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Risk Factors of Radicalisation towards Violent Extremism: Challenges and Progress

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ABSTRACT

Statistics have shown that violent extremism was responsible for tens of thousands of deaths, destructions of properties, and billions of economic losses to multiple nations for years. Despite a wide array of research conducted since the early 1940s, some academics in the past decades believe that studies on risk factors of radicalisation towards violent extremism are hindered by many setbacks causing the field to be at infancy stage in research and knowledge compared to other areas of studies. Challenges faced by academics in the field had caused stagnation in reaching a holistic understanding of the risk factors of radicalisation. However, some academics have stressed that it is untrue to refer to the research field as stagnant as it dismisses a multitude of empirical studies which have been published for decades. Some scholars had found that progress has been made, but it is relatively slow due to some research challenges imposed on the field. This paper highlights the challenges that remain true and prevalent to many academics that attempted to study the risk factors of radicalisation towards violent extremism. Also, this paper provides some relevant evidence which shows that the notion regarding the challenges may be true.

Keywords: *radicalisation, radical extremist mindset, risk factors, violent extremism, ideology*

INTRODUCTION

Radicalisation towards violent extremism refers to the process which individual gradually adopts an extreme ideology or mindset that endorses the use of violence by others or the innate willingness to personally use violence for various reasons including to achieve political and social goals (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Bott et al., 2009; Kortweg et al., 2010). Violent extremism, on the other hand, refers to the ideological acceptance to use violence or the willingness to use force or violence to achieve social, political, religious or racially related goals (Schmid, 2013; Stephens et al., 2019; Striegher, 2015). In simple terms, radicalisation is the "process", and violent extremism is the outcome of the "process".

Various methods and frameworks have been proposed and adopted to understand why radicalisation occurs via empirical research (Borum, 2011a, 2011b). The studies have also been used to inform policymakers on the most appropriate practice to prevent both radicalisation and violent extremism from affecting livelihood (Holmer, 2013; Koehler, 2015; Zeuthen, 2015). One method which has gained traction in studies of radicalisation is the identification of risk factors (Borum, 2015; Holmer, 2013). Kazdin et al. (1997) described the risk factor as "a characteristic, experience, or event that, if present, is associated with an increase in the probability of a particular outcome over the base rate of the outcome in the general population" (p. 377). When individuals are exposed to these "risk factors", their likelihood to commit to a particular outcome is higher compared to those who are unexposed to the factors. Individuals exposed to the factors are vulnerable to the radicalisation process.

The risk factors could be any identified information through scientific inquiry which describes either the characteristics, attributes, traits of an individual, or the situations, contexts, environments the individual or groups of individuals likely had encountered (Borum, 2015). The exposure to these factors could have a substantial influence on the individuals' likelihood to engage in violent extremism. The

risk factors are not necessarily the cause of radicalisation. The factors would increase the chances of the successful radicalisation process.

Statistics have shown that violent extremism is responsible for tens of thousands of deaths, destructions of properties, and billions of economic losses to multiple nations for years (Gaibulloev & Sandler, 2008; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019). Violent extremists have been responsible for the most brutal deaths and attacks worldwide (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019). Academics and policymakers have been working for decades, searching for answers to fill in the gaps of knowledge on radicalisation towards violent extremism (Gurr, 2011; Holmer, 2013; Sageman, 2014).

Violent extremism has had negative impacts all over the world (Gaibulloev & Sandler, 2008; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019). A wide array of research has been conducted since the early 1940s (Gurr, 2015). Sageman (2014) believe that studies on risk factors of radicalisation towards violent extremism are hindered by many setbacks causing the field to be at the infancy stage in research and knowledge compared to other areas of studies.

These challenges faced by academics in the field may have caused stagnation in reaching a holistic understanding of the risk factors of radicalisation, as per claimed by Sageman (2014). In his controversial piece titled "The Stagnation in Terrorism Research", he claimed:

> *"Despite over a decade of government funding and thousands of newcomers to the field of terrorist research, we are no closer to answering the simple question of ''What leads a person to turn to political violence?'' (p. 565)*

However, some academics have stressed that it is untrue to refer to the research field as stagnant as it dismisses a wide array of studies that have been published (Stern, 2014; Taylor, 2014). Six years since Sageman's piece had been written, and some scholars had found that progress has been made, but it is relatively slow due to some unavoidable circumstances (Schuurman, 2020).

