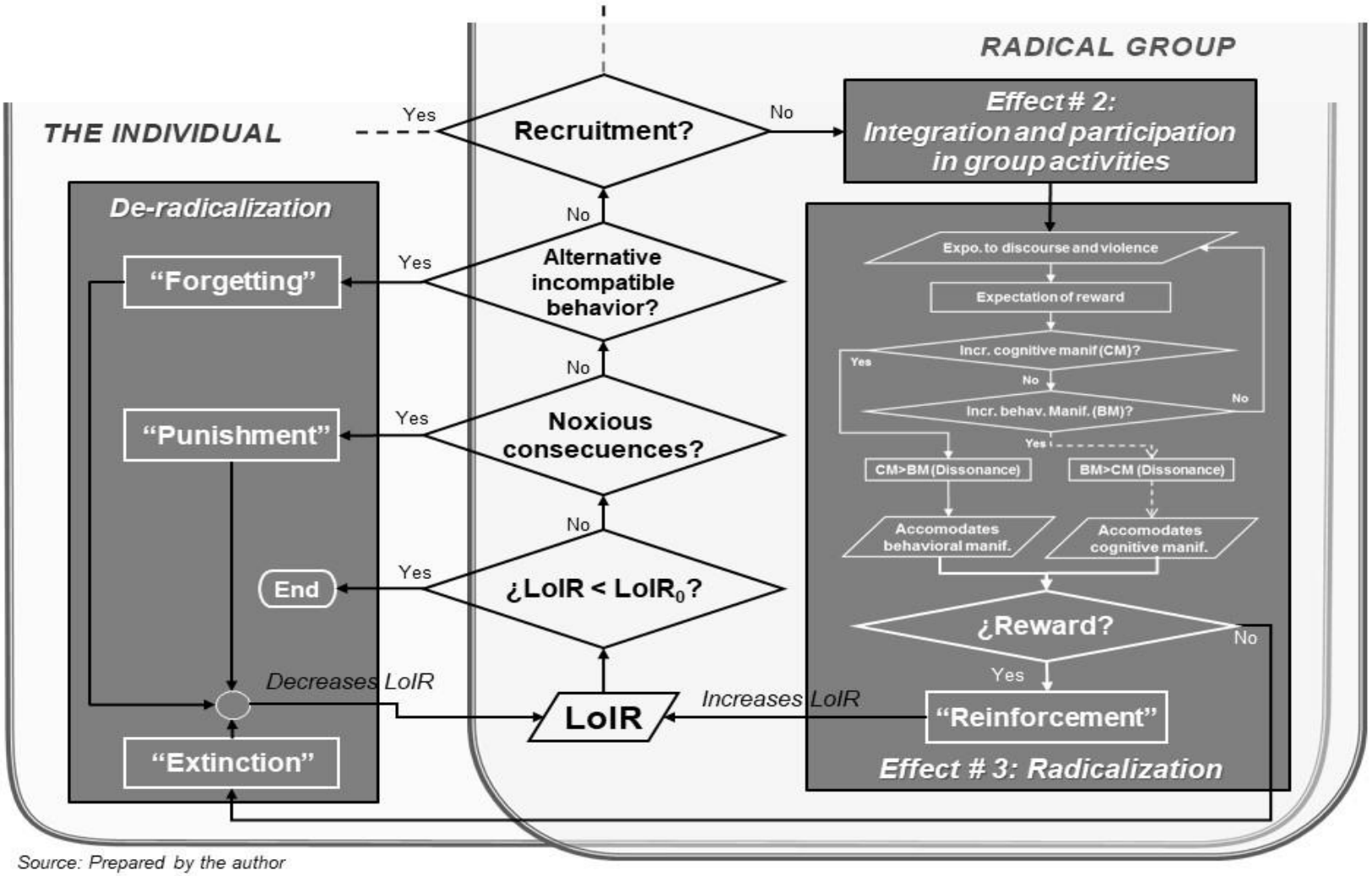
some complete the process and others do not. Finally, at any time the individual could be recruited by the organization and go into hiding, in which case the model would cease to be applicable (Figure 6).

