Key insights into masculinities and violent extremism from a brief literature review

Okumba Miruka

Abstract: This article offers a brief review of the literature that explores the link between masculinities and violent extremism. A content analysis was carried out to isolate common themes that were then analysed for insights. The majority of violent extremists are men, and this article suggests that it is therefore imperative to question the link between these two variables. The justifications for the investigation are explored in relation to the idea that masculinities are drivers of violent extremism. Common patterns emerging from the literature review are teased out, and the article hypothesises that individual differences and a multiplicity of common factors lead to violent extremism. Three potential conceptual frameworks are then proposed for researching masculinities and violent extremism, with a view to prompting investigations that seek to solve actual problems.

Keywords: radicalisation, masculinities, femininities, socialisation, violent extremism, gender norms, identity

Note on the author: Okumba Miruka is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Cooperative University of Kenya. His research centres around the social construction of gender, men's involvement in combating gender-based violence and gender and politics. He is currently engaged as a self-employed consultant on development issues and as a columnist on gender issues for Nation Media Group, the largest media house in East and Central Africa.
okumba.miruka@cuk.ac.ke; okumba.miruka@gmail.com

Introduction

The need to prevent and counter violent extremism gained prominence after the bombing of the Pentagon – the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense – on 11 September 2001. The sense of urgency surrounding these matters was also driven by the rise of high-profile violent extremist organisations, such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Boko Haram and al-Qaeda (Fried *et al.* 2020). It is widely agreed that the majority of individuals in extremist groups globally are (young) men (Dearing 2010; Groen *et al.* 2010; Carter 2013; Allan *et al.* 2015; Johnston & True 2019); however, 'the vast majority of men in settings where violent extremism is more common are not engaged in (it), and many are vocal advocates against it' (Fried *et al.* 2020: 8). This means that a proclivity to violent extremism should not be generalised as something innate to men.

Allan *et al.* (2015: 2) make the drastic claim that 'although most violent extremists are young men, there is little convincing research to suggest that ideals of masculinity and honour play a significant role in causing violent extremism'; this sits somewhat paradoxically with their assertion that 'the fact that men constitute the majority of violent extremists needs to be taken seriously' (Allan *et al.* 2015: 24) and, certainly, evidence from primary studies in Asia and North Africa indicates that this dismissive statement was premature. The mere fact that most known violent extremists are young men places gender, of necessity, at the centre of the analysis that needs to take place. Patriarchy (an ideological framework that informs behaviour) is central to violence, and so masculinities have to be treated as a possible catalyst of violent extremism. As UN Women (2020: 9) states in a study of identity and violent extremism in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines, 'through better understanding the gendered drivers of violence, it may be possible to isolate potential perpetrators of violent extremism and to focus programming on effective methods to prevent radicalisation amongst men and women'.

According to Angus (2016: 1), violent extremism occurs when 'a person or group decides that fear, terror and violence are justified to achieve ideological, political or social change, and acts accordingly'. In other words, radicalisation is a precursor to recruitment into extremist groups. Lewis *et al.* (2017: 31) adopt the definition set out by the Australian government, which suggests that violent extremism consists of the 'beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals'. Meanwhile, other academics argue that extremist violence 'can be exercised through discourse, institutions and practices of exclusivism' (Lewis *et al.* 2017: 31, citing Arendt, 1970; Zizek 2009; Malešević 2016), and, according to True (2020), violent extremism is characterised by three basic elements, namely: the intention to achieve a cause; the targeting of a large population; and the perpetration of actions that fall outside the bounds of international humanitarian law.

The key conclusions that can be drawn from these views are that: extremism itself does not necessarily imply violence but often justifies it; extremism is based on and driven by a cause; and violence is utilised by extremist groups either to amplify their cause or for its own sake. When these assumptions are combined, firstly, with the observation that the majority of individuals involved in extremist groups are men, and secondly, with acceptance of the idea that extremism is behaviour inculcated through socialisation, the link between masculinities and violent extremism becomes tenable. This article explores research findings that relate to masculinities as a driver of violent extremism and emphasises the need to contextualise and localise studies on the subject. It also proposes three conceptual frameworks for use in researching the subject further.

Methodology

The article was developed on the basis of a rapid review of literature on the confluence of masculinities and violent extremism. The sampled literature was drawn from online and physical publications on masculinities and violent extremism, and the review was guided by the following questions:

1. What does existing literature reveal about masculinities as a driver of violent extremism?
2. What approaches emerge from the literature on researching the link between masculinities and violent extremism?
3. What do the findings portend for further research on masculinities and violent extremism?

A content analysis was carried out to isolate specific findings related to these questions. Common themes were identified and findings around them were consolidated and analysed, firstly, so that insights could be gained into whether or not masculinities drive violent extremism, and secondly, so that strategies for researching masculinities and violent extremism could be identified. Questions that may form the basis of further research were also derived from the literature review.

Masculinities as a driver of violent extremism

This section presents findings on emerging links between masculinities and violent extremism based on six themes: the concept of masculinities; gender norms in the context of economic challenges; disillusionment and alienation; ideological and familial solidarity; militarisation; and inversion.

The concept of masculinities

This article adopts the definition of 'masculinities' established by Fried *et al.* (2020: 4), which suggests that masculinities refer to 'identities; power; individual and collective actions; and individually held and societally reinforced norms related to manhood'. The resulting identities are products of systematic socialisation into what each culture, community or society considers to constitute manhood. Using the notions of what it means to be a man in their environment, boys are conditioned to exhibit attributes such as courage, aggression, entitlement and leadership. Academic discourse about the construction of gender identifies violence as an attribute inculcated in boys/men, situating it as one of the factors that produce masculinities. It is on this understanding that scholars have generally accepted Connell's (2002) argument that there are multiple masculinities, often in contest with one another. As Pearson (2018: 8) has noted, masculinities also vary horizontally (from place to place) and vertically (from era to era).

Recognition that not all masculinities are characterised by violence informs the idea of 'toxic masculinity'. The term, popularised by Connell (2002), refers to 'masculine gender roles associated with aggression and possibly violence' (Kupers 2005, cited in Pearson 2019), but a close reading reveals that the expression has been appropriated, distorted and oversimplified. The concept of 'toxic masculinity' is traceable to the 1980s and 1990s, when the mythopoetic (New Age) movement of men in the United States reacted to a perceived onslaught on manhood linked to second-wave feminism (Bly 1990; Salter 2019). This movement argued that boys were being feminised and thereby losing their 'true' warrior identity, which thus needed to be reclaimed. Through men-only workshops and retreats in the wilderness, it sought to re-socialise them to their 'true' inner selves. In this framing, feminisation constitutes a toxin that is diluting warrior manhood, and it is feminised men who are understood to exhibit 'toxic masculinity'.

The meaning of 'toxic masculinity' has morphed, and the term is now commonly used to reflect a meaning diametrically opposed to its original sense. Salter (2019: 2) refers to this distortion as a leakage from 'academic literature to wide cultural circulation' that has led to the expression being used, simplistically, as a diagnosis for all problems around masculinities of violence. As Salter (2019: 1) notes, this popular usage further implies that 'the problem of masculine aggression and entitlement … [is] a cultural or spiritual illness – something that has infected today's men and leads them to reproachable acts'. Waling (2019) is also critical of what he considers as an obsession with 'toxic masculinity', a preoccupation that has developed at the expense of healthy and positive constructions of masculinity.