This paper highlights the challenges that remain true and prevalent to several academics that attempted to study the risk factors of radicalisation towards violent extremism which mostly had been addressed by Sageman (2014). Besides, this paper provides some relevant evidence which shows that Sageman's notion regarding the challenges may be accurate. Still, their effects upon research progress and knowledge development within the last decade may have been overemphasised.

Challenges in the studies of risk factors of radicalisation
The studies of risk factors are ongoing and tedious due to the rapid changes of global culture and movement, allowing new emergence of extremist groups every decade (Schuurman, 2017). In the year 2001, the world was shaken by the 9/11 extremist attacks causing over 3,000 deaths in the United States of America (Roach, 2011). The extremist attack was claimed to be directed by an extremist group which came to existence back in 1994, the Taliban. The attack had significantly changed counter-extremism policies all over the world.

A decade after 9/11, the extremist group Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), emerged and initiated attacks against several Western nations (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019). ISIS has been responsible for over 27, 000 deaths committing acts including suicidal bombings and several mass genocides of those they considered as their enemies. Many countries saw a rise in the number of their citizens or residences who were radicalised (Angus, 2016). This had raised concerns among the authorities and policymakers, which in turn bring new counter-extremism policies to prevent radicalisation in their countries.

Aside from Muslim extremist groups, there are other rising threats, including right-wing extremism affecting several Western nations. Several notorious right-wing extremist attacks could be observed all over the world, including North America, Europe and Australia (Desa & McCarthy, 2009;

Macklin, 2019; Richards, 2014). The most notorious incident which occurred in the recent years was the Christchurch Mosque attack in New Zealand back in 2019 (Macklin, 2019).

Some extremists do not affiliate themselves with any extremist groups such as lone-wolf extremist, Theodore Kaczynski. Kaczynski's as a radical extremist almost fell outside the box to what would have been considered as a by-product of radicalisation (Desa & McCarthy, 2009). His reasons for committing violent attacks were to convince the society that the industrial-technological system is a threat to human life (Kaczynski, 1995).

Some scholars have proposed to classify radicalised extremists using a various typological framework (Borum, 2016). Venhaus (2010) organised a group of foreign fighters as seekers of varied motivations including an outlet for frustration, recognition, place to belong, and adventure. He specified four primary types of seeker among 2, 032 foreign fighters detained in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay (Cuba).

Another scholar, Malet (2013), had categorised foreign fighters based on shared ethnic identity and ethnic-based conflict. He had examined 331 conflicts occurred between 1816 to 2005, of which only 70 of the disputes he uncovered the presence of foreign fighters. His analysis included various extremist groups, including the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLV) from Albany and African National Congress (ANC) from Angola.

To make matter even more complicated, Borum (2017), specified that not all extremists are ideologically driven similarly. Some may only use ideological commitment as an excuse for group affiliation, whereas others use it as leverage for their attachment to personal or collective grievances. The variance of ideology adoption further incurs the complexity of how and why radicalisation takes place. As a result, it raises difficulties in identifying risk factors of radicalisation.

Kaczynski's case is one example illustrating the complexity behind the definition of radicalisation and violent extremism (Kaczynski, 1995). His ideology was unique, and he did not create an extensive recruitment network of equal to extremist groups such as Taliban, ISIS, Right-Wing Extremists, and Boko Haram (Desa & McCarthy, 2009; Malet, 2013). There are studies on risk factors which have found that network affiliation plays a considerable role in the radicalisation process (Borum, 2016; Venhaus, 2010). Nevertheless, network affiliation would likely contribute to radicalisation among extremists that work in a group. This may suggest that which risk factors are associated with radicalisation may be different for single individual violent extremist.

Moreover, in regards to the definition, both radicalisation and violent extremism have various meanings given by different scholars. In his paper, Sageman specified that the ill-defined terminology caused hindrance in research advancement (2014). There is a lack of consensus in the elements characterising violent extremism. For instance, Striegher specified that violent extremism refers to "an ideology that accepts the use of violence for the pursuit of goals that are generally social, racial, religious and/or political in nature" (p. 5, 2015). On a similar note, Klein and Kruglaski (2013) described it as the expression of goal commitment which relinquished the goals or benefits desired by the majority.

Based on these two definitions, violent extremism leans towards the ideology or the belief that violence is imperative. Yet, an extremist does not necessarily need to commit violence to be an extremist. Not all scholars agree that violent extremism is just the presence of ideology (Schmid, 2013; Stephens et al., 2019). Other definitions heavily emphasised the use of violence to define violent extremism.