Figure 4. The "Epic Way in the Process of Radicalization" (VEPR) Model. Sequences



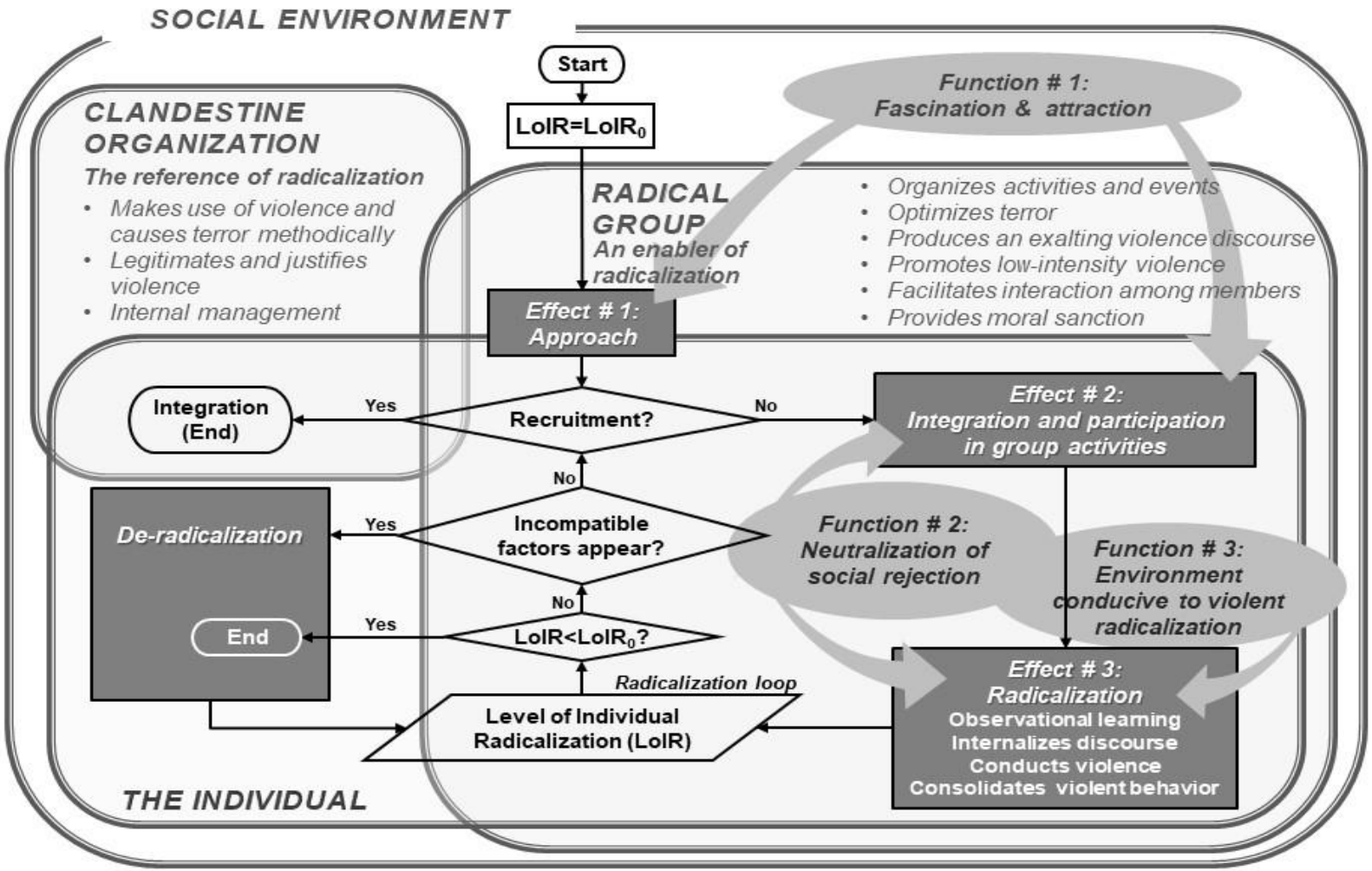
Source: Prepared by the author

Figure 5. The "Epic Way in the Process of Radicalization" (VEPR) Model. Details



Source: Prepared by the author

Figure 6. The "Epic Way in the Process of Radicalization" (VEPR) Model. Overview



Source: Prepared by the author

ANNEX 2

THE CONTEXT OF JIHADIST RADICALIZATION IN WESTERN SOCIETIES

According to some authors, jihadism represents currently a global movement with several territorial entities, a huge popular base of followers spread geographically throughout the planet, and an enormous capacity to attract human and material resources to new areas of conflict (Lia, 2016). With regard to western societies, the influence of this movement is materialized in a particular context of radicalization that some have called "fourth wave of militants and aspiring fighters" (Coolsaet, 2016). This current wave provides continuity to previous ones such as those related to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan and Algerian groups in the decades of the 70s and 90s, respectively, Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda at the beginning of the century, and shortly after this latter a third wave characterized by jihadists born in western countries.

