

The primary goal of this book on *Resilient Cities* is to compare and contrast local experiences on how to counter violent extremism at city level. The volume evaluates local action plans and best practices against violent extremism of various ideologies: from anarchism to left-wing, right-wing and Salafi-jihadism. A secondary goal of the book is to discuss ways in which European cities can increase their “resilience” or ability to persevere in the face of emergency and acute shocks such as terrorist attacks. As is well-known, the number of terrorist incidents worldwide has increased rapidly in the last 50 years and the biggest increase has taken place since 2001. Out of the approximately 150,000 terrorist incidents that have taken place between 1970 and 2016 (150,000 approximately) about half of those (73,000) occurred in the 2000–2016 period. Even though terrorists have killed 170,000 people since the turn of the 21st century, European democracies have been relatively unaffected by indiscriminate violence and it is estimated that only 4% of terrorist incidents took place in wealthy democracies.

The origin of this volume was a conference on *Resilient Cities: Countering Violent Extremism at Local Level*, which was held in Barcelona on June 8–9th 2017 under the auspices of CIDOB and the Handa Centre for the Study of Political Violence and Terrorism (CSTPV) at the University of St Andrews. The two-day conference was attended by public policy experts but also by a variety of local stakeholders interested in prevention: from social workers and educators to NGOs, community leaders and local police forces. The conference attracted considerable media attention and public interest, most probably because the ability of resilient cities to survive, adapt and grow after a terrorist atrocity does not only depend on elected representatives but on all individuals, communities, institutions, and businesses within a city. To put it differently, the social resilience of European cities depends on a collective effort to go back to normal after a disastrous event, emergency or challenge and face the future with confidence. In the aftermath of a terrorist atrocity, resilient cities can demonstrate they constitute strong and cohesive communities which are confident of their values and lifestyle and refuse to make concessions to those using brutal methods. In short, single event disasters put to the test the defences of a city, but also its social fabric.

To some, the future belongs to cities and only cities can “save the world”. This is the case for Benjamin Barber, who has praised the role of city authorities in creating a new vision of governance in his book *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities* (Yale University Press, 2013). According to Barber, the most perilous challenges of our time – climate change, terrorism, poverty, and trafficking of drugs, guns and people – are problems too big, too interdependent and too divisive for the nation-state. Cities worldwide share unique qualities – pragmatism, civic trust, participation, creativity, innovation, and cooperation – that allow them to better respond to these transnational problems than nation-states, which are often mired in ideological infighting and sovereign rivalries. By way of illustration, cities do not control the origins and causes of global terrorism but they are required to address their consequences. Despite lacking the necessary legal instruments and financial resources to provide a comprehensive solution to these complex problems, cities do not have the luxury of turning a blind eye and not delivering for their inhabitants. In an interdependent world, city authorities are forced to implement pragmatic policies that tackle the local manifestation of transnational challenges such as violent extremism. Barber makes a persuasive case that modern cities are best placed to meet the challenges of a globalising world and that cities alone offer real hope for a *glocal* future.

This volume on *Resilient Cities* is made up of 11 chapters that analyse what municipalities can do to build resilience to violent extremism. Towns and cities are uniquely positioned to safeguard their citizens from polarisation and radicalisation to violence through partnerships with local stakeholders. The chapters have been grouped into three sections devoted to explaining the current threat of violent extremism in Europe, providing examples of best practices and local experiences in order to facilitate organisational learning, as well as explaining what cities can do to inspire local action on a global scale. These three sections provide concrete answers and policy recommendations to the research question “What should cities do to counter violent extremism?” The contributors to this book argue that municipal governments need to map out the threats affecting their communities, identify best practices and learn from other local contexts, and must design and implement their own local action plans.

The first section on violent extremism in Europe is devoted to examining the current security threat and explaining institutional responses implemented by EU member states. **Rik Coolsaet** identifies the explanations and variables that account for the rise of violent extremism in European cities. **Bibi Van Ginkel** examines the different levels of countering the threat, from the European to the national and local levels. **Jorge Dezcallar** discusses terrorism in 2017 and mentions some of his experiences as head of Spain’s *Centro Nacional de Inteligencia* (CNI) between 2001 and 2004. **Diego Muro** examines the process by which an individual is radicalised into an extremist ideology that manifests itself in terrorism. He provides a visual representation of four scholarly models and argues that in spite of the popularity of the term, “violent radicalisation” bears no direct relation to its actual explanatory power regarding the causes of terrorism. A common concern for these four authors is the absence of a long-term view of prevention amongst practitioners which echoes the well-known cliché of “prevention is better than cure”. In the absence of pressure from the electorate, irresponsible practitioners and elected officials only come up with initiatives in the aftermath of attacks.

The second section focuses on international best practices and examples of local action plans. **Bart Somers**, World Mayor of the Year for 2016, presents the “Mechelen Model” and identifies the idea of “inclusiveness” as key to its success. **Toby Harris** discusses whether European cities are prepared to respond to a major terrorist incident. His policy recommendations are based on the findings of a wide-ranging strategic review written for the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, into what could be done to improve London’s resources and readiness to respond to a serious terrorist attack. Finally, **Lorenzo Vidino** examines what accounts for the lack of a strategy for countering violent extremism (CVE) in the USA. Under the Obama administration, funding for CVE was sizeable, but these initiatives have practically ended under President Trump. A common finding of this second section is that states and regions often suffer from institutional inertia and rarely devolve powers and competences to local authorities. In an adversarial environment where different levels of government compete with each other, cities are often forced to be creative with the limited resources at their disposal. Subsequently, the creation of international coalitions of mayors and municipal policymakers and practitioners such as the Strong Cities Network or the European Forum for Urban Security have been created to facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices in building social cohesion and community resilience to counter violent extremism in all its forms.