For example, Stephens et al. (2019) believed that usage of violence to further goals is what makes an individual a violent extremist. Another example is Schmid (2013), who specified that violent extremism is characterised by the propensity to achieve political motivations through use of force or violence over persuasion alongside ideological beliefs.

However, several academics have specified that definitional problems only play a minor role in hindering progress as the development of research in the field has expanded generously regardless of the definition problem (Schmid, 2014; Stern, 2014; Taylor, 2014; Schuurman, 2020). Much research in the field may be able to contribute to knowledge development and research progress through focusing on specific attributes that make an extremist, e.g. measuring the presence of beliefs in the ideology or acquiring samples from lone-wolf extremist attacks through database search (Malet, 2013; Nivette et al., 2017; Pretus et al., 2018; Venhaus, 2010).

Yet, the field is still further challenged by ongoing problems that are researchers are divided in their theoretical and analytical approach in identifying the causes or origin of violent extremism (Freilich & LaFree, 2015; Sageman, 2014; Ranstorp, 2016). This practice could be observed in past research where some researchers focused more towards the macro-level factors such as the political, sociological or economic risk factors (see Berrebi, 2007; Bandyopadhyay & Younas, 2011; Hegghammer, 2006; Enders, Hoover, & Sandler, 2016) while other work emphasised towards micro-level factors such as biological, linguistic or psychological risk factors (see Baele, 2017; Pretus et al., 2018). As a result, the process of synthesising information related to risk factors of violent extremism became complicated due to the approach variance (Sageman, 2014).

Additionally, the field also lacks statistical analysis allowing generalisability of data and frequent use of secondary resources (Sageman, 2014). In Schuurman's (2020) review of papers published between 2007 to 2016, he found an increased in the usage of both methods in research articles. However, Youngman (2020) claimed that much of the articles published on radicalisation and violent extremism in the past decade which used primary resources and ran statistical analysis used data mainly taken from social media platforms. For instance, Scrivens et al. (2017) searched through online discussion forums to identify radical extremist authors. The study's collected dataset were 1 million postings made by users of the media. Several other studies employed a similar approach which is analysing available online postings that may or may not have been made by radical extremists. This highlights the main challenge faced by the field – to acquire radical extremists as samples are likely to be improbable.

Studies of radicalisation towards violent extremism faced several similar problems. One of the problems is the inaccessibility of samples whom are members of radical extremists groups or any radical extremist that committed violent actions to further socio-political goals (Holmer, 2013). In real life, these samples are no longer living, localised in the most dangerous site, or they could place themselves at risk of harm or arrest if they put themselves in public (Bakker & De Bont, 2016; Beardsley & Beech, 2013).

Aside from sampling problem, heavy reliance on secondary data and more qualitative compared to quantifiable data have hindered generalisability of data (Bakker & De Bont, 2016; Beardsley & Beech, 2013; Schils & Verhage, 2017). Even counter violent extremism and intervention policies had to rely on data that has been gathered from openly available sources of arrested, convicted or self-proclaimed extremists (Koehler, 2015). Open-sourced data are subjected to several limitations, including reporting bias or false positives, e.g. media reports favouring allegations despite later prove of innocence (Hegghammer, 2013).

Stern's (2014) paper highlighted that a more significant number of researches, especially from the field of economics and politics, had more focus towards the environmental situation of the nation or society to predict the risk of extremist attacks or supports (for example, Berrebi, 2007). These studies were criticised due to its lack of consideration that the radicalisation process is a psychological transformation of beliefs and attitudes (Borum, 2016). Assessing the economic growth and number of extremist attacks are not able to explain which factors caused individual changes from accepting of the normative ideologies towards extreme deviancy.

Due to much challenges faced by academics to study the risk factors of radicalisation, the field suffers from a high number of research publications with poor quality research (Sageman, 2014; Schuurman, 2020). Academics have acknowledged the weaknesses of the field during the time which Sageman had raised his views (Stern, 2014). Improvements are needed to enhance current research practice. However, despite the challenges summarised earlier, the field has made some progress since Sageman's remark. Even though Sageman's (2014) criticised the field for only having poor quality research to rely on, he still acknowledged notable progress in understanding radicalisation. He commended some research advancement, including the importance of ideology in the radicalisation process and identifying risk factors through studying individuals radicalised that remains relevant today.