"FOREIGN FIGHTERS": THE CALL OF THE JIHAD

Among the characteristics of this fourth wave, it should be noted the influence of groups such as the self-styled Islamic State (IS) during his attempt to build a caliphate in the territories of Syria and Iraq, as well as other groups either close to or affiliated with Al Qaeda. In particular, within this intended influence it is noteworthy the call made by these organizations to young Muslims, either to travel to these theaters –and become what has been called foreign fighters (FF)- or, in case of not being able to do so, to take the jihad to their own countries of origin. Each case gives rise to different, although complementary scenarios.

As for the FF, what constitutes an unprecedented innovation is the scale of the phenomenon and not its nature.[12] Although the majority of the fighters that have traveled to Syria and Iraq come from the States of the Middle East and North Africa region, the flow of properly called FF from the western countries is not negligible. According to some studies conducted within the European Union, it is estimated that until October 2015 about 4,000 individuals from member States may have traveled to the aforementioned theaters in Syria and Iraq.[13] The return of the FF to their countries of origin poses a genuine concern, since they already have military training to conduct attacks on their own, solid links with other ex-combatants to get logistical support, and prestige enough to influence, recruit and eventually train new jihadists.

LOCAL WARRIORS: A HIDDEN TREND

As for bringing jihad to their own countries of origin, the IS has been considerably succeeding in extending its networks of affiliates, sympathizers, and collaborators, as well as committing attacks far from its usual bases in the Middle East. In particular, the IS has shown an unusual ability to indirectly generate the phenomenon of violent radicalization in western societies by fostering the development of autonomous local structures. These structures tend to take shape more or less spontaneously and, although

[12] One could cite the cases of Afghanistan, Bosnia or Chechnya. See, for example Galperin & Sanderson (n.d.).
[13] Around 14% may have died in combat while 30% may have already returned to their countries of origin.

they assume the strategy of the organization as their own and actively collaborate whit it "[...] by carrying out indoctrination, propaganda and recruitment actions", they tend to maintain a strong autonomy with respect to the central levels of said organization (Audiencia Nacional, Spain 2018).

The aforementioned jihadist structures retain characteristics of other waves. For example, they are often primary groups, i.e. groups characterized by their small size and the physical and emotional closeness between their members. According to some studies, these bonds of friendship and kinship can become the main source of normative values, and therefore provide the adequate motivation for some individuals to develop radicalization processes and end up engaging in transgressive activities. In fact, individuals usually finish up embracing jihadism due to their belonging to the group, and not vice-versa (Jordán, 2009: 207-209). In general, this process could be explained to a large extent by the interaction among the members together with the exposure to the jihadist propaganda (Jordán, 2009: 205).

AGENTS OF RADICALIZATION: CATALYSTS OF THE PROCESS

The more or less spontaneous emergence of structures based on primary groups is perfectly compatible with the presence and influence of what has been called "agents of radicalization". These are individuals with a certain charisma and who use extreme rhetoric to attract supposedly vulnerable individuals to the jihadist cause.[14] According to some studies conducted in the main urban centers sources of recruitment of jihadists in Europe, the presence of these individuals –who have an in-depth knowledge of the community's problems- coupled with their close relationship with potential recruits, allows them to adapt the jihadist message as a solution to the perceived grievances, and therefore to maximize the effect of attraction. Moreover, if the latter is combined with the connectivity provided by social networks on the Internet –which allows among other things to establish direct links with individuals who are already fighting in operation theaters- all this can lead to a "perfect storm" so that the recruitment is carried out successfully (Maggiolini & Varvelli, 2016: 19).

The coexistence of agents of radicalization directly linked to the jihadist organizations –and therefore being able to perform active recruitment tasks- together with the autonomous local structures spontaneously created, fits well with the theoretical description of Sageman (2004) about the processes generated by the interaction between recruitment attempts ("top-down") and the activists' attitude before a potential recruitment ("bottom-up").[15] It should be noted that, contrary to what is derived from some studies carried out with individuals convicted of terrorism, these processes do not have to be mutually exclusive, but usually occur simultaneously. [16]

LESS RELIGION, MORE INTERNET

[14] See, for example, Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (n.d.) or Ducol (2012).
[15] Specifically, in p. 110 the author states: "Instead of a top-down process of the terrorist organization trying to recruit new members, it was a bottom-up process of young people volunteering to join the organization. [...] Of course, it was a chance phenomenon". Later, in p. 122, it is stated that "the process of joining the Jihad, however, is more bottom-up than a top-down activity" while using a metaphor to suggest that the role of the recruiter is related to "[...] evaluation and selection more than marketing."
[16] An important bias appears when considering the context of radicalization with samples from convicted individuals, exclusively. See a review, for example, in Peco Yeste (2013).