Pearson (2019) and Treadwell & Garland (2011) similarly regard as problematic the 'toxic', 'crisis' and 'protest' labels Connell (2002) ascribed to masculinities.

Treadwell & Garland (2011) specifically argue that Connell's formative work runs the risk of 'pathologising marginalised or subordinate men' (Pearson 2019: 1259). They agree, instead, with the approach favoured by Hood-Williams (2001), who considers masculinities to be psychological constructs and products of complex gendered relations. Pearson's observations are based on her research into the English Defence League (EDL) demonstration that occurred in Telford, United Kingdom, on 5 November 2016. In her study, which sought to 'outline the ways in which EDL masculinities (were) part of wider social norms' (Pearson 2019: 1252), Pearson noted that the aggressive physical postures and presence employed by the men involved in the demonstration, which Pearson collectively labels as instances of 'hyper-masculinity', were primarily meant to ward off emasculation in a hostile social environment. Pearson suggests that labelling such men with one identity was inaccurate, given that they also exhibited caring masculinities by protecting downtrodden and vulnerable members of the community. Moreover, the presence of equally aggressive women in the EDL negated the deterministic equation of violent masculinities with men. Pearson's central argument is that 'many of the so-called toxic practices of the extreme fringes are present in society more widely', and so 'the concept … is inadequate to describe the gender practices of those involved' in the anti-Islam(ist) EDL protest (Pearson 2019: 1269). Similar arguments are advanced by Caravaggio & Davis (2020), Rahman (2020) and Duriesmith (2020) to suggest that masculinities vary contextually and locally, and therefore it is wrong to homogenise men and violent extremism.

It is evident from the above review that the meaning of 'toxic masculinity' has been completely inverted, and while academics have assigned it a descriptive value in order to label men's violent and sexist behaviours, popular users of the term have mobilised it to judge and condemn anything and everything discerned to be negative about men. Given these distortions, the expression is no longer useful.

Rather than focusing on labelling masculinities at work, which can become an abstract and sterile intellectual exercise, this article will produce credible evidence linking masculinities with violent extremism in order to put the focus on assessing and solving societal problems. This is the approach used by the UN Women (2020: 10) study on Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines, which established that 'people who support violence against women (VAW) are three times more likely to support violent extremism'. UN Women's findings echo those of Hadiz (2008, 2013), Pedahzur (2013), Ghafar (2016), Bourekba (2016), Mokbel (2017), Johnston & True (2019) and Fried *et al.* (2020).

As Caravaggio & Davis (2020) have argued, it is a mistake to treat the actions of extremist groups as alien to mainstream society – like Pearson (2019), they posit that these actions are actually extensions of and predicated on the existing gender norms that groups use to recruit members and legitimise deeds, including VAW, in

their ranks. The actions of extremist groups should, therefore, be seen as existing on a continuum which begins with individual and domestic perpetration of, and extends to, violence in its extremist and large-scale forms.

The link between support for VAW and violent extremism implies that the men concerned have internalised the vice as part of their domestic lives and expanded its application to external spaces. Emerging from this view is the idea that, if social-isation of boys and men encourages and legitimises VAW, it constructs an identity that is likely to be sympathetic to and supportive of violent extremism. This finding needs to be verified because, if proved, it could assist in measuring the likelihood of support for extremism in a population; it also suggests that, if support for VAW can be subverted, then support for violent extremism can also be eradicated. The clear implication here is that confirming the drivers of VAW, including gender norms, is the first step towards tackling violent extremism.

Gender norms in the context of economic challenges

True (2020) notes contestation about whether or not economic factors (such as pov-erty, unemployment and lack of opportunities for men) can be classified as root causes of violent extremism. Other studies are more definitive about the link. For example, Rahman (2020) notes that pressure to provide for households in a con-text of scarce economic opportunities for young men easily morphs into desperation for any source of income, which can increase men's attraction to extremist groups that promise financial benefits. In Libya, for example, extremist groups used finan-cial incentives to radicalise men based on these types of gender norms and women's economic vulnerability in a war economy (Johnston & True 2019). Further evidence of this nexus was captured in a UN Women (2020: 11) report which established that accomplished manhood was 'defined by male leadership and earning power, as well as violence and protection of … particularly female family members' in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines. In fact, half of all the report's male and female study respondents in Indonesia and the Philippines agreed that men should sacrifice their wellbeing for their families, even if this meant joining extremist groups (UN Women 2020: 26).

These findings are consonant with the claim that men who are unable to live up to social expectations deviate into crime, substance abuse and violence (Barker & Ricardo 2005; Robb *et al.* 2015; Barker *et al.* 2017). Explaining this dynamic, Messerschmidt (1997) and Connell (2002) observe that when acceptable traditional and conventional methods for fulfilling gender norms are unavailable, men tend to resort to crimi-nal behaviour to accomplish or validate their identities. The behaviour they exhibit depends on how each individual constructs his gendered self in relation to the power

structures and resources available to him. Specifically, men who feel marginalised and disempowered are more likely to engage in protest as a way of resisting subordination.

The key point here is that socialisation creates a contradiction in men's lives: it teaches men to expect to lead, but the opportunities for them to do so have dwindled, and so leadership becomes, for many, an illusion. This contradiction effectively serves as a stimulus that can drive men to reclaim what is quickly slipping from their grasp by whatever means, including violent extremism. Embedded in this response is disillusionment with the status quo.

Disillusionment and alienation

One hypothesis about masculinities and violent extremism considered by Allan *et al.* (2015: 8) is that 'under-employed young men with frustrated aspirations and a limited stake in society are particularly susceptible to radicalisation'. The observation that militant groups primarily recruit members from this category is relevant to this claim, but more significant is the recognition that young men are vulnerable because they have been socialised to understand that economic success is a mark of manhood, while failure is a source of stigma. If they believe they can achieve some level of fulfilment from extremist groups, they may therefore be willing to join, not only to earn a livelihood, but also to try and transform a situation that does not serve their interests.

That violent extremist groups play on people's vulnerabilities for recruitment purposes is becoming clearer from recent studies in Asia as captured by UN Women (2020: 13). These vulnerabilities include feelings of discrimination, oppression and injustice that lead to resentment towards governments (UN Women 2020: 48). This situation is illustrated by a United Nations Development Programme study which identified unemployment 'as the single most immediate need faced at the time of joining extremist groups such as Boko Haram and al-Shabaab' in Africa (Fried *et al.* 2020: 17).

On 2 November 2021, while this article was being prepared, a televised news item featured fishermen in the coastal Kenyan town of Lamu who were protesting about the confiscation of their fishing nets for violating prescribed standards. They asked the government how it expected them to make a living, when it had taken away their means of earning a livelihood. The clear but implicit message was that they had an alternative option in neighbouring Somalia, where they could join Al-Shabaab. The palpable anger and desperation in the men's voices were signs that resentment of government can catalyse people's movement into extremist groups.

