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Abstract

As (violent) radicalization is challenging established social and political orders worldwide, governments began to introduce a range of policies to counter terrorism (CT) and violent extremism (P/CVE) well before but especially after the 9/11 attacks. This working paper shifts the attention to the dynamic interactions between protest and radicalization on the one hand, and counter-activities and prevention measures on the other. We set out to bring the dispersed knowledge together, systematize the many forms of these interactive dynamics and argue that mutual aggravation can lead to (spirals of) escalation. As these co- or de-escalation dynamics require more attention conceptually and empirically, we critically review the state of research and develop an analytical framework that allows tracing these dynamics. We make the case for a research program that includes multidirectional and multi-agent approaches and delineates a typology of co-escalation dynamics.

Zusammenfassung

(Gewalttätige) Radikalisierung stellt etablierte soziale und politische Ordnungen weltweit in Frage. Aus diesem Grund haben Regierungen schon lange vor, aber insbesondere nach den Anschlägen vom 11. September 2001 damit begonnen, eine Reihe von Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung von Terrorismus (CT) und gewalttätigem Extremismus (P/CVE) einzuführen. Dieses Working Paper lenkt den Blick auf die dynamischen Wechselwirkungen zwischen Protest und Radikalisierung einerseits sowie Gegen- und Präventionsmaßnahmen andererseits. Wir führen das verstreute Wissen zusammen, systematisieren die vielen Formen dieser interaktiven Dynamiken und argumentieren, dass gegenseitige Verschärfung zu Eskalationsspiralen führen kann. Solche Ko- oder Deeskalationsdynamiken erfordern konzeptionell und empirisch mehr Aufmerksamkeit. Nach einer kritischen Diskussion des Forschungsstands entwickeln wir einen analytischen Rahmen, der es ermöglicht, diese Dynamiken zu erfassen. Wir schlagen ein Forschungsprogramm vor, das verschiedene Wirkweisen (multidirectional) und Akteure (multi-agent) umfasst und eine Typologie der Koeskalationsdynamiken beschreibt.

Content

1. Introduction: Two variants of co-escalation

Radicalization, whether including violence or not, continues to challenge established social and political orders worldwide. Given the broad understanding of radicalization we use in this paper, including radicalization *without, within* and *into* violence (Abay Gaspar et al. 2020: 6–12), examples for such phenomena are manifold: from right-wing, Islamist terrorism, and sectarianism to animal rights activism, feminist politics, and climate protests. Especially the latter three phenomena are with only very minor exceptions linked to non-violent behavior. Yet, the focus of state security authorities is primarily on violent forms of radicalization, which have been observed since the 1880s (Rapoport 2022).

As a result, many countries began to introduce a range of counterterrorism (CT) and security policies well before 9/11, and such measures have continued to be scaled up ever since (for the German case, see Hegemann 2021; Petzsche/Coenen 2022). Importantly, state CT responses have been criticized for securitizing many domains of social life, greatly expanding the agency of security authorities, stigmatizing certain minority communities, and restricting free speech and civic space (e.g. Donohue 2005; Choudhury/Fenwick 2011; Ragazzi 2016) – dynamics that pose major challenges for civil society and activism in democracies, but especially in autocracies. Radical actors might intentionally or unintentionally provoke those countermeasures, or capitalize on them for mobilization purposes. Such mutual aggravation could lead to spirals of escalation, which we grasp as *co-escalation.* However, while being of great relevance for research and prevention practice, the knowledge about these dynamics is dispersed over diverse research strands that do not always interact sufficiently, and systematic empirical research on co-escalation or de-escalation mechanisms is scarce.

In this paper, we distinguish unidirectional and bidirectional variants of escalative interactions. The unidirectional perspectives focus their conceptual or empirical work primarily on either the civil society side or the state side, but take into account the others' influence. The bidirectional perspective truly focuses on the interactive nature of those escalative effects by scrutinizing in one systematic research program both the civil society and the state side. The term *co-escalation* we put forward here builds on this distinction and is broad enough to serve as an umbrella for the variety of concepts in different research strands.

To contribute to the conceptualization and further investigation of these interactions, and ultimately to advance theory building in this area, we set out to take stock of the dispersed knowledge on these phenomena. Doing so, we aim to bridge peace and conflict studies, social movement theory, and radicalization research – a challenging endeavor, but one of the major contributions of this paper. We rely on a thorough literature review of the above-mentioned research strands based on a combination of several key words (counterterrorism, P/CVE, (de-)/(co-)escalation, dynamics, radicalization, protest, uni-/bidirectional, mutual, state responses, state measures, community, countermovements, cumulative effects). In addition to these findings, we also draw on our own (empirical) research findings and expertise as well as discussions with peers.

While the search was mainly limited to English and German literature published after 2001, we also considered some earlier conceptual debates. In total, we found over 75 publications explicitly dealing with (co-)escalation dynamics. After identifying relevant texts, we first differentiated them according to whether they are primarily based on a uni- or bidirectional perspective. In the case of the unidirectional texts, we then looked at whether they focus on state or non-state actors. In the case of the significantly fewer bidirectional texts, we differentiated between theoretical and empirical works. This sorting served as the basis for our review and for the development of a broad co-escalation concept.