Another distinctive feature of this wave is that the age of radicalized individuals is, in general, lower than that of the jihadists of other times. Consequently, the motivation to take the aforementioned call for the jihad is arguably less related to religion or ideology and more to other personal reasons (Coolsaet, 2016: 20). This characteristic has already been recognized by other experts, who emphasize that the main motivation of young people who embrace jihad could be the fascination with narratives such as "[...] the small brotherhood of super-heroes who avenge the Muslim Ummah" (Roy, 2015). As a matter of fact, to account for this decline in the role of religion EUROPOL has recommended using the term "violent extremism social trend" instead of "radicalisation" (EUROPOL, 2016). Despite this decline, however, it can still be affirmed that jihadism is different from other ideologies held by radicals because of its capacity to grant the believer a genuine identity as well as a clear mission in the present life and in the hereafter (Maggiolini & Varvelli, 2016).

Although it is not an exclusive feature either, the role of the Internet continues to be particularly relevant as a key technology within this fourth wave. As it is well known, the Internet allows certain organizations to expand the global jihad in an efficient manner, while it also allows individuals to establish social networks susceptible to become virtual communities. Looking ahead, and despite the decline of the IS and the resurgence of Al-Qaeda, the methods of the latter organization in terms of propaganda and recruitment aimed at western societies seem to follow the school already consolidated by the former, so no significant changes are expected in this regard (EUROPOL, n.d.). Annex 3 is dedicated to the analysis of this phenomenon.

A SPECIAL SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Of the aforementioned 4,000 individuals from the European Union who could have traveled to the theaters of Syria and Iraq, some 2,800 did so from only four countries: Belgium, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Of these, more than 90% were from metropolitan areas, and there are indications that they belonged to extremist networks based on existing friendship circles in those areas (van Ginkel & Entenmann, 2016). More specifically, entire districts in cities such as Paris, Brussels or London have been considered by some as authentic hotbeds for jihadists, i.e. places of confluence of supposedly propitiatory factors of the radicalization phenomenon such as unemployment, delinquency, influence of Salafism, and political, social and geographical marginalization, among others (Maggiolini & Varvelli, 2016: 17-18).

The assessment of the greater or lesser support for jihadism that can be found within Muslim communities settled in western countries is a controversial issue. According to some studies, it cannot be denied that in some of them there is a radical environment with a considerable background of sympathy and support for the jihadist cause, where propaganda is accepted and a certain freedom of action to recruit and mobilize supporters exists (Schmid, 2017: 25). Although this situation is not generalizable to most of the Muslims communities, it could arguably be the case in urban nuclei such as those indicated above, where a wide range of supports ranging from mere empathy to providing the necessary logistics to commit attacks can be found.

ANNEX 3

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET IN THE CONTEXT OF JIHADIST RADICALIZATION

The use of new information technologies in violent radical contexts, and in particular the use of the Internet, has been a reality for several decades. Considering as a background the old websites dedicated to disseminate particular versions of conflicts, such as those of the former Yugoslavia or Chechnya, different jihadist organizations have been adapting themselves during this time to the new functionalities this technology provides, either to take advantage of their possibilities or to protect themselves from their risks (Torres, 2017: 2). Currently, in the field of counterterrorism, it is assumed the Net offers a wide range of possibilities such as propaganda, recruitment, more secure internal communications, operational coordination, indoctrination, financing, and diverse operational support (Audiencia Nacional, Spain, 2015: 2).

When defining the role of the Internet in the radicalization system represented by the VEPR model, it may be useful to group the aforementioned possibilities in two connected aspects. The first one is related to the advantages offered by the Internet to the jihadist organization when it comes to developing habitual activities such as the internal management, government of the territorial conquests, issuance of jihadist propaganda, incitement to certain hearings to join their ranks and/or carry out attacks in the countries of origin, and others. The second aspect relates to its role in facilitating the conditions in which an individual can initiate and deepen his process of radicalization. Finally, both aspects converge in one of the high points of the process: the recruitment of followers.