In short, extremist groups become attractive because they fill a void left by governments that are unable to create employment, protect citizens and provide services. Closely related to the frustration these issues cause is the search for belonging by men

who feel alienated. A study on rural youth in Bangladesh shows that young men who leave their villages and go to towns for university education encounter a lifestyle in which their rural upbringing is demeaned as primitive. Extremist groups exploit this crisis by providing 'an apparently safe space (for) validation of their rural practices' and promising to make them 'real' men (Rahman 2020: 56). A similar appeal to 'a sense of brotherhood, belonging and power' also attracted men to violent extremist groups in Indonesia and the Philippines (UN Women 2020: 38), and evidence from Jordan and Syria also shows that the quest for inclusion and belonging, driven by peer influence, has pushed youth into violent extremism. Fried *et al.* (2020: 16) summarise the dynamic when they note that 'especially [for] young men who are ostracised or marginalised, a violent extremist group provides … a space that satisfies the essential human need for connection'.

The message arising from these studies is that the alienation of young men is being instrumentalised by extremist groups that offer solace in return for allegiance. In the broader scheme of things, this finding demonstrates that solidarity around ideology and identity is operating as a driving force in men's recruitment into violent extremist organisations.

Ideological and family-based solidarity

The literature reviewed here identifies two levers that are being used to galvanise solidarity and recruit men, primarily, but also women, into violent extremist groups. The first lever is protest ideology, while the second is familial solidarity, and both are intertwined in the web of gender norms at the levels of family and society.

UN Women (2020) noted that Islamist extremist groups in Indonesia supported conservative practices that harmed women, such as polygamy, bride wealth and honour-based violence, by equating these activities with resistance to Western influence. The implicit goal was to form a coalition against the perceived onslaught on traditional Indonesian culture by modernity. Similarly, in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines, extremist groups equated gender equality with Westernisation and moral decadence. They promoted an alternative concept of 'gender complementarity' that assigned men and women specific and fixed roles in which the former were heads of families, providers and protectors, while the latter were nurturers and caregivers (UN Women 2020: 41). Extremist groups also projected images of 'perfect (traditional) romantic relationships' between the men and women in the group to entice recruits (Johnston & True 2019: 6). Young men in rural Bangladesh were specifically indoctrinated into adopting hard-line and violent practices, which were clothed as resistance to 'Western' liberal ideas about gender norms promoted by non-governmental organisations (UNDP & UN Women 2020: 69). The strategy was to romanticise and idealise

men's traditional supremacy over women. The power of such appeals was evident in Indonesia, where more men (32 per cent) than women (23 per cent) thought regressive gender ideology motivated men to join violent extremist groups (Rahman 2020). Similarly, the 'recruitment messaging of violent extremist groups in Libya appeal[ed] to men's sense of masculine dominance over women as fighters, breadwinners, and decision-makers' (Johnston & True 2019: 9). The message here is that if extremism promises to, and actually does, enable men to retain and perpetuate their traditional dominance over women, they readily join violent groups and become allies in sustaining conservatism.

Extremist/masculinist standpoints have also become manifest in the actions of far-right activists in Australia. Lewis *et al.* (2017: 8) note that these activists promote what they call 'heroic' and 'salvational masculine violence', which offers its proponents the opportunity to '"save" the world, culture, nation, or the purity of religion through the exercise of violence and exclusivism'. These far-right groups have unilaterally assumed the responsibility for defending the Australian nation from perceived Islamic oppression of women and sanctioned their own use of violence to fulfil their self-conferred obligation. This approach draws on the traditional notion of the nation as 'masculine, aggressive, powerful and culturally monadic' (Norocel 2010: 172). The type of dichotomised worldview promoted by Australian far-right groups has also been commonly used among Islamist groups. In Bangladesh, for example, these types of groups have propagated an ideology based on binaries of good or evil, right or wrong, and Islamic or un-Islamic behaviours, which they have confounded with existing gender norms (Rahman 2020), so that notions of conservatism, exclusion and masculinity became self-reinforcing.

These findings show that conservatism fosters a double-barrelled backlash against the perceived threats represented by emasculation and alien norms, one which allows extremist groups to project their adherents as valiant and powerful men. Extremist groups also capitalise on family solidarity to recruit members. In Libya, for example, 'women who are subordinate to and/or dependent on male relatives who (were) members of violent extremist groups (were) likely to be recruited by those relatives' (Johnston & True 2019: 5). Thus, they were drawn into a web where they felt permanently bonded to their husbands due to financial insecurity as well as fear of the stigma that would arise from divorce or separation. Familial relationships were also crucial in mobilising men in Morocco, where male recruits were deployed to conscript female relatives and online images promoted the idea that extremist fighters were authentic and ideal Muslim men in order to appeal to women's sentimentality (Johnston & True 2019: 5). In summary, extremist groups in Libya and Morocco appealed to masculinities and femininities for recruitment and manipulated these notions for group control.

The importance of family solidarity was reiterated in the UN Women (2020) report, which established that the presence of a male relative (spouse, father, brother or other) in extremist groups in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines was one of the reasons behind the successful recruitment of women. In Indonesia, women's recruitment was reportedly bolstered by the belief that 'wives ought to obey husbands in nearly all circumstances' (UN Women 2020: 31).

It is evident from the studies explored here that men in extremist groups play a significant role in recruiting female relatives, which is a replication of the traditional gendered order in which the former provide leadership and direction. A critical dimension of recruitment concerns the role of religion and religious actors. While some literature points to the direct involvement of religious leaders in radicalising male youth towards recruitment, other research regards religious factors as less significant. Rahman (2020) is categorical that religious leaders play a central role in constructing masculinities in support of violence at home and its collective use through violent extremism. The assumption here is that religious leaders inculcate rigid gender norms informed by hegemonic patriarchy, and this behaviour is replicated by extremists who are intolerant of divergent opinions and readily enforce their own through violence. This religious influence on recruitment can be so subtle that it is often hard to detect. For instance, Yemeni women confessed that they found it difficult to recognise warning signs about their sons' progress into extremist groups because they thought that the children were 'merely becoming more religious', a change they considered positive (Carter 2013, citing SAVE 2010). Fried *et al.* (2020) are among those who discount religiosity as a factor in recruitment for violent extremist groups, even though they acknowledge that recruiters peddle religious doctrine to justify masculine norms. This difference in opinion indicates the need to investigate the religious dynamic further.

Despite these differences, the findings indicate that violent extremism cannot be tackled decisively by focusing on the individual alone, without targeting the family as well. They also show that the individual and collective actors promoting violent extremism operate through multiple interlocking platforms, such as the family, community and religion. Furthermore, men emerge as the primary ideologues, recruiters and mobilisers for extremist groups. These findings further underline the need to explore the psychology of young people, considering that this is where indoctrination occurs. A strand in the literature also indicates that, while radicalisation is a precursor to men enlisting in violent extremist groups, the militarisation of young men, and associations with militant culture and exposure to militant imagery, also help to propel them towards violent extremism.