In a nutshell, what we found: While there is a need for further systematic comparative empirical research in all variants, the unidirectional variant that lays the focus on radical groups and individuals is linked to a rich conceptual and empirical debate (not least in social movement research). There is notably less understanding about the effects of radicalization processes on (de-)escalating measures. The most obvious research gap is in research designs that focus on the interactive variants: while there is some conceptual work, systematic empirical studies are scarce. As with radicalization, co-escalation is a procedural term, which requires, in essence, the shift from a cause-based to a process-based understanding. Not all of the literature strands and findings we include in this paper take this temporal unfolding of processes seriously, but a future research program should.

The paper proceeds in three steps: First, we summarize the bidirectional variants of co-escalation research (section 2) before focusing in two further sections on bidirectional approaches: radicalization and protest (section 3, focus on non-state actors), and prevention and repression (section 4, focus on state actors). By bringing together this dispersed knowledge, we aim at sketching the contours of a research program that does justice to the comprehensive nature of co-escalative effects.

2. Bidirectional variants of co-escalation research

As discussed above, there are many strands and disciplines that discuss interactive elements – often they use different terms to describe (almost) the same phenomenon: mutual radicalization, reciprocal radicalization, cumulative extremism, tit-for-tat radicalization, echoes of extremism, blowback and backfire, co-terrorism, and co-extremism. These interactive mechanisms can take many forms: They might be cumulative in the sense that measures and actions add up slowly over time, they might be cyclical in that there are escalating and de-escalating dynamics that cycle around a mean over time, or they might be spiraling by combining cyclical and cumulative effects. With the term *co-escalation*, we refer to all interactive mechanisms between those who design measures to intervene in radical milieus with the aim to prevent and counter radicalization processes and those non-state actors who radicalize or who are alleged to do so. We aim to build bridges between various strands of literature and various disciplines, to make an offer for integration rather than for fragmentation. Our understanding of the term differs from other works in that we intentionally include multiple actor perspectives (state vs non-state) as well as unilateral and bilateral interaction effects – an aspect that has been largely understudied in previous contributions. Its main added value though is that it can serve as an umbrella term that brings together hitherto fragmented debates, might integrated them into a larger research program and, by doing so, sheds more light to a crucial aspect for radicalization research and for understanding P/CVE programs.

A key part of such a research agenda is a focus on bidirectionality, implying comprehensive relational analyses of interactive dynamics between state and non-state actors. Social phenomena, such as escalation, are epistemically accessible via studying relevant feedback loops and central mechanisms by which they can be explained and understood on a fine-grained level (see, for instance, Bosi et al. 2014: 2 or McCauley/Moskalenko 2011a: 223). In-group as well as out-group identity is constructed with reference to the "other" group (Parker 2007; Sageman 2017: 18; Moghaddam 2018). Without a "them" there is no "us" – nobody to tango with – but what is concretely meant by "us" and "them", what the bone of contention is and who the aggressor is, is based on continuous interpretative, narrative work. Meaning-making and reciprocity are thus two fundamental, non-static qualities of a bidirectional framework.

With regard to the bidirectional perspective, there are hardly any empirical reflections and only a few more conceptual studies. With the term "mutual radicalization", Moghaddam (2018: 4) aims to capture spiraling conflict between groups and states using many insights discussed above, backing those assumptions by citing existing empirical studies in social psychology. Though Moghaddam does not merely focus on state-non-state escalation, he assumes that many processes are similar across various cases and all tend to be subject to complex sequences of cause and effect. A similar argument of causal complexity is made by more recent studies on the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg (Malthaner/Teune 2023). In this volume, authors discuss the circular interaction processes between police forces and anti-G20 protests (Malthaner/Teune 2023: 275). They show the complex escalatory and de-escalatory elements that interacted over days of clashes and that hardly fit into a parsimonious causal model due to the sheer density of interactions and responsibilities for those escalative effects (Knöbl/Hoebel 2023: 261–263).

This conceptual and empirical challenge might be one reason why there are hardly any systematic empirical studies on those interactions, since such a comprehensive research agenda requires quite some resources and escapes easy explanatory frameworks. Several scholars of the sociological field of contentious politics point out the difficulty to capture social reality with its dynamic and multidirectional qualities in parsimonious models (McAdam et al. 2001: 309) and argue that another viable option may be to take seriously that "explanation consists of identifying crucial mechanisms and their combination into transforming processes" (McAdam et al. 2001: 310) – a methodological proposal that might prove useful for studying co-escalation dynamics. And indeed, a growing body of literature demonstrates that these challenges are not insurmountable: In the context of police interaction with protestors, for instance, research points to the mechanism of "competitive escalation". Della Porta (2013: 71) uses this term to refer to dynamics that develop "during cycles of protest" and argues "that violence is driven less by strategic concerns than by relational dynamics developing during moments of intense mobilization". Hence, there is a

> "reciprocal adaptation of police and protesters' tactics. The relationship between protesters and the police does not have a unique causal determination: we observed that protest tactics influenced the police tactics through interactive processes." (Della Porta 1997: 123)

Furthermore, these phenomena are often cross- and transnational (Della Porta 2013: 38). One further example is Lindekilde's (2014) concept of backfiring or backlash mechanisms. The empirical focus is still on the non-state actors' side, though, which is why we discuss this text in greater detail in our sections on unidirectional approaches. Even more bias towards the non-state actor side is to be found in the literature on "cumulative radicalization" (Eatwell 2006), which came with a focus on radicalization effects between far-right and Islamist groups (see, for instance, Bartlett/Birdwell 2013, Ebner 2017).