THE INSTRUMENTAL USE OF THE INTERNET BY THE ORGANIZATION

The Internet has made it possible to expand the scope of the jihadist organizations' activities to the extent that without the Net these groups would certainly not be able to maintain such a decentralized global movement (Jordán, 2009: 210). In particular, the following sections describe the advantages obtained in terms of internal management, propaganda, and incitement to the commission of attacks.

Internal management of the organization

For the IS, the Internet has been a key element of its communications and information system that has led to obtaining obvious advantages when it comes to internally managing the organization. These advantages are, among others, the possibility of waiving complicated engineering; integrating geographically dispersed elements in the command and control system, immediately and free of charge; increasing the capacity to transport important volumes of information; and above all, improving the security of the communications and the anonymity of the users. This latter advantage –key for the survival of the organization- has increased exponentially since the appearance of smartphones and the consequent advances both in the encryption of communications and the possibility of adding extra security layers via commercial applications. To all this, it should be added the difficulties experienced by the security agencies to face this challenge without the help of the private sector, sometimes reluctant to share technology or to disclose data (Hannigan, 2014). Thus, taking advantage of the opportunity offered by this technology development, coinciding with the rise of the IS, the organization has made

extensive use of these features when coordinating and controlling remotely its operational cells before and during terrorist operations (Tonnessen, 2017: 104).

Propaganda

The origins and scenarios in which major jihadist groups operate are located far from the more or less open societies where this context of radicalization is applicable. Thus, propaganda via the Internet is essential when it comes to influencing these hearings, since it allows establishing the link between the alleged grievances suffered by Muslims there and the armed struggle that takes place in the areas of operations (EUROPOL, 2017)

In addition to being a requirement, the IS has made an innovative use of the Internet when it comes to legitimizing and justifying violence, as well as deliberately inducing terror. In this sense, it is worth noting the role of the Net in giving way to the extensive audiovisual production of its propaganda apparatus constituted by news agencies, audiovisual producers, publishers, distributors, and other centers. According to declarations of deserters and other sources, this propaganda exploits massively a double message: on the one hand, aimed at threatening the western adversaries with scenes of executions, while, on the other hand, describing the territory under control as a privileged place to live (Miller & Mekhenne, 2015). This double message is consistent with the opinion of some analysts, who focus the purpose of this propaganda on the intimidation of opponents, the ability to recruit new members, and the promotion of the legitimacy of the conquered territory as a State (Williams, 2016). To conclude with this section, it should be said that the evolution of the jihadist propaganda contents has gone hand in hand with the situation of the IS in the territories of Syria and Iraq, although always seeking to achieve the greatest possible impact.[17]

Incitement to the commission of attacks

The change in the content of IS' messages, from encouraging travel to the theaters of operations of Syria and Iraq to instigating the commission of attacks in the countries of origin, is particularly clear from 2015 and seems coincident with the difficulties in maintaining the control of the occupied territories before the attacks conducted by the coalition led by the US. In this way, since the end of 2014, the well-known digital publication *Dabiq* was appealing to such actions with arguments as:

> Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling. [...] will you leave the American, the Frenchman, or any of your allies to walk safely upon the earth while the armies of the crusaders strike the lands of the Muslims not differentiating between a civilian and fighter? (The Official Spokesman for the Islamic State, 1435 Muslim year:6-10).

According to some authors, the reasons for this change of trend were, among others, the recognition by the leaders of the organization of the psychological effects that such attacks could originate among the western population, especially coinciding with the crisis of the refugees (Fainberg, 2017: 34). In fact, the spokespersons of the organization, in messages issued during 2016, urged to conduct attacks to the volunteers who originally

[17] Prior to 2016, the IS propaganda strived to give the impression that the group represented the victorious Islam, to later replace it with another that represented the Sunni Muslims suffering the attack of a coalition of Westerners, Jews and Shiites, attack that would lead to the final battle between good and evil. Later, as the territorial losses increased, it was added that in case of defeat in Syria and Iraq the affiliated organizations must continue the fight in other geographical areas (EUROPOL, n.d.).

planned to travel to Syria, particularly in the USA and Europe, by whatever means available, and especially during the month of Ramadan. The reason given was, precisely, that even a "minor" attack could have a considerable impact when it comes to expanding terror among the "enemies" (Reuters, 2016).