Progress in the Studies of Risk Factors of Radicalisation

Studies of risk factors of radicalisation have employed various research strategies to seek out risk factors of e studies employed qualitative interview strategies to build extremist biographies including their livelihood before committing extremist attacks (Bakker & De Bont, 2015; Rostami et al. 2020). Others would use a database search of openly available sources which contains information on lone-wolf extremists (Hegghammer, 2013). In recent years, some scholars have attempted to study social media activities to assess network affiliation as a risk factor of radicalisation (Scrivens et al., 2017). This trend was a result of the rising awareness of the incessant power of the internet to ensure the success of radicalisation both acknowledged by academics and extremist groups.

Several examples of risk factors identified in past studies include personal characteristics or life experiences of foreign fighters from Europe (Bakker, 2006; Bakker, 2015; Bakker & De Bont, 2015; Rostami et al. 2020; Sageman, 2004). These studies found that individuals who could be at risk of radicalisation are likely to be male, in their 20s or 30s and living in the urban areas. These findings have provided significant input knowledge to prevention policies built in Western countries that are aimed to reduce the number of radical extremists (Zeuthen, 2015; Koehler, 2015). For instance, countries like German and Denmark employed family counselling programs as a measure of both preventative and intervention methods against radicalisation (Koehler, 2015). The emergence of these programs was supported by studies that were able to identify the social environment, including family members and friends could significantly place an individual at risk of radicalisation (Bakker, 2006; Sageman, 2004). The success of these programs indicates the value of risk factors studies in knowledge development and policy establishments in the fight against radicalisation. Studies of risk factors have received praised and endorsement by authorities and policymakers (Holmer, 2013; Koehler, 2015). This further supported the notion that the radicalisation field has successfully developed despite its challenges (Schuurman, 2020).

Moreover, in recent years, there is a transformative difference in the uptake of the research approach among scholars that allow the field to develop. A method which is gaining popularity in recent years is analysing the association between theorised risk factors and the radical extremist mindset (Doosje et al., 2013; Peracha et al., 2017; Pressman & Flockton, 2012). Radical extremist mindset refers explicitly to the individuals' attitudes, dispositions, thoughts, inclinations, and motivations to support the use of violence or extreme methods to further ideological, racial, religious, social or political goals (Borum, 2014; Kruglanski et al., 2017; Striegher, 2015). The presence and level of the extremist mindset could be analysed for its association with theorised individual factors that may increase risk of radicalisation among individuals, such as personality traits and cognitive distortion (Holmer, 2013). Measuring the level or presence of radical extremist mindset is a more appropriate approach to explain why individuals become radicalised by empirically assessing factors of radicalisation that play an influential role in ensuring the formation of radical extremist mindset occurs. Besides, studies on attitudinal and beliefs changes have been part and partial of several de-radicalisation programs employed by some countries (Razak et al., 2018; Schmid, 2015; United Nations Development Program, 2016).

Additionally, Pemberton & Aarten (2017) had stated that compared to decades ago, the radicalisation and violent extremism field had matured mostly due to greater understanding of the

process of radicalisation involving the formation of extremist ideology. Remarkably, even Sageman (2014) had commended the importance of ideology in understanding radicalisation yet refuse to acknowledge the maturity of the field. This popular approach had inspired several psychologists to perform lab-based experimental research to address the lack of laboratory research due to sampling problems.

Despite the increase in research that assessed attitudinal changes, there is room for improvement in the area of assessing the radicalisation process across both radical extremists and possibly, in-lab setting (Schuurman, 2020). However, the usage of the in-lab simulated setting of the radicalisation process may be highly controversial and raise several ethical issues. There have been a number of notable research in the field of communication, or social psychology employed experimental manipulation approach to assess changes in extreme attitudes and beliefs among non-radical extremists (Iyengar, 1991; Pretus et al., 2018). Iyengar's (1991) had found that alternative television news frames could change individuals perceived beliefs of who should be responsible for extremist attacks in selected regions. It is possible to employ similar methods, but much caution should be considered when designing the research procedures.

In regards to the divisive approach, to overcome this problem, one of the proposed suggestions is to encourage academics from various field to collaborate - an approach endorsed by several other scholars including Sageman himself (Holmer, 2013; Sageman, 2014; Stern, 2014). One of the most prominent suggestions was by Freilich and LaFree (2015). They proposed a multi-disciplinary, multi-factorial, and multi-theoretical approach to study what causes individuals to be vulnerable to radicalisation. This approach reflects the idea that more factors make up the risk factors of radicalisation. There is also a need to gain to employ theories from a wide variety of disciplines to evaluate and identify these factors.