A similar finding emerges within terrorism studies, as many scholars have examined the influence of state repression on terrorism. For instance, Sageman discusses the psychology of terrorism and, at least conceptually, addresses the role of the state. He argues that, like terrorist groups, the state side – taking Bush's war on terror as an example – is subject to a specific psychology, namely the construction of an in-group and an out-group leading into a "mutual escalation of violence" (Sageman 2017: 33). Thus, not only terrorist groups radicalize – Sageman calls it "turn to political violence" – but so do states in their reaction to these groups (ibid.: 3). The research focus, though, is yet again on terrorist groups, not on state actors. Thus, while there is plenty of reference to bidirectional concepts, there is

hardly any empirical study that does both conceptual and empirical justice to the interactive effects on both sides. With this paper, we attempt to further the conceptualization and future investigation of these very interaction dynamics.

3. UNIDIRECTIONAL (ESCALATIVE) INTERACTIONS WITH A FOCUS ON NON-STATE ACTORS: RADICAL MILIEUS AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS

In general, much of radicalization research concentrates on the role of internal factors: the individual pathways towards radicalization, group dynamics, or common ideology and instruments, among others. Knowledge about the role of external factors, on the other hand, stems in particular from social movement studies, dealing, for instance, with protest policing (see, for instance, Mansley 2013; Della Porta et al. 2006; Della Porta/Reiter 1998) and with security policy and counterterrorism in a broader sense (see Lindekilde 2014 as the most comprehensive conceptual work in this regard; see as well Lindekilde 2012). In this context, "[r]adicalization has been considered as the most likely outcome of the closing down of political opportunities and the adoption of strong and indiscriminate repression" (Della Porta et al. 2019: 3; see also Della Porta 1995). In contrast, Koopmans (1997) finds that intensified state repression contributes to a decline in radical right-wing mobilization and thus has a de-escalating effect.

The benchmark for the influence of those outside factors is the political outcome of those movements, however often reduced to conditions for the "success" or "failure" dichotomy – though there are studies that do more justice to the more complex effects of those outside/inside dynamics pointing to contradictory trajectories, inducing political set-backs, backlashes, or the creation of counter- and rival movements (Amenta et al. 2010: 290; Giugni 1999; Lindekilde 2014; Tilly 1999: 268; Tilly 2005). In sum, state measures are said to have a central role in shaping radicalization, i.e. the groups' development and changes in its members' attitudes and behavior – a finding we elaborate on in more detail in the following two sections.

As discussed above, a majority of the reviewed studies deals with the effects of intervention measures on civil society actors. We start by providing a summary of the findings that relate to literature on radicalization processes in radical milieus (3.1) and continue with findings on protests and sectarian movements (3.2).

3.1 Radical milieus:[1] *Politically and/or religiously motivated communities, groups, and individuals*

Research dealt predominantly with state repression trying to suppress radicalization/extremism and its role for individual/group radicalization and escalation (Della Porta/Diani 2020, 213–219; Hafez 2003; O'Brien and Deng 2015). The main argument is that repression, prevention, deradicalization, and counterterrorism measures can backfire and lead to increased resistance and also more (violent) radicalization – contrary to their intentions (Githens-Mazer 2009; Lindekilde 2016; Crenshaw 2010; Silke 2005). To describe counterterrorism driven radicalization, Ingram introduces the term "iatrogenic radicalization", which he defines as "the inadvertent and preventable 'blowback' effects that counterterrorism and CVE [Counter Violent Extremism] efforts may have on the radicalization of individuals and groups toward support of or engagement in acts of politically motivated violence"

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1   Since extremist groups "are not completely isolated, socially 'free-floating' entities, but emerge from and operate within a specific, immediate social environment" we speak – following Malthaner and Waldmann (2014: abstract) – of *radical milieus.*

(Ingram 2019: 181). A broad range of other researchers are investigating these types of "counterproductive" (Sageman 2008: 153f.) or "backfire mechanisms" (Lindekilde 2014).

The studies differ, however, in their conceptual orientation. While some scholars emphasize the dual interaction between terrorism and state countermeasures, most focus on the unilateral effect, namely the (facilitating) impact of state measures on radicalized actors. We can also find differentiations regarding the specific (repressive[2] or preventive) measures, the empirical phenomenon, and also the level of analysis. While some studies look at backfire effects on (minority) communities (macro level), others focus on radical groups and campaigns (meso level) or on individual perpetrators (micro level).

