CHARTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM RESEARCH PRIORITIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Western Balkans Snapshot 2019

Amidst the evolving threat of violent extremism (VE) worldwide, the Western Balkans face substantial challenges to social cohesion and stability. As elsewhere, narratives of religious, far right, and nationalist militancy resonate with vulnerable youth populations in Western Balkan countries where a history of ethnic, religious, and civil strife created a situation vulnerable to terrorist recruitment at home and abroad. Individuals who traveled to fight alongside violent extremist organizations abroad are returning to their home countries following the territorial losses of extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. At the same time, ethno-nationalist extremism continues to gain traction and expand across the region.

While some of these topics have received increased attention in the current body of literature, others remain under-researched. Existing research topics also require more field research and deeper conceptual foundation. The resulting gaps in our collective understanding point to the need for further research on evolving social and VE dynamics in the Western Balkans. More rigorous and grounded research, in this regard, can help inform and improve efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE) in the region.

In 2019, the RESOLVE Network convened local and international experts to discuss research gaps and develop a preliminary list of research priorities for P/CVE moving forward in the Western Balkans. The topics identified in this Research Priorities Snapshot reflect their collective expertise, in-depth understanding, and commitment to continued analysis of VE trends and dynamics in the region.

For more, see: RESOLVE Network, *Research Priorities: Western Balkans Snapshot*, 2019.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Far-Right Extremist Groups in the Western Balkans

How do far-right extremist and ethno-nationalist dynamics play out in the Western Balkans and how do they relate to international networks?

Youth Recruitment

Are youth a vulnerable population to violent extremist recruitment in the Western Balkans?

State Capture, Corruption, and Radicalization

What is the relationship between corruption and radicalization to violent extremism?

Community Resilience

What aspects within Western Balkan communities make them more resilient, less resilient, or susceptible to drivers of violent extremism?

Trauma and Psychosocial Services

What is the role of previous trauma in the radicalization process and how can the provision of psychological services addressing post-conflict trauma help prevent radicalization?

Returnees & Reintegration

How does the specific individual, community, or country context impact the efficiency of violent extremist disengagement and reconciliation initiatives?

RESOLVE NETWORK

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