THE INTERNET AS A FACILITATOR OF THE RADICALIZATION PROCESS

The Internet continues to have key instrumental roles in the individual either candidate for or in the process of radicalization. Perhaps the most obvious one is related to the simplicity to access materials provided by the jihadist organization, and therefore to the way the individual gets exposed to its propaganda. This exposure to propaganda contents in forums and web pages, as well as in other materials such as the aforementioned *Dabiq* digital magazine, is probably less effective than the direct exposure provided by agents of radicalization when compared on a case-by-case basis. However, the distinctive feature of online influences is that they are capable of reaching an infinitely greater audience of potential candidates to develop a process of radicalization. As a result, in a sufficiently large community of individuals –such as open societies- online influences may be able to provoke the appearance of more radicalized individuals than offline influences, which are very limited because of the relative scarcity of physical agents of radicalization.

Building on instrumental roles, it is also necessary to take into consideration the advantage that cyberspace provides when it comes to getting involved in radical activities. In particular, in the context of radicalization with jihadist roots linked to the boom of the IS, the Net has become a substitute field of action for some to deploy their activism given the difficulty of doing so, for example, in the IS' operation theaters (Torres, 2017).

Above instrumental roles, though, another key function of the Internet in the process of radicalization relates to its socializing aspect and, in particular, its capacity to establish social networks susceptible to becoming virtual communities (Ducol, 2012). According to some authors, the Internet can provide the individual with genuine social spaces that encourage the construction of political and ideological discourses and justify the use of violence (Bowman-Grieve, 2009: 990). Moreover, referring to the phenomenon of the so-called "lone wolves", others argue that these virtual communities can even become a substitute for the social environment that some individuals lack in the real world (Pantucci, 2011: 34). In this sense, special attention require the social networks created around radical preachers, which constitute a privileged vehicle for the transmission of the cognitive-normative elements of jihadism, as well as the internal networks of certain organizations (Jordán, 2009: 211).

The virtual nature of these communities gives them some particular characteristics. For example, some authors have described the Internet forums as "echo chambers" for the most extreme positions, since the moderate ones are quickly overshadowed by them (Gerraerts, 2012). Also, interviews with police experts have revealed the short duration of the process and the lesser involvement of the religious dimension with respect to traditional jihadists: "A couple of months are enough. The theological burden has less weight. They are formed through Google and YouTube" (Abril, 2017).

In short, radicalization via virtual communities on the Internet is a feasible prospect, which does not exclude their complementarity with other real communities. Supporting this statement, it can be mentioned a relatively recent study where three different (ideal) trajectories could be identified with regard to the use of the Internet during the process of radicalization. Firstly, there were individuals for whom the Net was the first channel of

exposure to radical discourse, which was subsequently complemented by interactions in real life. Secondly, there were also individuals who followed an inverse path to the previous one. And thirdly, 4 of 15 cases studied showed trajectories in which the Internet not only played a central role in the exposure to the radical world, but also in the gradual adoption of a belief system that morally legitimized the use of violence (Ducol *et al*., 2016).

ON-LINE RECRUITMENT

Recruitment can be considered as the point of confluence between the attempts of the organization to raise followers and the desire of the individuals to integrate into it. In the context of jihadist radicalization, the way in which the recruitment of followers via the Internet is conducted depends to a large extent on the more or less active role of the recruiter. Thus, some describe the process in its most complete case as a sequence of steps: the first contact between the individual and the recruiters, the creation of a micro-community around the possible objective, the transition of the interactions to private channels of communication, and finally the identification of and subsequent support for the actions the individual is willing to carry out on their own on behalf the organization (Berger, 2015: 19). In other cases, the prominent role of autonomous local structures, which tend to appear more or less spontaneously and often maintain a strong autonomy with respect to the central levels of the organization, has been highlighted. In this way, through what has been called "remote recruitment and adhesion", autonomous cells relaunch the propaganda material issued by the official IS channels, adapting it to the uniqueness of the country in which they are located. After that, the debate generated in social networks provides favorable conditions for some individuals to assume the mandate and guidelines of the organization, culminating the process with an offer to collaborate with it (Audiencia Nacional, Spain, 2017).

Finally, it is important to point out the open nature of the recruitment, which in many cases constitutes a true "self-integration". As an example, some judicial investigations show that the integration of a person in a jihadist group is not necessarily an external formal act of mutual recognition and agreement of wills between both parties, "[...] but it is completed when the aspirants, freely and voluntarily, assume the mandate and guidelines of the terrorist organization and execute actions in the desired line". According to the same sources, this is due to the effectiveness of the radical jihadist propaganda, which has become a fundamental element as important as the violent action itself (Audiencia Nacional, Spain, 2018).