The following sections present research findings regarding radicalizing effects of state action along these three levels. For this purpose, literature from the fields of politically motivated (right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism, single issue radicalization) and religiously motivated radicalization[3] (Islamism, Evangelicalism) will be drawn upon.

Radicalizing Effects on Community Level

Taking the example of Muslim communities in Australia, Ingram (2019) argues that counterproductive effects on the community level occur when counterterrorism measures show three characteristics: "(i) a disproportionate and myopic targeting of a single community, (ii) implement ideology-centric 'soft' counterterrorism initiatives, and/or (iii) disseminate strategic communications messaging that reinforces rather than counters militant narratives" (Ingram 2019: 180). Already in 2008, Sageman also discussed backfire effects on Muslims in the case of inadequate counterterrorism measures. He argues that "[i]t is when Muslims are indiscriminately singled out that they become angry" (2008: 155) and that the "escalation of hostility between the state and their community" due to continued "state repression" (2016: 159) is one of the ways how political protest communities turn to political violence. Likewise, Scheerer (1988: 108) argues that exaggerated measures on the part of the state and general assignments of guilt to Muslims can be seen as criminalization and stigmatization and thus lead to a further escalation stage. From a social movement perspective, Della Porta (2013: 69) shows how strong of a radicalizing effect state repression in local conflicts and state reactions to transnational conflicts can have on "new generations of Muslims in Europe or the United States".

However, not only repressive but also preventive measures are examined for their radicalizing effects. Thus, when Islamism prevention is targeted exclusively at Muslims, it can trigger feelings of being treated as a 'suspect community' (Choudhury/Fenwick 2011), and therefore feelings of frustration, anger, and alienation, increasing the likelihood of vulnerability to radicalization (CLGC 2010: 11; Hickman et al. 2012: 99; Abbas 2019). Moreover, Islamism prevention can also drive far-right radicalization by inadvertently reinforcing Islamophobia (Abbas 2019). In this sense, preventive security policies run the risk of (re)producing the very outcomes they seek to prevent (Abbas 2019: 402; Schiffauer 2015: 362).

Radicalizing Effects on Group Level

With regard to the question of whether state repression can have escalating or de-escalating effects on the group level, different assessments can be found in the literature. Minkenberg (2017: 188), for instance, puts forward the hypothesis that state repression leads

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2   For a differentiation of five different levels at which state repression can be exercised in democracy see, for example, Minkenberg (2017: 184).

3   Religiously motivated extremism refers to religious movements that follow a view or interpretation that no one else besides them tolerates and/or whose followers are prepared to enforce it by violent means (Dienstbühl 2019: 145).

ceteris paribus to an increase in militancy and propensity to violence among right-wing extremists. Koopmans (1997), on the other hand, expresses a different view: He emphasizes that the intensification of state repression contributes to a decline in radical right-wing mobilization and thus has a de-escalating effect. Similarly, some researchers argue that in response to repressive state measures like bans on associations, right-wing extremists minimize identifiable structures in order to avoid further bans and preserve their core organization (Körting 2017: 13–14; Minkenberg 2017: 190–191), or that misjudgments and disproportionate repression can provoke undesired counterreactions (Laumond 2015; see also Minkenberg 2017: 195).

While there is only a few systematic empirical studies on the role of state measures with regard to right-wing radicalization, there is more evidence with regard to left-wing extremism. There is broad agreement that a state's reaction to left-wing terrorism contributes significantly to its continued existence and even its strengthening (see, for example, Scheerer 1988). Both the severity of police action against student demonstrations in Germany in the late 1960s and the Stammheim terrorist trials and difficult prison conditions in the 1970s contributed to further radicalization. This resulted in waves of solidarity and (further) radicalization of the left-wing political sphere (Sack 1984). However, it remains unclear to what extent there was a reciprocal escalation and how the reaction of the state shaped the radicalization of individual groups.

In contrast to other forms of religious extremism, Islamism was set and examined quite early in the framework of the prevailing social and political context (Sageman 2008; Della Porta/LaFree 2012; Mamud/Agyeno 2019; in relation to political violence see Bosi et al. 2014). The argument is that over-reactive measures of state violence usually accelerate mobilization processes and increase sympathy, support, and recruitment on the group level (see Karstedt-Henke 1980: 198f.; McCauley/Moskalenko 2008: 425). For instance, McCauley and Moskalenko (2011b) find that in the initial phase of a group's political actions, the members are generally not prepared to immediately challenge the state by force, but as soon as the state as an opponent takes repressive measures, the use of force by group members becomes increasingly probable (2011b: 221). In a kind of "competition with state power", the group can exponentially radicalize further and choose the means of violence relative to the respective resources and opportunities (McCauley/Moskalenko 2008: 425).

When it comes to Christian fundamentalism, like Evangelicalism, most studies remain focused on internal dynamics (Lee 2010: xvi) rather than external dynamics, let alone the relationship between movement and government. A notable exception is Schäfer's (2011) interpretation of American Evangelicalism in light of social movement theory. Although Schäfer points to the contributory role of the state, the relationship between state and movement is only casually examined, as he hardly names how the state reacted to the movement or identifies empirically observable dynamics of interaction between the two sides.