Militarisation

The militarisation of men has been identified as a contributing factor to violent extremism. In Syria, where ISIS thrives, martial education is mainstreamed in the school curriculum and military leadership is glorified. In Libya, the haphazard demobilisation and reintegration of former soldiers has created a cadre that can easily deploy its skills in extremist groups (Fried *et al.* 2020), and similar mobilisation occurs in Western countries through the glorification of violence in the mass media and popular culture – a trend that extremist groups replicate in their messages when appealing for recruits. In the Philippines, 'men engaged in violent extremism often define their masculinity in relation to other men, and particularly those in the national military' (Caravaggio & Davis 2020: 4). In cases such as these, militarism and extremism become mechanisms for acquiring authority and status. This insight reinforces this study's earlier findings that men's clamour for power, influence and supremacy is a key driving force in their mobilisation into violent extremist groups.

In a case study from the southern Philippines, Duriesmith (2020) notes that militarism was one of the most reliable pathways to status and belonging, particularly for young men who were facing exclusion from education and employment, restricted movement, humiliation at checkpoints and constant scrutiny from the state. Joining a militant group offered these young men meaningful avenues to regaining a sense of their own significance and proving their manhood.

'Exaggeration' emerges as another pathway to manhood under material conditions where other avenues have been blocked (Duriesmith 2020).[1] For example, when 'an offense committed against a man that shames (*sipug*) him results in a reduced self-image' it creates potential for conflict as the offended person seeks to restore personal and collective honour (Duriesmith 2020: 23), and this represents an opportunity for violent extremist groups. This resonates with findings in Lewis *et al.* (2017: 45) on how far-right organisations in Australia justified violence as a legitimate means of protecting the country, its values and its way of life from perceived Islamic gender-based violence against women.

In summary, a militant masculine mentality is clearly instrumental in the identification of extremist groups as legitimate fighters for a cause, a fact that resonates with this study's earlier findings that ideology plays a role in driving violent extremism. So far, the highlighted themes have concerned direct recruitment methods, but the literature reviewed also unveiled an additional unique and subtle recruitment method, as described below.

---

[1] 'Exaggeration exists when a mainstream narrative or norm is adopted but taken substantially further in its brutality or intensity' (Duriesmith 2020: 12).

Inversion

'Inversion' refers to something that is done contrary to the norm in order to stimulate conventional behaviour. Essentially, as Caravaggio & Davis (2020: 7) explain, it enables extremists to 'manipulate and instrumentalise existing gender power structures and cultural narratives within communities to validate their actions'. One manifestation of this tactic involves deploying women suicide bombers to shame men into participating in extremist groups (Carter 2013, citing Bloom 2007). Another inversion tactic involves the sexual violation of women, with the aim of stigmatising them into joining extremist groups and making them easier to exploit (Carter 2013; True & Eddyono 2017; Brown 2018; True 2020). For example, in Sri Lanka, women survivors of sexual violence opted for terrorism because the social disgrace arising from this type of experience precluded them from participating in marriage and motherhood (Carter 2013).

Inversion arises from a very nuanced strategy in which rape – typically, an expression of power relations by the perpetrator – is used to produce embarrassment, which helps to push women into extremist groups. The tragedy is that this type of violation continues even during women's lives within extremist groups, where examples of their treatment include sexual slavery within ISIS and forced marriage in Al-Shabaab (Fried *et al.* 2020). While these groups claim to be protectors of women, they are essentially misogynistic. Inversion, therefore, allows men, paradoxically, to identify as both protectors of women and enforcers of traditional gender norms that situate women as subordinate and targets of sexual violence.

As the above findings make clear, the main concern of studies on masculinities and violent extremism tends to be to establish whether or not there is a verifiable link between the two phenomena. Emerging evidence suggests that while this link exists and cannot be decoupled from men's socialisation, it is complex and needs to be deconstructed. A useful causality framework outlined by Fried *et al.* (2020: 13) attempts to unpack the link by identifying five processes 'that influence the likelihood that men will participate in … multiple forms of violence, including violent extremism'. First is the desire and propulsion to achieve socially recognised manhood, which drives motives that revolve around the self and a need to realise a prescribed identity (Ezekilov 2017), though the idea that this proves the existence of a causal link between masculinities and violent extremism is contested by Kluch & Vaux (2015) and Allan *et al.* (2015). Second is the policing of masculine performance, a process that sees men judged by certain criteria that determine whether or not they are successful and masculine. This form of surveillance pushes men into specific forms of behaviour to prove themselves. Third is '"gendering" the heart', men's socialisation to suppress emotion and thus display immunity to their own pain and that of others. Logically, this process yields sadism and the ability to perpetrate violence

without guilt, which echoes what Kaufman (1999) refers to as the psychic armour of manhood.[2] The fourth process involves the construction of identity through spaces dominated by men, such as police and military forces, as well as criminal gangs, that replicate masculinities considered attractive by men who yearn for power and supremacy. Fifth is re-enforcement of patriarchal power over women, as well as other men, through mechanisms such as joining extremist groups in order to exercise unfettered control over people's lives. Taken together, these five elements suggest that proclivity to violent extremism, like gender, is socially constructed and performed through self- and externally driven processes, and, just as the construction of gender is contributed to by multiple agents, extremist violence is also created by several drivers. Two broad methodological approaches to researching masculinities and violent extremism emerge from the literature review, and each of them is elaborated on in the next section.

Researching masculinities and violent extremism

The two approaches to researching masculinities and violent extremism deciphered from the literature review focus, respectively, on contextualisation and localisation, and the development of potential conceptual frameworks for use in research.

Contextualising and localising research on masculinities

Caravaggio & Davis (2020) highlight the need for a relational and contextual understanding of masculinities in settings where violent extremism flourishes. They argue that rigid, generalised models of gender identity, such as 'toxic masculinity', should be avoided. This standpoint echoes Duriesmith's (2020) view that correlations between masculinity and violent extremism that have been largely developed in the Global North can lead to erroneous generalisations based on alien notions that do not pertain locally outside that arena.

A second strand in research that seeks to contextualise masculinities focuses on the portrayal of women and men by extremist groups. Brown *et al.* (2020), Duriesmith (2020) and Rahman (2020) all show that, while the role of men in violent extremism is magnified, that of women is deliberately downplayed by extremist groups and officialdom in order to sustain and reinforce the stereotype of masculine valour. Such cultural narratives depict men as martyrs and women as victims, and, by this means, violent extremism is masculinised. But this raises the following questions:

[2] See Kaufman (1999).

1. Is this a tactic to hoodwink society and thereby enable the use of women as underground actors?
2. Is it a practice, driven by denial, that seeks to maintain patriarchal ego and the interlocking frameworks on which men's authority across a society depends?
3. Is it a process of downplaying women's involvement in order to sustain men's hegemony?