Freilich and LaFree's (2015) proposal is a very ambitious method as it assumes that having researchers to cross the path and work together to form a comprehensive image of violent extremism is palpable. In reality, the success of this approach might not always be probable. The approach would face greater hindrance when the researchers come from various field of studies and have been practising an approach that has almost little to no connection with the other field of studies (e.g. neuroscientists attempting to collaborate with terrorist experts).

One notable scholar, Max Taylor, criticised the interdisciplinary approach for being unrealistic and counterproductive for it may lead to "distorted career paths for terrorism specialists, and the inhibition of the emergence of professional norms and standards appropriate to our area of concern" and the current academic climate are not able to promote each other's area of study. (p. 585,Taylor, 2014).

However, Taylor's point of view may not affect a vast array of available academics worldwide. Silke & Schmidt-Petersen (2015) had observed a notable increase in collaborative research before and after 9/11. In their analysis, they also found that the most cited papers were likely to be collaborative study with original findings. Moreover, Youngman (2020) remarked that collaborative interdisciplinary research is important as most significant findings are likely to be produced by various scholars likely to be within field outside of radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism. Thus, it indicates that inter-disciplinary research to study radicalisation towards violent extremism may be challenging, but it is neither impossible, nor would it negatively affect the field.

Regardless, Freilich & LaFree's (2015) approach may be the most suitable. The approach appreciates the notion that there is more than one risk factor which could contribute to violent extremism, and they are interrelated or coexist, making individuals vulnerable to the radicalisation process. One of the most consistent perspectives posited by various experts on radicalisation accepted that risk factors of radicalisation should not be secluded to one area only (Holmer, 2013; Sageman, 2014; Stern, 2014).

One notable theoretical framework that assists in specifying which risk factors should be studied and how best to understand the interconnection between the factors were introduced by Holmer (2013). Holmer proposed that to understand the connection between various risk factors is through classifying the risk factors into two forms – the push and pull risk factors.

The "push" factors refer to any elements that make an individual or a group of individuals vulnerable to violent extremism. The push factors could refer to any personal, social or situational factors attributed to an individual or group of individuals which could increase their likelihood to become radicalised, hence pushing them towards radicalisation (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015).

The "pull" factors, on the other hand, refer to any elements related to radicalisation and violent extremism which an individual or a group of individuals may find attractive hence pulls them into violent extremism (Holmer, 2013). These factors could refer to the content of the recruitment message sent out by violent extremist groups or the material incentives offered by violent extremist groups (Meloy & Yakeley, 2014). The interaction between the two has the potential to induce the process of radicalisation, ultimately leading individuals towards violent extremism outcome.

The push and pull risk factors are assessed factors of radicalisation on the opposing end of the spectrum which coexist and feed onto one another causing radicalisation process to meet is violent extremism end (Özerdem & Podder, 2011). There are some models available which described the disengagement from extremist groups using push-pull perspective (Altier et al., 2017; Bjorgo, 2009; La Palm, 2017). These models are mainly applied to reduce recidivism and treat individuals arrested and convicted for committing extremist attacks or joined extremist groups.

There is some variation as to what is considered as the push and pull risk factors of the radicalisation process, which lead to violent extremism end. Vergani et al. (2018) explained the "push factors" as the "structural root causes of terrorism that drive people toward resorting to violence" and the "pull factors" as the "aspects that make extremist groups and lifestyles appealing to some people" (p. 3).

Holmer (2013) specified the push factors are any factors of structural conditions and psychological-emotional factors, and the pull factors refer to the active recruitment using extremist messaging inspiring violence. Vergani et al. (2018) separated the psychological factors in their model, calling it the personal factors – characteristics on an individual causing them to be more vulnerable, thus at more risk to be radicalised, compared to others of similar background.

Aside from the glaring distinct definitions from the two models, the specific variables for the push and pull factors are also different. For instance, Vergani et al. (2018) included cognitive attributes, social mechanisms, group processes, emotional and material incentives, as well as consumption of the extremist group's propaganda as the push factors. The pull factors, on the other hand, would be situational triggers such as loss of legitimacy, geopolitical factors, state repression, relative deprivation, inequality, intergroup contact, violence, unemployment and education.

According to Holmer (2013), the push factors are the factors mainly related include the structural conditions (e.g. living situation or nation's political stability) and psychological-emotional factors (e.g. sense of belonging, loneliness). Pull factors, on the other hand, would refer to active recruitment and extremist messaging content individuals are exposed to. Regardless of the difference, the push and pull factors provided progress in the understanding of the risk factors of radicalisation. The framework acknowledged that there is a wide array of risk factors which could be attributed to the radicalisation process and one of the appropriate manners of understanding the factors as interconnected to one another.