Radicalizing Effects on Individual Level

Studies that consider co-escalation at the individual level are much less common. One study worth mentioning is that of Dornschneider (2016). Looking into Islamist and left-wing activists and terrorists, she examines "why certain individuals take up arms against their states as opposed to others who live under the same conditions and engage in nonviolent activism instead" (Dornschneider 2016: 244). She finds "that the motivations of violent and nonviolent individuals are surprisingly similar" (2016: 13), but that these individuals differ in their beliefs about effective means in response to state aggression. She concludes "that both violent and nonviolent individuals act in self-defense by responding to the belief that

the state is aggressive" (2016: 24). Although the study does not examine the effect of actually implemented state measures, but rather the (violent and non-violent) individuals' perception of the state, these findings contribute considerably to co-escalation research in two ways: on the one hand, they show that it is not specific measures per se that are relevant, but the individuals' perception of the state. On the other hand, they also show that the (cognitive) decision making mechanisms about how to respond to state repression also contribute to radicalization into violence.

Some insights into radicalizing effects at the individual level can also be derived from research on single issue radicalization (radical environmentalist and animal rights activism being one example), since these phenomena are "mentioned in studies on terrorism, political violence, counterterrorism, and state repression" (Hirsch-Hoefler/Mudde 2014: 588). What is noticeable is that although research on single issue terrorism contains strong empirical debates, it is theoretically insufficiently embedded in existing research. A study of mutual radicalization can, however, be observed partially: Regarding the political reaction of the state to animal activism, Lovitz (2010: 77) recognizes "the trend away from passively protecting animal enterprises toward aggressively prosecuting animal activists". Similarly, Loedenthal (2014) examines single issue terrorism from a Critical Security Studies perspective and questions the framing of radical environmental groups as terrorist threats to the nation-state. He concludes that "[t]his rhetorical framing—especially that dealing with tactics and targeting—supports the increased government repression of leftist movements through targeted legislation […]" (Loedenthal 2014: 28f.). In contrast to Lovitz and Loedenthal, Liddick (2006) goes one step further and discusses the effects of being labeled as terrorist (state measure) on the side of the activist. He concludes that "[a]s the federal government has applied its resources, arrests and convictions of animal liberation and radical environmental activists have accelerated in recent years" (Liddick 2006: 99). Referring to criminologists Sykes and Matza he argues "that when faced with such attacks on the self-image, would-be criminals utilize various techniques of neutralization" which enable "criminal behavior" (Liddick 2006: 91). Thus, it can be stated that, although there are many empirically based analyses that show an increase in the resources employed on both sides (government and activists), there is no investigation of how these are mutually dependent and what reactions a tightening of the measures on the other side could lead to.

3.2 Taking the 'traditional' social movement perspective: Protests, policing, and separatist movements

As stated in the chapter's beginning, social movement scholars highlight the relevance of closed or closing political opportunities for (radical) activism and (violent) mobilization (on protests, see Della Porta 2013; Kitschelt 1986). At the same time, the concept of political opportunity also harbors some weaknesses in explaining radicalization or escalation: First, it entails a static notion which does not apply to radicalization, as "[o]pportunities and constraints for specific groups are created in the course of frequent interactions with the state" (Della Porta 2013: 35). Besides, particularly the activists' perception of those opportunities or constraints matter, factoring in perceived notions of opportunities or repression (see Benford/Snow 2000; Della Porta 2018 on framing). Against this background, this section takes a closer look at two phenomena: Protest and separatist movements.

First, analyzing *protests* is part of the traditional research agenda of social movement studies. In this context, the term protest "is widely used to refer to non-routinized ways of affecting political, social, and cultural processes" (Della Porta 2013: 15). Central to the scope of this paper are themes and issues of *protest policing* that came to the academic forefront in the 1990s. A general definition of the term refers to "the police handling of protest events

– a more neutral description for what protesters usually refer to as 'repression' and the state as 'law and order'" (Della Porta 1997: 99). When it comes to the radicalization and escalation of protest, police behavior is said to be decisive for enabling "violent escalation" (Della Porta 1997: 35). In a similar line of thought, a recent study analyzing the effects of repressive policing of the Yellow Vest movement concluded that "police violence may contribute to the formation of radical politicized identities among protesters" (Adam-Troian et al. 2020: 1183) and foster future (violent) radicalization. At the same time, and as already pointed out earlier (see section 2), violence rather needs to be seen as a result of "situation-specific escalation dynamics based on interactions" (Knöbl/Hoebel 2023: 263, own translation), instead of unidirectional effects of protest policing on movement behavior.