The third and final section focuses on “ways forward” for European cities and examines how local authorities can systematically strengthen strategic planning, policies and practices at local level as well as building the capacity of local practitioners to counter violent extremism. **Daniel Heinke** first discusses how to fine-tune existing institutional responses and answers the question of who should lead the local initiatives against violent extremism. He discusses the role of multi-agency coordination, community engagement and public-private partnerships. **Daniel Koehler** then explains how to design and evaluate programmes of prevention of radicalisation. **Marije Meines** discusses the possibility of coming up with a European local action plan. Finally, **Tim Wilson** provides a long-term perspective on the issue of countering violent extremism and resilience and examines city resilience in a historical perspective. The authors of this section point out that cities devising their own municipal initiatives face coordination challenges in the form of horizontal collaboration with other local actors as well as vertical synchronisation with regional and state levels of government. Also, community-centric approaches cannot be oblivious to ongoing initiatives at the national and supranational levels. Last but not least, local action plans need to define clear goals as well as mechanisms to evaluate their effectiveness and facilitate the evaluation of what works and what does not.

Is a local response necessary?

The contributors to this volume advocate that cities need to develop local responses to terrorism to respond to citizens’ demands for safer local communities. The terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004), London (2005), Oslo (2011), Paris (2015), Brussels (2016), Nice (2016), Berlin (2016), Manchester (2017), or Barcelona (2017) to name a few, have demonstrated the harm that violent extremism can cause to the social cohesion of European societies. In addition to the division between communities, the deadly attacks have caused deaths, injuries, emotional stress and economic costs to European states, not

to mention a loss of public confidence in the authorities. Notwithstanding the general call for additional measures, not everyone is persuaded by the citizenry's plea to develop bottom-up responses to cross-border problems. Indeed, skeptical readers may be asking themselves: is a local response to violent extremism truly necessary? The answer is "Yes", and there are at least four reasons why a city-level response is indispensable.

First, the key motivation for a local response to violent extremism is that the threat of terrorism frequently manifests itself at the local level. The root causes or grievances that give rise to political violence may be national or international, but they often affect towns and cities, where 75% of European citizens live. To put it differently, a local response is needed because the threat is eminently local. In Europe, the number of attacks in our streets and neighbourhoods has increased significantly since 2001. Terrorist incidents in EU cities now occur with such frequency that terrorism has long ceased to be something that happens "over there". The list of urban centres that have been victims of terrorist atrocities – from Madrid in 2004 to London in 2017 – is long and tackling jihadist terrorist threats has become an over-riding priority for security services. It is increasingly clear that European cities need to update and intensify their efforts to counter and prevent Salafi-jihadist violent radicalisation.

Second, local officials have a much higher trust level than the upper levels of government. City mayors, for example, often have more credibility than state institutions, often because they are rooted in the city they govern (it is rare for mayors to live in a different city to the one where they work), because of their proximity to citizens (if they use public transport), and the possibility of interacting with them in meetings (sometimes face-to-face). By contrast, state-wide initiatives are often criticised for lacking proximity to citizens and for implementing blueprints that neglect local contexts. Citizens no longer expect counter-terrorist initiatives only to punish perpetrators but also to prevent new attacks, and these are measures that need trust between the authorities and local communities. If we are interested in the engagement of citizens, fostering the sense of solidarity and communal closeness typical of parochial cities, it is essential to develop a network of stakeholders with shared goals. Indeed, trust (what scholars used to call social capital) is essential to complete the paradigm shift from "countering" terrorism to "preventing" it. In this new scenario, bespoke social policies and security policies go hand in hand and resilient cities can play a role in addressing the causes of violent extremism, supporting local communities and facilitating the development of effective counter-narratives by civil society.

Third, if violent extremism is local, the problem should be dealt with by the most immediate level of government: the local. This line of reasoning for a municipal response is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity (enshrined in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty), which sustains that the resolution of conflicts should be decentralised. At the moment, central governments are firmly in control of counter-terrorism but indiscriminate violence mainly affects local authorities. There is a mismatch that needs to be addressed through the delegation of competences and an adequate distribution of resources. Needless to say, these strategies will be implemented at the local level but they cannot neglect the national and supra-national level. Only vertical coordination across the different levels of government as well as horizontal collaboration between local stakeholders can assure the empowerment of resilient cities.

Fourth, local authorities know their local communities best. No other level of public administration has better intelligence of its streets and neighbourhoods than local practitioners and representatives. When mapping out hotspots, vulnerable groups, unsafe areas, or groups displaying anti-social behaviour, no other level of government is better prepared to determine where the challenges lie than city authorities with daily contact with the reality on the ground. This exercise of “defining” the problem is even more effective when carried out by officials in collaboration with local stakeholders. A related problem is, of course, that city authorities do not always have the competences or the resources to carry out an independent analysis of their local problems. Mayors and cities would no doubt like to see an increase in their budgets to address violent extremism but this is unlikely to happen in most cases. The point to be made here, though, is that local expertise already exists and it only needs to be put together. What is lacking is local will to gather existing local intelligence and act upon it.

Building resilience to violent extremism has become a matter of great concern for European cities that have experienced attacks or that fear experiencing them in the future. Mayors, municipal leaders and other local authority representatives are leading efforts to empower city governments across the EU and develop pragmatic and non-ideological policies. As increasing numbers of citizens rank violent extremism as one of their top worries, urban centres have effectively become the front line of the fight against radicalisation. It is in European cities where transnational extremist threats take shape in the forms of hate speech, recruitment networks, radical cells and terrorist attacks, and it is also in European cities where evidence-based plans to counter and prevent violent extremism at local level need urgently to be devised. Cities are obvious settings in which to implement the motto “think globally and act locally”.

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