REFERENCES

Abril, G. (2017), "Fabricando a un yihadista", *El País*, April 16. Available at: https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/04/16/eps/1492293912_149229.html

Allen, C. E. (2017), "Threat of Islamic Radicalization to the Homeland", Written testimony before the US Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, March 14. Available at: http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/download/031407allen

Audiencia Nacional, Juzgado Central de Instrucción nº 2, Spain (2015), Auto. Procedimiento abreviado 0042/2015 F. September 7.

Audiencia Nacional, Spain (2017), Sentence 19/2017, July 21.

Audiencia Nacional, Spain (2018), Sentence 3/2018, January 18.

Bandura, A. (1997), *Social Learning Theory*, New York: General Learning Press.

Berger, J.M. (2015), "Tailored Online Interventions: The Islamic State's Recruitment Strategy", *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 8, Issue 10. Available at: https://ctc.usma.edu/app/uploads/2015/10/CTCSentinel-Vol8Iss1036.pdf

(von) Bertalanffy, L. (1968), *General System Theory*, New York: George Braziller.

Bowman-Grieve, L. (2009), "Exploring Stormfront: A virtual community of the radical right", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol 32, Issue 11, pp. 989-1007. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903259951

Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (n.d.), *Strengthening our Resilience to Agents of Radicalisation and Their Rethoric*. Available at: https://info-radical.org/en/what-is-an-agent-of-radicalization/

Coolsaet, R. (2016), "Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave", *Egmont–The Royal Institute for International Relations.* Available at: http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2016/02/egmont.papers.81_online-versie.pdf

Ducol, B. (2012), "Uncovering the French-speaking jihadisphere: An exploratory analysis", *Media, War and Conflict*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, pp. 51–70. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635211434366

Ducol, B. *et al*. (2016), *Assessment of the state of knowledge: Connections between research on the social psychology of the Internet and violent extremism*, The Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society. Available at: http://tsas.ca/tsas_library_entry/tsas-wp16-05-assessment-of-the-state-of-knowledge-connections-between-research-on-the-social-psychology-of-the-internet-and-violent-extremism/

EUROPOL (2016), *Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorist attacks*. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/changes_in_modus_operandi_of_is_in_terrorist_attacks.pdf

EUROPOL (n.d.), *European Union Terrorism and Trend Report 2017*. Available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/tesat2017_0.pdf

Fainberg, A. (2017), "Here We Come: The Evolution of Foreign Fighters' Flow to Syria and Iraq in 2013-2016", *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).* Available at: https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1954/the-evolution-of-foreign-fighters

Festinger, L. (1957), *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Frontini, A. & Ritzmann, A. (2017), "Introduction", in European Foundation for Democracy (ed.), *The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond*. Available at: http://europeandemocracy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-The-Challenge-of-Jihadist-Radicalisation.pdf

Galperin, M., Sanderson, T.M. & Fellman, Z. (n.d), "Foreign Fighters in History", *Center for Strategic & International Studies.* Available at: http://foreignfighters.csis.org/history_foreign_fighter_project.pdf

Geeraerts, S. (2012) "Digital radicalization of youth", *Social Cosmos*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, pp. 25-32.

(van) Ginkel, B. & Entenmann, E. (eds.) (2016), *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism-The Hague. Available at: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf

Hannigan, R. (2014), "The web is a terrorist's command-and-control network of choice." *Financial Times*, November 15. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/c89b6c58-6342-11e4-8a63-00144feabdc0

Jalloul Muro, H. (2015), *El islamismo y la utilización del "fiqh" con fines políticos: el caso del Líbano actual*, Ph.D. thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Jalloul Muro, H. & abu Warda, A. (2017), "El yihadismo como ideología exportable y distinta entre Oriente Próximo y Europa", Paper presented at IV Congreso ADESYD, Madrid, November 28.

Jordan, J. (2009), "Procesos de radicalización yihadista en España. Análisis sociopolítico en tres niveles", *Revista de Psicología Social*, Vol. 24, Issue 2, pp. 197–216. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1174/021347409788041499

Lang, P. (1968), "Fear Reduction and Fear Behaviour: Problems in Treating a Construct", *Research in Psychotherapy*, Issue 4.