To understand possible escalation processes between police and protest groups, the so-called repression-mobilization-nexus offers an explanatory approach. Research on this very link reveals ambiguous findings: On the one hand, repression is said to have a positive effect on mobilization, pointing to radicalization (while it is stated that the intensity of repression matters). Yet, from a resource mobilization perspective, repression is "perceived instead as dissuasive due to the imbalance between costs, risks and benefits of activism" (Combes/Fillieule 2011: 5). In this sense, the "reduction in repression facilitates the development of social movements" and a "higher degree of repression is often associated with radical behavior on the part of the challengers" (Della Porta 1997: 122). Looking at protestor violence, and supporting the assumption that the effect of repression depends on its intensity, a recent study concludes in contrast to Della Porta's earlier work that "light state violence generates backlash, while severe state violence 'works'" (Steinert-Threlkeld et al. 2022: 810). To conclude, repression might affect people's behavior in at least two different ways: either it "discourage[s] the moderates, pushing them to return to private life and leaving room in the protest arena for the more radical wings", or it radicalizes them (Della Porta 2013: 67).

Second, *separatist* or *independence movements* represent a special case where activists voice radical political claims in seeking "the creation of a new state as its outcome" (Pavković/Radan 2011: 3). Looking at such dynamics, the unidirectional interactions between the group and the nation state or its organs appear to be rather obvious: The political claims of the group(s) are directly challenging the existing national normative order, a provocation that might be answered with repression. Yet, research points to "a seemingly stateless political space": "the state has been brought into the analysis [...] through its absence in studies of state weakness, state failure, and state capacity" (Siroky 2011: 54). Hence, it is not only about the actions of a certain state and its interplay with groups or individuals, but also about its non-actions, since "we know that governments have the ability to prevent or avoid separatist wars by granting various degrees of autonomy or even independence." (Walter 2009: 207). Besides, it also seems clear that "secessionists act and react to the state's actions both present and past, and not only to the state's inaction and weakness" (Siroky 2011: 58).

Research further addressed the mediating or escalating influence of foreign interventions on separatist movements (e.g., Saideman 2007; Bélanger et al. 2005) and the role of state repression in the formation of separatist aspirations on the one hand (for such mobilization processes see e.g., Wilkinson 2004) as well as concerning separatist movements' increasing relying on violent means on the other (e.g., Lupu/Peisakhin 2017; Walter 2009). The central role of the state is emphasized repeatedly, for example by mentioning its responsibility concerning the mobilization of minority groups, "as when the state initiates or prevents violence for political purposes" (Siroky 2011: 55). Barceló (2018) directly addresses such unidirectional dynamics in an article on backfiring and deterring effects of state

repression and its influence on separatist movements. In his study, he analyzes empirical data from Catalonia and concludes that they "show no clear evidence that police brutality influenced separatism or electoral mobilization in the areas that it was deployed" (Barceló 2018: 6). Further empirical studies on the same case, however, demonstrate other findings: Studying contention during an independence referendum in Catalonia, Gunzelmann (2022) finds that repressive surveillance significantly affected activists' repertoire of actions, as they adopted a variety of tactics to circumvent surveillance – a dynamic the author grasps as "a first step towards going underground" (Gunzelmann 2022: 13), potentially facilitating radicalization (into violence) in the long run (see also Della Porta et al. 2019). Hence, the literature once more reveals ambiguous findings on the escalative effect of state-movement-interactions.

Overall, the reviewed literature on protests and independence movements offers many (superficial) references to and initial analyses of (escalative) interactions between the state and activists, with a focus on movement behavior. Given social movement studies' inherent emphasis on interactions and relationality, also in the context of radicalization (see Süß 2023), this strand of literature contains promising conceptual work and explanatory approaches that are also helpful for further developing our concept of co-escalation. Yet, even social movement analyses still fall short when it comes to thoroughly examining bilateral co-escalation dynamics, i.e., the interplay of escalation dynamics on the part of both the movement and the state.

4. Unidirectional (escalative) interactions with a focus on the state: Prevention and repression

Especially after terrorist attacks or after thwarted terrorist attacks, the question is raised in public discourses as to what can be done to prevent or to combat the turn to political violence and terror. Political responses to terrorist attacks usually focus first on restoring domestic security. To this end, repressive measures are often used. For example, border controls are introduced, raids are carried out, airline passenger data is stored, or military presence on the streets is expanded. Such measures, some of which themselves involve violent practices, lead to an increasing securitization. Increasingly, however, voices are being raised[4] that, in the long term, more focus should be placed on prevention and inclusion efforts to prevent radicalization and radical extremism. Repressive measures alone are not enough to stop terrorism and preventive measures are needed at least as much. In order to provide a deeper insight into prevention on the one hand and repression or securitization on the other, this section focuses on these topics.

We deliberately choose broad conceptualizations of our key terms to not fall into the trap of narrowing our lenses too much: By *state actors*, we relate to all levels of governance from the local to the national/federal to the international, from political bodies and decision-makers to bureaucracies to security agencies and the judicial system. Furthermore, we go beyond the dominant focus in the literature on democracies and attempt to include the knowledge on authoritarian states as well (repression on radical groups is particularly prevalent in some areas that are dominated by authoritarian state systems like, for instance, in the North Caucasus or in the MENA region) – see as well our discussion on a broad definition of radicalization below.

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4   For instance by Lisa Paus, a German politician who has served as the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth since 25 April 2022, who stated: "Prevention is better than repression" (https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/mediathek/lisa-paus-praevention-ist-besser-als-repression--221512).