A refreshing approach to the study of masculinities and violent extremism is that taken by Brown *et al.* (in UNDP & UN Women, 2020), who work from the standpoint that myths are meaning-making ways of rationalising reality. For instance, extremist groups in the Philippines not only created their own myths, they also appropriated existing ones that were aligned with their ideologies to legitimise their actions and causes. In this matrix, mythical characters clearly embody what is considered heroic or problematic, and their actions depict the values of the groups, including their views on the status of women versus that of men. These values include honour, loyalty, love and obedience for men, while women are often offered in these myths as rewards to heroic men, used as tricksters to beguile the enemy or depicted as villains. The myths' plots and settings feature extraordinary and extreme events and actions, including sacrifices, which endear the (male) heroes to the audiences and alienate the villains. The masculinities and femininities that are created are to be adopted and perpetuated as inviolable by virtue of the authority assigned by myths, which explains why heroes are rewarded while villains are punished and discredited.

The myth constructed around the Jabidah Massacre of 1968 is about the Islamic Moro of the Philippines and their struggle against domination by the Christian state. Their struggle is represented as a quest for self-governance pursued through an armed uprising which began in the late 1960s and early 1970s via the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and, later, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). According to popular myth, between 12 and 68 soldiers of Moro descent were killed by military commanders on 18 March 1968 on the island of Corregidor off Manila, having been duped and conscripted into efforts to reclaim the Sabah region from Malaysia.

The 'massacre' is mythologised to serve three functions: it provides a specific point of origin for state violence against the Moro; it sets the Moro apart as a distinct ethno-religious community oppressed by Christians and fake Muslim converts; and it helps to justify the resistance and recruitment of the Moro to defend themselves and challenge injustice. The myth helps to simplify and clarify the Moro struggle and serves as a powerful means to mobilise ethnic sentiment, much in the same way that Black consciousness became a rallying call against racism and Irish literary revival

was energised by nationalistic pride and achieved through the re-rendition of Gaelic legends.

The myth features a belle called Safiya. Her naivety is taken advantage of by Martelino, a man who feigns conversion to Islam in order to marry her. Safiya symbolises the bridge by which men's social integration occurs, in the same way that brides in traditional African communities were exchanged as a sign of peace and in order to normalise relations after warfare, although those women were also used as spies for their own communities. Safiya also represents the pristine territory which is the subject of contestation, while Martelino is the obvious villain who disrespects women and, symbolically, the Moro.

In the second myth, which focuses on the battle of Marawi, the role of Farhana Maute, a woman who finances the insurgent group, is downplayed by the violent extremist organisations as part of a deliberate strategy not to 'disrupt gender stereotypes, particularly with audiences beyond the Philippines that may have trouble comprehending the matriarchal structures that exist in parts of the country' (Brown *et al.* 2020: 40). This deliberate distortion of reality is a move that seeks to masculinise violent extremism. Not only does it obscure Maute's role, and, by extension, the agency of women, it also gives prominence to men as the principal actors in the insurgency, thus reinforcing the stereotype of men's agency.

Analysis of both myths reveals that they have been constructed to support a set of distinct gender identities, and that women's roles are denied and even denigrated within this framework. In these myths, women are objectified and instrumentalised to support what men perceive to be their own goals. The masculinisation of history through mythification emerges as a subtle strategy by which patriarchal notions and practices are sustained by extremist groups.

The uses of these myths demonstrate the need to contextualise and localise studies on violent extremism, especially given their divergence from the classical Western myth pattern, where the hero survives and returns home. In these Asian myths, the hero often dies, though this is only in the physical sense. Spiritually, they gain a higher status in paradise, a reward that symbolically subverts the apparent victory of their killers and confers a sense of divinity on these men and their masculinities. This is contiguous with Duriesmith's (2020) finding about the intransigence of suspected terrorists who refused to seek pardons, even as their execution dates drew closer, and instead perceived their impending elimination as a form of martyrdom which would confer hero status and immortality on them. The mythologisation process puts extremist men on a moral pedestal because it allows them to be depicted as iconic figures who are pursuing an ideal and pure world.

The mentality here is unconventional. Death is seen not as a loss but as a justified sacrifice; the eliminator of the martyr is situated as an instrument of infamy rather

than a victor; death does not instil fear but instead inspires the next generation of fighters; and belief in the divine call to fight for justice is so compelling that it elevates the actions of extremists from earthly pursuits to divine quests.

In essence, then, myths define a higher and more abstract ambition than the pursuit of material welfare. It is therefore vital that studies of masculinities and violent extremism go beyond the investigation of material motivations to analyse the abstract ideas that are the software driving violent extremism. Analysis of the abstract is key because myths play such an important role in the ways men are socialised into their missions as individuals, family and community members, national citizens and global actors. Given that not all men turn out to be violent, even when they have been socialised in the same context as others, individual differences are central to understanding masculinities and violent extremism. It is therefore imperative to pay attention to microscopic differences in men's socialisation as well as the broader factors that influence them.

Generalising about men again emerges as a folly. Labelling men as toxic is not only judgmental, it is also biased by the standards of the one applying the label. Extremist men perceive the acts of violence they commit as being driven by genuine grievances. The analogy of freedom struggles against colonialism in Africa comes to mind: while colonialists regarded the insurgents as terrorists, the colonised saw themselves as freedom fighters, and treating them as terrorists did not address the core problem that informed their actions. This insight suggests that the logic that underpins the existence and violence of extremist groups needs to be analysed and addressed, alongside the individual motivations already outlined in this article. To elaborate on how such studies can be conducted, three conceptual frameworks are set out below. Two of these models have been developed by the author, and one has been adopted from an existing model.

Potential conceptual frameworks for researching masculinities and violent extremism

Three models that can be used to study masculinities and violent extremism have been derived from the literature reviewed in this study: the first is a framework for understanding categories of violent extremism; the second is an ecological model; and the third is a framework that accounts for relevant 'push and pull' factors. These frameworks can be applied in isolation or in combination, depending on the focus and theme of the study a researcher undertakes. The three models are summarised below.

A framework for categories of violent extremism

Angus (2016) identifies three broad categories of violent extremism – ideological, issue-based and ethno-nationalist/separatist – and his typology can be applied in a general analysis of the subject, as well as in studies that examine how violent extremism links

with masculinities. The ideological type of extremism involves pursuit of a collective nationalistic/political or religious goal and tends to be conservative, authoritarian and coercive in character. Issue-based extremism is understood to be grounded in a specific cause and is generally peaceful, but it can resort to violence to increase attention and accelerate action. Meanwhile, the ethno-nationalist/separatist model brings together 'groups or individuals involved in violent political or independence struggles based on race, culture or ethnic background' (Angus 2016: 3). While the overlaps that can arise in this classification system will not be dwelt on here, this conceptualisation usefully clarifies that violent extremism is driven by one grievance/cause or another, and the model suggests that extremists are generally seeking attention and/or change (Figure 1 provides a graphical illustration of this model's configuration).

