

RESUME
MASTER THESIS

“KOSOVO CITIZENS IN FOREIGN WARS: EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF
RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM”

From
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The Scope of the Thesis

The main scope for conducting this Master Thesis, is the research on the involvement of Kosovo citizens in foreign wars and violent extremism, and to better understand the factors and motivations that drive individuals to participate in such activities. It is also to identify the root causes of violent extremism and to develop effective strategies and policies to prevent and counter it. Specifically, in the context of Kosovo, which has a history of conflict and political instability, the research aims to shed light on the patterns and dynamics of violent extremism and to provide recommendations for policymakers, civil society actors, and other stakeholders on how to address this complex issue. By examining the experiences and perspectives of those who have been directly affected by violent extremism, the research seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon and to promote more effective responses. The research is divided into three chapters, as below:

Chapter I

This chapter provides an overview of the terminologies of extremism and radicalism, focusing on the rise of Jihad, which have become essential field of study due to its implications for national security. Violent extremism, which promotes or engages in violence, is often used interchangeably with terrorism. The chapter explains the difference between Islam, Islamism and Islamist extremism, and how these ideologies are used by extremist groups to justify their actions. It provides an overview of the history of Islam, including the life of the prophet Muhammad and the spread of Islam across Arabia and beyond, and emphasizes that not all Muslims are extremists, and radical Muslims represent a minority within the religion. The chapter also includes the influence of extremist groups in Kosovo and how they recruit new members.

Chapter II

This chapter focuses on the involvement of Kosovo citizens in foreign wars, especially their participation in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. One of the reasons for joining these wars was the desire to live in and defend the so-called Islamic State. A number of young people from Kosovo joined extremist groups in Syria, influenced by radical ideologies and internal factors such as poverty and unemployment. In the chapter it is stressed that Kosovo needs to address economic, social, and political concerns that directly affect radicalization and the spread of violent extremism.

The chapter identifies the factors that drive Kosovo's citizens to join extremist groups, including ideological beliefs, economic opportunities and social pressures. It suggests that a combination of societal disorientation, weak economic and political conditions, neglect towards Kosovo's rural communities, corruption, high-income inequality, and inadequate provision of public services, have all contributed to an environment in which religion has become more appealing, and extremist groups have been able to recruit followers.

The chapter also explores the expectations and experiences of participants in foreign wars. Their experiences in Syria were not what they expected, with poor living conditions and constant pressure from institutions leading some to become disillusioned with their extremist ideology upon their return.

Chapter III

This chapter elaborates the repatriation of Kosovo citizens participating in foreign wars and the challenges they face after returning home. It explains the potential risks of repatriated citizens and the prevention of violent extremism and analyzes the community perceptions of violent extremism and how these perceptions may influence the reintegration process. It also highlights the dangers of repatriating foreign fighters, citing instances where returned fighters have been involved in terrorist activities and planning attacks in Kosovo and Western Europe. Despite the risks, Kosovo's repatriation efforts have been applauded by the international community.

The chapter explains the process of reintegration and the difficulties that repatriated citizens may encounter, such as stigmatization and discrimination. The main institutions involved in the process are the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Culture, Youth and

Sport, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The chapter elaborates the efforts to prevent violent extremism, with countries creating new treaties and legal frameworks to combat terrorism. The motives for involvement in violent extremism are divided into three categories: ideological violence, cause-based violence, and ethno-nationalist or separatist violence. Kosovo's legal framework is considered to be in accordance with EU legislation and international counter-terrorism instruments, and the country has arrested and prosecuted a significant number of individuals involved in terrorist organizations in conflict zones in Syria and Iraq.

Conclusion, Recommendations and Bibliography

The thesis is finalized with the conclusion, recommendations, and bibliography.

The **conclusion** discusses the definitions and causes of radicalism, extremism, and violent extremism. The causes of violent extremism are identified as low education, economic disadvantage, distrust in the political system, religion, and psychological influence. It highlights the importance of studying factors beyond religion and politics. The wars in Syria and Iraq have affected international security, as they have become importers of fighters and exporters of radicalism and violent extremism. The conclusion ends by discussing the Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism, which focuses on early identification, prevention, and de-radicalization and reintegration of radicalized individuals.

Finally, three **recommendations** to prevent the spread of violent extremism in Kosovo:

- The first recommendation suggests strengthening cooperation between institutions, raising awareness among citizens, and creating better economic and social conditions to reduce the interest in joining terrorist groups.
- The second recommendation suggests monitoring mosques and other places of religious practice and targeting individuals who try to distort religious teachings and indoctrinate youth.
- The third recommendation advises Kosovo to model itself after the European Union rather than Middle Eastern countries and monitor the activities of Middle Eastern countries operating in Kosovo. Additionally, citizens should prioritize the construction of schools over the construction of mosques, which are often funded by foreign organizations.