Lia, B. (2016), "Jihadism in the Arab world after 2011: Explaining its expansion", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 23, Issue 4, pp. 74–91. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12234

Maggiolini, P. & Varvelli, A. (2016), "Conclusions", in Varvelli, A. (ed.), *Jihadists Hotbeds. Understanding local Radicalization Processes*, Instituto per gli studi di politica internazionale. Available at: http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/jihadist-hotbeds-understanding-local-radicalization-processes-15418

Maslow, A. (1943), "A Theory of Human Motivation" *Psychological Review*, Issue 50, pp. 370-396.

Miller, G. & Mekhenne, S. (2015), "Inside the surreal world of the Islamic State's propaganda machine", *The Washington Post*, November 20. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/inside-the-islamic-states-propaganda-machine/2015/11/20/051e997a-8ce6-11e5-acff-673ae92ddd2b_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e23fdb79ff0b

Le Moigne, J.-L. (1994), "La théorie du système général", *Annals of Physics*, Issue 54.

Pantucci, R. (2011), "A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists", *Developments in Radicalisation and Political Violence*. Available at: http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/1302002992ICSRPaper_ATypologyofLoneWolves_Pantucci.pdf

Peco Yeste, M. (2013), "Interpretaciones que no ayudan a entender el problema de la radicalización violenta en España", Observatorio Paz, Seguridad y Defensa, Universidad de Zaragoza, November 28. Available at: http://catedrapsyd.unizar.es/observatorio-psyd/opina/interpretaciones-que-no-ayudan-a-entender-la-radicalizacion-violenta-en-espana.html

- (2014), "A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Violent Radicalization, Based on a Real Case", *Psicología Política*, Issue 49, pp. 7-26. Available at: https://www.uv.es/garzon/psicologia%20politica/N49-2.pdf
- (2016), "A Functional Approach to Violent Radicalization. Building a Systemic Model Based on a Real Case", *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, pp. 63-76. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18847/1.3.4

Radicalisation Awareness Network (2016), *The Root Causes of Violent Extremism*, European Commission. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf

Reuters (2016), "Islamic State calls for attacks on the West during Ramadan in audio message", May 21. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-islamicstate/islamic-state-calls-for-attacks-on-the-west-during-ramadan-in-audio-message-idUSKCN0YC0OG

Roy, O. (2015), "What is the driving force behind jihadist terrorism? – A scientific perspective on the causes/circumstances of joining the scene", Paper presented at BKA Autumn Conference: International Terrorism: How Can Prevention and Repression Keep Pace? November, 18. Available at: https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/Publications/AutumnConferences/2015/herbsttagung2015Roy.html

- (2016), "France's Oedipal Islamist Complex" *Foreign Policy*, January 7. Available at: http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/07/frances-oedipal-islamist-complex-charlie-hebdo-islamic-state-isis/

Sageman, M. (2004), *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schmid, A. (2017), "Public Opinion Survey. Data to Measure Sympathy and Support for Islamist Terrorism", *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague*. Available at: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ICCT-Schmid-Muslim-Opinion-Polls-Jan2017-1.pdf

Skinner, B. F. (1938), *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Soufan, A. & Schoenfeld, D. (2016), "Regional Hotbeds as Drivers of Radicalization", in Varvelli, A. (ed.), *Jihadists Hotbeds. Understanding local Radicalization Processes*. Instituto per gli studi di politica internazionale. Available at: http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/jihadist-hotbeds-understanding-local-radicalization-processes-15418

The Official Spokesman for the Islamic State (the Muslim year 1435), "Indeed your Lord is Ever Watchful", *Dabiq*, Issue 4, pp. 6-10.

Tibi, B. (2012), *Islamism and Islam*, Yale University Press

Tonnessen, T.H. (2017), "Islamic State and Technology – A Literature Review", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 11, Issue 6, pp. 101-111. Available at: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/659

Torres, M. (2017), "Lecciones aprendidas de la lucha contra el yihadismo en Internet", *Documento de opinión 04/17 del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. Available

at: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2017/DIEEEO04-2017_Lucha_Yihadismo_Internet_MRTorres.pdf

Vidino, L. (2013), "Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland", *Center for Security Studies.* Available at: http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CH_radicalization_report.pdf.

Williams, L. (2016), "Islamic State Propaganda and the Mainstream Media", *Lowy Institute for International Policy.* Available at: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/islamic-state-propaganda-and-mainstream-media