This framework places grievance at the centre of all categories of violent extremism, and it illustrates that each category links with the others in some respects. For example, an extremist group fighting for self-determination may be regarded as ethno-nationalist, but it will certainly be driven by an issue (marginalisation, for instance) and an ideology (equality). It all depends on how one defines these terms. This framework can be used effectively in research that examines the drivers of violent extremism as independent or conjoined variables. For example, it supports enquiry into questions about how economic effects on men contribute to violent extremism and whether and how these factors might be solidified by radical ideology, gender
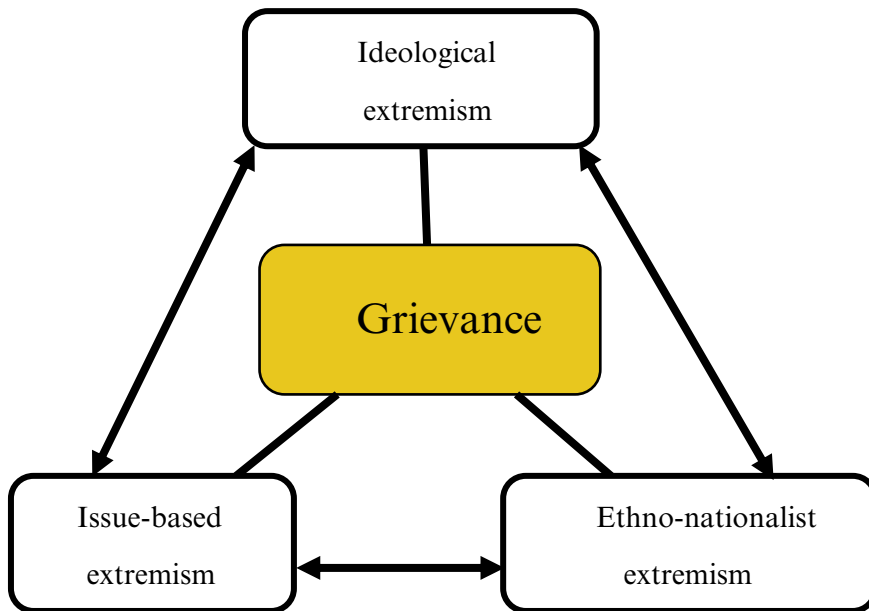

Figure 1. A framework for categories of violent extremism
(Source: Author, based on Angus 2016).

norms and militarisation. The ecological model provides another possible approach to organising research at various analytical levels, from the individual to the societal.

The ecological model

The assumption that the links between masculinities and violent extremism can be examined at micro, meso and macro levels is evident in Allan *et al.* (2015) and Fried *et al.* (2020). The ecological model set out here is derived from Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework for human development, which was pioneered in the 1970s and developed into a systematic theory in the 1980s (Harkonen 2007). It posits that human development is affected by the entire cosmos in which one grows, including factors at individual, micro, meso and macro levels, and so analysis needs to take all of them into account. These levels and their relationships are illustrated in Figure 2.

Factors at the individual level that can be related to violent extremism include attitude formation, religious indoctrination, exposure to and normalisation of violence in the domestic sphere, and perpetration of intimate partner violence. Family (micro-) and community (meso-) level factors reinforce individual ones and are consolidated through socialisation into what it means to be a man, which can solidify beliefs in violence, even if it is extreme. Structural (macro-level) factors then become the triggers that propel individuals towards specific types of action, such as joining violent
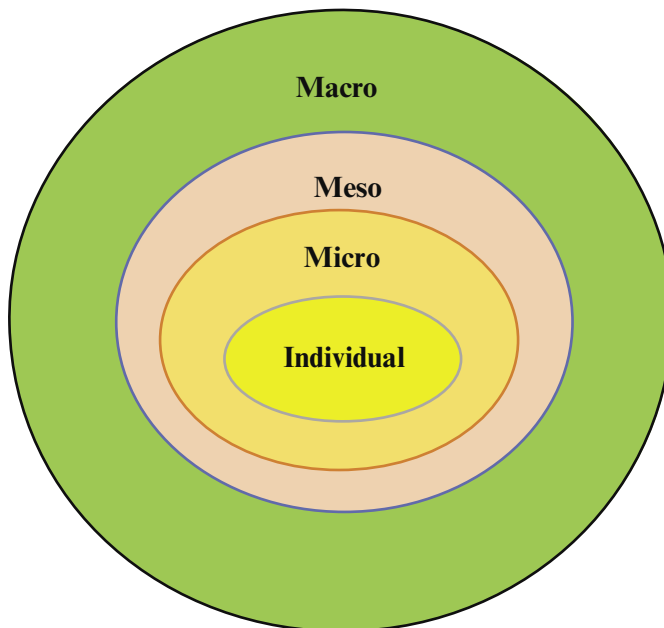
Figure 2. Ecological model (Derived from Bronfenbrenner 1994)

extremist groups. The ecological model may be useful for showing how hierarchical factors that affect the creation of masculinities link with violent extremism. It may also provide helpful ways to identify entry points for initiatives seeking to prevent and/or respond to the vice.

A framework for 'push and pull' factors

Ezekilov (2017) posits that mapping the factors that push and pull individuals from society into and out of extremist groups is a useful way of isolating the conditions that lead to men's radicalisation. Hassan (2012) defines push factors as negative elements in one's 'societal environment', among which can figure a lack of economic opportunities in forms such as unemployment and a person's inability to provide for themselves and family. Barker (2005) identifies the lack of economic options as a significant element in emasculation and one that can catalyse the urge to join an extremist group. Hassan (2012) cites the example of former Al-Shabaab fighters in Somalia who confessed to having been motivated to join the group so as to enhance their ability to be self-reliant. Social marginalisation, arising from factors including race, age, religion, ethnicity or any other social identity, is also identified as a push factor (Jasko *et al.* 2017).

Conversely, 'pull' factors are the perceived positive features of extremist groups that attract men towards them. They include a sense of belonging, derived through an appeal to a common identity, and shared causes and joint goals, which can include the defence of identity, religion, territory and values (Bannon & Correia 2006; Aslam 2012; Khader *et al.* 2016). In this scheme, quests for power, status and honour in society, and among women, are also classified as pull factors (Hassan 2012), as Figure 3 illustrates.

The ecological model presupposes a direct correlation between push and pull factors – a push factor will not be presumed to be meaningful unless there is a corresponding
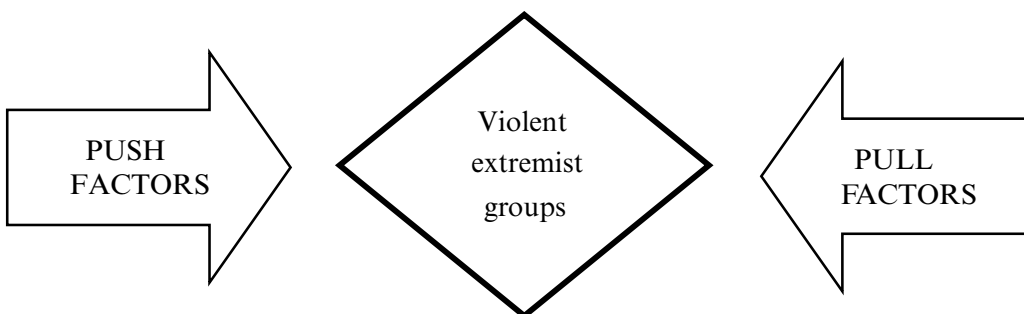

Figure 3. A framework for 'push and pull' factors
(Source: Author).

pull factor. For example, unemployed men without a means of earning a living (push) will only be attracted by a reliable and assured promise of employment and income (pull). The inability to be self-reliant, which fuels people's perception of themselves as failures (push), must correspond with an assurance of a sustained source of income and improved socio-economic status (pull). Marginalisation, alienation and a lack of a sense of belonging (push) must, according to this view, correspond with the promise of a sense of community (pull). And if diminished prospects of marriage due to poverty and low socio-economic status make affected men feel emasculated (push), the corresponding pull would be definite access to brides and the ability to sustain the family (pull).