4.1 Prevention of radicalization, extremism and terrorism

Since the 9/11 attacks, the subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe, and the emergence of the so-called Islamic State (IS), countering Islamist terrorism has shaped the security policy agenda of Western states (Jackson 2007). As strategies have adapted and expanded, counterextremism has increasingly been extended to the preventive realm (Pantazis/Pemberton 2009; Heath-Kelly 2013; Innes et al. 2011). As a result, many researchers argue to have noticed a "trend toward pre-emptive counter-terrorism legislation" (Mythen et al. 2009: 737) in dealing with Islamist terrorism. At the European level, this was evident, for example, in the counterterrorism strategy developed in 2005, which includes a focus on 'Prevent'.[5]

"Prevention" is a very broad term and can include measures ranging from basic democracy building to state intervention. The more unclear the definition of prevention is, the more the boundaries between areas of responsibility become blurred. In both theoretical and practical discourse on extremism prevention and de-radicalization, there is still uncertainty about definitions and their delimitations between and among each other (Baaken et al. 2018: 3). It is therefore not surprising that the intensification and 'preventification' of measures to combat Islamist terrorism raise questions about their legitimacy and effectiveness, which is why Critical Security Studies in particular is increasingly taking a close look at extremism prevention as a form of over-reactive security policy.

The focus here lies on different actors as well as different areas of prevention. Many prevention measures are implemented not only by state actors, though often funded by public sources. How state and civil society actors work together strongly depends on the national and local context (Baaken et al. 2018: Summary). The areas of prevention usually referred to in the literature are oriented towards the progression of the radicalization process: (i) Primary prevention is aimed at a very broad target group (or even society as a whole), its purpose is to strenghten democratic values and thereby prevent any kind of radicalization process; (ii) Secondary prevention is aimed at people or groups who may feature specific vulnerability or already show some significant signs of radicalization; (iii) Tertiary prevention is aimed at people or groups who are already radicalized and may already have committed crimes or are about to do so (Armbost et al. 2018: 5–6; Challgren et al. 2016).

While the majority of studies focus on the potential effects of preemptive security policy by different actors in different prevention areas, there is a small number of works that focus explicitly on state action and attempt to explain the preemptive shift as a risk management strategy within security policy. In this regard, relevant works focus in particular on the concept of radicalization. For example, researchers argue that the production and use of the radicalization concept and discourse facilitates dealing with terrorism by making it preventively manageable, controllable, and detectable. Counterterrorism, the argument goes, thereby relies on the "invention of 'radicalization'" and the associated supposed knowledge of radicalization to control suspected communities or legitimize action against them (Heath-Kelly 2013). The concept of radicalization thus fulfills a "political function," according to Heath-Kelly (2013: 398). In this sense, Hegemann (2019) also speaks of the "politics of radicalization," while Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) address the failure of the "conventional wisdom of radicalization". That supposed knowledge of radicalization "oversimplifies the complex realities of such situations" (Heath-Kelly 2013: 396; cf. Jackson 2007: 412 regarding the discourse around 'Islamist terrorism'). The critique is thus: Radicalization "performs a story about terrorism, and enables the performance of security

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5   https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST%2014469%202005%20REV%204/EN/pdf

around it" (Heath-Kelly 2013: 398). The increasing introduction of prevention policies is thus understood as generating political agency and legitimizing the expansion of securitization. What these few studies have in common is that they primarily seek to explain governmental (or civic) preemption of counterextremism and counterterrorism.

In addition, there is a large number of studies that focus primarily on the effects of prevention policy. A small proportion of studies examine the radicalizing effects of such preventive security policies on their target groups (see 3.1). The majority of studies discuss stigmatizing, suspicion-raising, and discriminatory effects, pointing out how prevention measures may also (but not necessarily) have radicalizing effects if suspected target groups, communities, and social minorities feel stigmatized as a result of them.

It can thus be summarized that there is a strand of literature within Critical Security Studies that focuses on the preemption of security policy by state (and non-state media, political, or civil society) actors and understands this in particular as a disproportionate response to a (constructed) potential terrorist threat. In this sense, one can speak of a unilateral perspective. In contrast, the studies that also focus on the (radicalizing) effects of this preventive action persist in the perspective of the target groups without considering the reciprocal relationship, which is why we understand this literature as unilateral as well. Studies that conceptualize prevention as a strategy for dealing with insecurity, then focus on the counterproductive radicalizing effects on the target groups, and then again examine the state's response to such radicalizing effects – in short, a bilateral perspective on the escalative prevention-radicalization nexus – have been largely absent.