Some scholars proposed that knowledge on the push and pull risk factors is important for creating scientific-based prevention policies tackling radicalisation process (Bjørgo, 2013; La Palm, 2017). Considering the success of some pilot studies (Zeuthen, 2013), the implications of push and pull risk factors could contribute to advances in countering violent extremism policies worldwide.

Suggestions for Future Research and Practice

Despite its setback, the studies of risk factors have provided a progressive understanding of what are the potential variables that could be related to the individual and the environment the individual lives in that drew the individuals towards violent extremism end. Such knowledge has allowed several tools developed to identify individuals that may be at risk of becoming involved in violent extremism (Pressman, 2009; Pressman & Flockton, 2012).

In addition, studies on risk factors of radicalisation have further expanded understanding on how radicalisation process could successfully cause ideological adoption among some convicted extremists (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015; Meloy & Yakeley, 2014). Push and pull risk factors framework is one of the frameworks which had filled in the gap of knowledge related to how the risk factors allow radicalisation to take place (Holmer, 2013; Vergani et al., 2018). Some of the identified risk factors through empirical studies allowed academics and policymakers to build scientific-based preventative strategies to thwart the radicalisation process (Zeuthen, 2013).

Regardless, as Taylor (2014) had remarked, attempting to specify actual causes of radicalisation and why individuals are willing to become extremists would be as difficult as answering why anyone would be willing to become criminals. Experts in the field should acknowledge studies of risk factors of radicalisation will continuously face limitations by circumstances that are beyond the control of researchers and policymakers alike.

This review paper proposed to overcome some of the challenges by employing appropriate measures including to advocate for measuring the mindset in order to separate between radical extremists and non-radical extremists. This could assist in breaking down the process of radicalisation. Aside from that, even though multi-theoretical and interdisciplinary approach should be the new practice to prevent the process of radicalisation, it remains important to continuously see radicalisation as psychological transformation because it is an individualised process in nature (Borum, 2014; Kruglanski et al., 2017; Striegher, 2015).

No academic fields triumph without challenges. Thus, Sageman's (2014) claiming the field of radicalisation and violent extremism is stagnant in progress is overemphasised. Several academics had greatly criticised Sageman's argument due to his highly sceptical and narrow view of the phenomenon (Taylor, 2014; Stern, 2014). Sageman's criticism dismissed a great deal of what has been studied decades before he wrote his paper (2014). Ironically, he had cited a great number of research paper that has provide progressive advancement in the radicalisation field itself.

Sageman's criticisms were based on his great ordeal that there should be a definite answer to what causes an individual to become radicalised and commit violent attacks to provide a direct answer to journalists. This could be seen in his remark:

> *"What leads a person to turn to political violence? Several journalists asked me this question in the wake of the Boston bombing incident on April 15, 2013. I was emerging from an eight-year involvement in the U.S. intelligence community (IC) and could finally talk with them. However, I was at a loss to provide them with a consensus answer about the turn to political violence, either from academia or the IC." (p. 565)*

There is no definite answer to the actual cause of radicalisation, and the urgency for achieving the answer might not be as simple as Sageman had hoped for it to be. Schmid's (2014) response to Sageman provided clarity over why Sageman's famous claim would not demotivate academics and

policymakers to continue studying the risk factors of radicalisation. The field is as complex as other sub-disciplines of criminology. In his article, Schmid stated:

> *"In its general formulation, it is as unanswerable as the question ''What leads a person to turn to crime?'' There are many types of crime (e.g., crimes of need, crimes of greed, crimes of passion, etc.) and for some forms of crime, criminologists are closer to an answer than for others. The same is true for some forms of ''political violence.'' (p. 587 – 588).*

Schmid's remark clarified that getting the right and objective answer to why anyone would be willing to become criminal is a common dilemma in understanding criminal behaviours, but the current situation does not imply the research is stymied from progress.

CONCLUSION

Even in the most recent review, Schuurman (2020) has highlighted tremendous progress in established knowledge related to radicalisation and violent extremism. Compared to a decade ago, there is an increase in number of publications providing original research to the field. It remains true that there is more work needed to be done considering the current gap of knowledge especially for risk factors of radicalisation tailored closely to various extremists currently in existence or those that may emerge in coming years. But, like every other field of academics, growth is slow but achievable for knowledge expansion to allow both academics, policymakers and stakeholders alike to allow enhancement and progress for human civilisation.

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