This analytical model can be used to evaluate active and reformed violent extremists. It would also be important to establish whether one pair of push and pull factors is adequate to compel movement to an extremist group or if more sets are needed to reach a tipping point. Additionally, it would be helpful to establish whether the 'pull' promises made by extremist groups are actually fulfilled, as this may explain how they sustain recruitment. From a programmatic perspective, this might also help to identify preventive actions that could be taken to counter candidate recruitment efforts, even though this type of action may risk creating a blackmail culture in which the society is held to ransom by potential extremists. For example, an insurgent group called the Mombasa Republican Council, formed in 1999, threatened to establish an independent state because the region had been systematically marginalised politically and economically by successive governments in Kenya. It agitated using the slogan 'Pwani si Kenya' (The coast is not part of Kenya) (Kivoto 2012). The group was linked to sporadic violence against civilians in the coastal region and associated with terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab. If the government acceded to their demands, it is possible that more disgruntled groups would similarly call for secession or use violence to draw attention to their grievances.

Conclusions and recommendations

This article has offered a broad overview of insights emerging from literature on masculinities and violent extremism. Across the globe, violent extremism is largely perpetrated by men, and much of the reviewed research shares the view that the vice cannot be attributed to one or even a few causes. Instead, the literature identifies a complex range of isolating factors that lead individuals into violent extremism. Nevertheless, there are recurring themes that help to shed light on what facilitates recruitment into extremist groups.

Whichever way studies explore the subject of the links between masculinities and violent extremism, they invariably link causal factors to the ways boys and men are

socialised and the pressures on them to fulfil expectations of manhood. Central to these processes of socialisation are specific actors who must be the locus of studies due to their roles in transmitting beliefs, ideologies, philosophies, practices and attitudes in support of violent extremism. Such persons include religious and school teachers. This exploration of socialisation mechanisms will require a concurrent analysis of the individuals involved and their operational contexts with a primary focus on influential actors.

In terms of the structural factors that potentiate extremism, it is imperative to think not only of pull and push factors but also about the mediating or catalytic elements that can trigger people's move into extremist groups. For example, where a lack of employment and economic opportunities is a push factor and the promise of high salaries constitutes a pull, the pressure family members exert on men can be the mediating factor that seals a decision to move. All the elements that form part of a candidate's decision-making process must be addressed simultaneously in order for violent extremism to be addressed in a meaningful way.

As this article has illustrated, the manipulation of masculinities and femininities for recruitment purposes is informed and perpetuated by an underlying patriarchal ideology and normative framework. A few recommendations are floated here with a view to informing further research on the subject. Firstly, it is notable that studies on masculinities and violent extremism largely rely on secondary data, although primary studies have recently emerged, frequently based on case studies from Asia and North Africa. This points to a need for extensive primary research to generate incontrovertible evidence on the causal link between the two phenomena. Secondly, the confluence of broad ideological and more mundane concerns suggests that push and pull factors should be plotted on a continuum. This process will require detailed localised studies that can then be used as the basis for generalisation and theorisation. Such studies should be interdisciplinary. Thirdly, a fundamental question remains as to whether or not a groundswell of studies on masculinities and violent extremism will root out the problem. This scepticism arises from the observation that, while a large volume of research has been conducted on the relationship between patriarchy and gender-based violence, that violence remains prevalent, and, although researchers have reached a consensus on the link between masculinities and violent extremism, few practical and actionable suggestions for strategic interventions have been implemented to change the picture on the ground.

Based on the findings from the literature review, the following questions are proposed as the basis for further research that could contribute to the type of real-world solutions that are urgently needed:

1. What role do individual differences play in explaining why some men join extremist groups and others, in the same situations, do not?

2. To what extent is religiosity a factor in promoting violent extremism?
3. To what extent are initiatives that seek to prevent and counter violent extremism addressing the root causes of the vice?
4. How does downplaying women's roles help the cause of violent extremists?
5. Which specific men in families (e.g. fathers, brothers, sons, uncles, cousins and/or grandfathers) wield influence over the recruitment of female members?
6. Does the presence of a female relative in an extremist group also give men in their families a reason to join?
7. What is the role of women, as primary caregivers, in constructing masculinities that lead to violent extremism?

References

Allan, H., Glazzard, A., Jesperson, S. & Reddy-Tumu, S. (2015), *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review* (London, RUSI).

Angus, C. (2016), 'Radicalisation and violent extremism: causes and responses', NSW Parliamentary Research Service. https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/radicalisation-and-violent-extremism-causes-and-/Radicalisation%20eBrief.pdf

Arendt, H. (1970), *On Violence* (Orlando, FL, Harcourt).

Aslam, M. (2012), *Gender-Based Explosions: The Nexus Between Muslim Masculinities, Jihadist Islamism and Terrorism* (New York, United Nations University Press).

Bannon, I., & Correia, M. (2006), *The Other Half of Gender: Men's Issues in Development* (Washington, DC, World Bank). https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-6505-2

Barker, G. (2005), *Dying to Be Men: Youth, Masculinity and Social Exclusion* (Sexuality, Culture and Health Series; New York, Routledge).

Barker, G. & Ricardo, C. (2005), *Young Men and the Construction of Masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Social Development Papers, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction; Washington, DC, World Bank).

Barker, G., Heilman, B. & Harrison, A. (2017), *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico* (Washington, DC and London, Promundo–US and Unilever).

Bly, R. (1990), *Iron Man: A Book About Men* (Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley).

Bloom, M. (2007). 'Female suicide bombers: a global trend', *Daedalus*, 136(1), On Nonviolence & Violence: 94–102. http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/daed/136/1

Bourekba, M. (17 May 2016). 'Countering violent extremism in the MENA region: rethinking approaches and strategies, Euromesco Policy Brief no. 63.

Bronfenbrenner, U. & Ceci, S.J. (1994), 'Nature–nurture reconceptualised: a bio-ecological model', *Psychological Review*, 10(4): 568–86. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.101.4.568

Brown, K. (2018), 'Violence and gender politics in forming the proto-state "Islamic State"', in Parashar, S., Tickner, J.A. & True, J. (eds), *Revisiting Gendered States: Feminist Imaginings of the State in International Relations* (New York, Oxford University Press), pp. 174–90.

Brown, K., Toros, H. & Parashar, S. (2020), 'Violent extremist myths and masculinities: two country case studies', in UNDP & UN Women, *Conflicting Identities: The Nexus Between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia* (Bangkok, UNDP & UN Women, pp. 31–52).

Caravaggio, I. & Davis, L. (2020), 'Masculinities, femininities and violent extremism in Asia', in UNDP & UN Women, *Conflicting Identities: The Nexus Between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia* (Bangkok, UNDP & UN Women, pp. 1–9).