4.2 Securitization and the upscaling of repression

Similar to the diverse field of prevention actors and practices, there are also a variety of repressive measures that states have taken to respond to (violent) radicalization and terrorist attacks. While this is true for democracies and autocracies alike, repression by autocratic elites carries the risk of dual use, i.e., the suppression of non-violent, dissident groups and the general restriction of civil society's scope for action (for the Middle East and North Africa, see Josua 2019, 2021). As we have shown earlier (see Section 2), most literature focuses on the promoting impact of state measures on terrorism and tends to explain the emergence of radicalization. While some of these studies consider the "'escalatory' error" (Aytac 2008: 134) repressive tactics can have on movement behavior and attempt to explain governmental anti-terror strategies "through the prism of precautionary risk" (Aradau/van Munster 2007: 107f.), they fall short in examining the opposite direction of escalation: the side of the state. Of particular interest in this context is the expansion of repressive measures and practices, resulting in what has been dubbed "securitization" (Da Silva/Martini 2021).

The strands of literature most fruitful for this line of discussion are Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), as they are particularly useful for critically examining state CT or repressive measures, and traditional (counter-)terrorism studies. While there are significantly fewer studies overall that focus on the (escalative) effects on the state compared to those on radical milieus or movements (see section 3), the existing literature mostly includes an interactive element that fits well within the scope of this paper. Importantly, studies on terrorists' impact on the state argue that provoking 'the state' is one of the goals of terrorist campaigns. Beside blame and endurance strategies, terrorists are said to "provoke a strong reaction from the state" by carrying out acts of violence and "attempt to increase the severity of attacks" (Silke 2011: 4). To ensure greater security and protection, "the state takes increasingly severe and exceptional measures – sometimes including blatantly illegal tactics"; a

dynamic that is referred to as "escalation" (ibid.). McCauley and Moskalenko call this kind of provocation "jujitsu politics" (2011b: 155): Following this strategy, "[t]errorists count on the response of the state to mobilize those who sympathize with terrorist goals, to move passive terrorist sympathizers into active terrorist supporters" (ibid.).

Furthermore, Crenshaw argued that the "use of unexpected and unusual force" (1981: 384) by governments is attributed to a desire for revenge and leads to what she calls an "action-reaction syndrome" (ibid.: 385; see also Silke 2005). Moreover, she points out that "[g]overnment reactions" can be "inconsistent, wavering between tolerance and repression" (Crenshaw 1981: 396). Linking back to an earlier part of this paper (see 3.1), studies also claim that wrong policies can lead to a "vicious circle of terrorism" (Bird et al. 2008: 271), which might feed into an upscaling of repressive practices. Looking at the traditional research agenda of CTS, the (US) 'war on terror' represents a prime example for these dynamics (e.g. Holland 2021). The campaign was not only accompanied by large scale security measures, but also particular media campaigns and reporting, that ultimately led to a securitization of the war on terror (Vultee 2010) and "has normalised the securitisation of Muslims and regularised the existence of Islamophobia" (Abbas 2021: 1). Even when not in the explicit focus of CTS studies, interactions between state security measures and terrorist actors on the ground are obvious and often also contain an inherent escalative element.

Generally, there is not much literature focusing on the side of the state and the upscaling of repression. This might also be due to the fact that it may be unconventional to 'accuse' the state of fostering escalation. Yet, what may be normatively difficult in democracies is perhaps more obvious in authoritarian contexts, where such securitization often goes hand in hand with autocratization or attempts to stabilize autocratic rule.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on our review of literature in the fields of peace and conflict studies, social movement theory, and radicalization research, we argue that there is a need for further systematic comparative empirical research on co-escalation. As we have shown, there is a rich debate on unidirectional approaches to the phenomenon of co-escalation, but mainly with a focus on non-state actors. This literature is both empirically and conceptually rich and provides important inspirations for a more comprehensive research agenda that takes both unidirectional approaches with a focus on state measures and bidirectional approaches into account. The most obvious research gap is in research designs that focus on bidirectional (escalative) interactions, in particular regarding systematic empirical studies. To contribute to a more holistic research agenda, this paper has highlighted the strengths and gaps within different research strands and aimed to lay a conceptual foundation for a future research agenda with the proposed notion of bidirectional interaction between state and civil society actors.

The challenge remains that such a comprehensive research agenda not only poses high theoretical demands, but above all is not easy to implement empirically, as access to very different actors is necessary. This is already difficult to realize on its own, but analyses that are systematically related to each other, organizing various access points, pose yet new challenges – not only concerning quantitative studies, but qualitative studies as well, since interviewees might be skeptical when they realize the scope of the research they contribute to. Yet, these efforts are as worthwhile as they are necessary also from a more practical perspective, since dealing with all kinds of radicalization phenomena and, in particular, with extremisms is one of the major social and political tasks of our time. There is an urgent need to understand the effects that social and political actions have – even more so their

unintended consequences,[6] such as stigmatization or further escalatory dynamics. Not least, such an agenda also harbors the potential to understand de-escalation mechanisms from an academic perspective, but also comes with important practical implications. Such a comprehensive research approach requires, above all, a long-term frame and the systematic combination of methods. And it needs to be, as we can see from our review, interdisciplinary in nature.

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6   Whether these consequences are truly unintended and, in this sense, unexpected, must be examined in each individual case. One could argue that most reactions and dynamics are at least comprehensible in retrospect if one considers the contextual factors as well as the pathways and perceptions of the actors and movements involved. Here we use the term "unintended" to refer to the discrepancy between the initial strategic objective of a measure and its actual effect.

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