Carter, B. (2013), *Women and Violent Extremism* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 898, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham).

Connell, R.W. (2002), *Gender* (Cambridge, Blackwell).

Dearing, M.P. (2010), 'Like red tulips at springtime: understanding the absence of female martyrs in Afghanistan', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 33(12): 1079–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2010.523861

Duriesmith, D. (2020), 'Adaptation of militarized masculinity and violent extremism in the Southern Philippines', in UNDP & UN Women, *Conflicting Identities: The Nexus Between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia* (Bangkok, UNDP & UN Women, pp. 11–30).

Ezekilov, J. (2017), 'Gender "men-streaming" CVE: countering violence extremism by addressing masculinities issues', *Reconsidering Development*, 5(1): 1–7.

Fried, A., Lauro, G. & Barker, G. (2020), *Masculinities and Preventing Violent Extremism: Making the Connections* (Washington, DC, Promundo–US).

Ghafar, A.A. (2016), *Educated but Unemployed: The Challenge Facing Egypt's Youth* (Washington, DC, Brookings Institution).

Groen, J., Kranenberg, A. & Naborn, R. (2010), *Women Warriors for Allah: An Islamist Network in the Netherlands* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press).

Hadiz, V. (2008), 'Towards a sociological understanding of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 38(4): 638–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330802311795

Hadiz, V. (2013), 'Indonesian political Islam: capitalist development and the legacies of the Cold War', *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1: 3–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341103000101

Harkonen, U. (2007). 'The Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory of human development', *Scientific Articles of V International Conference* (Daugavpils University, Latvia, 1–17).

Hassan, M. (2012), 'Understanding drivers of violent extremism: the case of Al-Shabaab and Somali youth', *CTC Sentinel*, 5(8). https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wpcontent/uploads/2012/08/CTCSentinel-Vol5Iss84.pdf

Hood-Williams, J. (2001), 'Gender, masculinities and crime: from structures to psyches', *Theoretical Criminology*, 5(1): 37–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480601005001003

Jasko, K., LaFree, G. & Kruglanski, A. (2017), 'Quest for significance and violent extremism: the case of domestic radicalization', *Political Psychology,* 38(5): 815–31. https://doi.org.10.1111/pops.12376

Johnston, M. & True, J. (2019), 'Gender equality and violent extremism: Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco', Monash University Gender Peace and Security Institute. https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/01/Regional%20Brief_LibyaTunisaMorocco_ART.pdf

Kaufman, M. (1999), 'The seven P's of men's violence'. https://michaelkaufman.com/1999/10/the-7-ps-of-mens-violence/

Khader, M., Neo, L.S., Ong, G., Mingyi, E.T. & Chin, J. (2016), *Combating Violent Extremism and Radicalization in the Digital Era* (Hershey, PA, Information Science Reference). https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-0156-5

Kivoto, M. (2012). Secession in Africa: to what extent has the Kenyan government failed to respect the civil and political rights of Mombasa Republican Council?' https://www.academia.edu/19533334/mombasa_republican_council

Kluch, S.P. & Vaux, A. (2015), 'Culture and terrorism: the role of cultural factors in worldwide terrorism (1970–2013)', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29(2): 1–19. http://doi.org/10.1080/0954 6553.2015.1038523

Kupers, T.A. (2005), 'Toxic masculinity as a barrier to mental health treatment in prison', *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61: 713–24. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20105

Lewis, J., Lewis, B., Cameron, R., Pond, P., Ghumkhor, S. & Hussein, M. (2017), *Mediating Extremist Violence: A Report on the Role of Media, Far-right Politics and Gender in Extremist Violence and Social Cohesion in Victoria* (RMIT University, Centre for Global Research).

Malešević, S. (2016), 'How old is human brutality? On the structural origins of violence', *Common Knowledge*, 22(1): 81–104. https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-3322894

Messerschmidt, J.W. (1997), *Crime as Structured Action: Gender, Race, Class and Crime in the Making* (London, SAGE). https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452232294

Mokbel, R. (28 August 2017). 'Egypt seeks to battle extremism through religious education', *Marsad*. https://marsad-egypt.info/en/2017/08/28/egypt-seeks-battle-extremism-religious-education/

Norocel, O.C. (2010), 'Constructing radical right populist resistance: metaphors of heterosexist masculinities and the family question in Sweden', *Nordic Journal of Masculinity Studies*, 5(2): 169–83. https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1890-2146-2010-02-07

Pearson, E. (2018), 'Why men fight and women don't: masculinity and extremist violence', Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. https://institute.global/insight/coexistence/why-men-fight-and-women-dontmasculinity-and-extremist-violence

Pearson, E. (2019), 'Extremism and toxic masculinity: the man question re-posed', *International Affairs*, 95(6): 1251–70. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz177

Pedahzur, A. (2013), *Religious Fundamentalism and Political Extremism* (Hoboken, NJ, Taylor and Francis).

Rahman, F. (2020), 'Trajectories of gender inequality, identity and violent extremism in rural Bangladesh', in UNDP & UN Women, *Conflicting Identities: The Nexus Between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia* (Bangkok, UNDP & UN Women), pp. 53–74.

Robb, M., Featherstone, B., Ruxton, S. & Ward, M. (2015), 'Beyond male role models: gender identities and work with young men', Open University. http://www.open.ac.uk/health-and-socialcare/research/beyond-male-role-models/sites/www.open.ac.uk.health-and-social-care.research.beyond-malerole-models/files/files/BMRM_report.pdf

Salter, M. (27 February 2019), 'The problem with a fight against toxic masculinity', *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/02/toxic-masculinity-history/583411/

SAVE (5 February 2010), 'The roles and capabilities of Yemeni women against violent extremism – a report from a SAVE Yemen workshop'. https://womenwithoutborders-save.blogspot.com/2010/02/roles-and-capabilities-of-yemeni-women.html

Treadwell, J. & Garland, J. (2011), 'Masculinity, marginalization and violence: a case study of the English Defence League', *British Journal of Criminology*, 51(4): 627–32. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azr027

True, J. (2020), 'Sexual and gender-based violence reporting and terrorism in Asia', in UNDP and UN Women, *Conflicting Identities: The Nexus Between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia* (Bangkok, UNDP & UN Women), pp. 75–96.

True, J. & Eddyono, S. (2017), 'Preventing violent extremism: gender perspectives and women's roles', Monash Gender, Peace and Security Institute. http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b4aef1_5fb20e84855b45aabb5437fe96fc3616.pdf

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) & UN Women (2020), *Conflicting Identities: The Nexus Between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia* (Bangkok, UNDP & UN Women).

UNESCO (2017). *Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research* (Paris, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation).

UN Women (2020), 'Building a stronger evidence base: the impact of gender identities, norms and relations on violent extremism (a case study of Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines)'. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2020/05/BLS20019UNWPVEBuilding%20a%20stronger%20evidence%20base0043WEB.pdf

Waling, A. (2019), 'Problematising "toxic" and "healthy" masculinity for addressing gender inequalities', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 34(101): 362–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2019.1679021

Zizek, S. (2009), *Violence* (London, Profile Books).