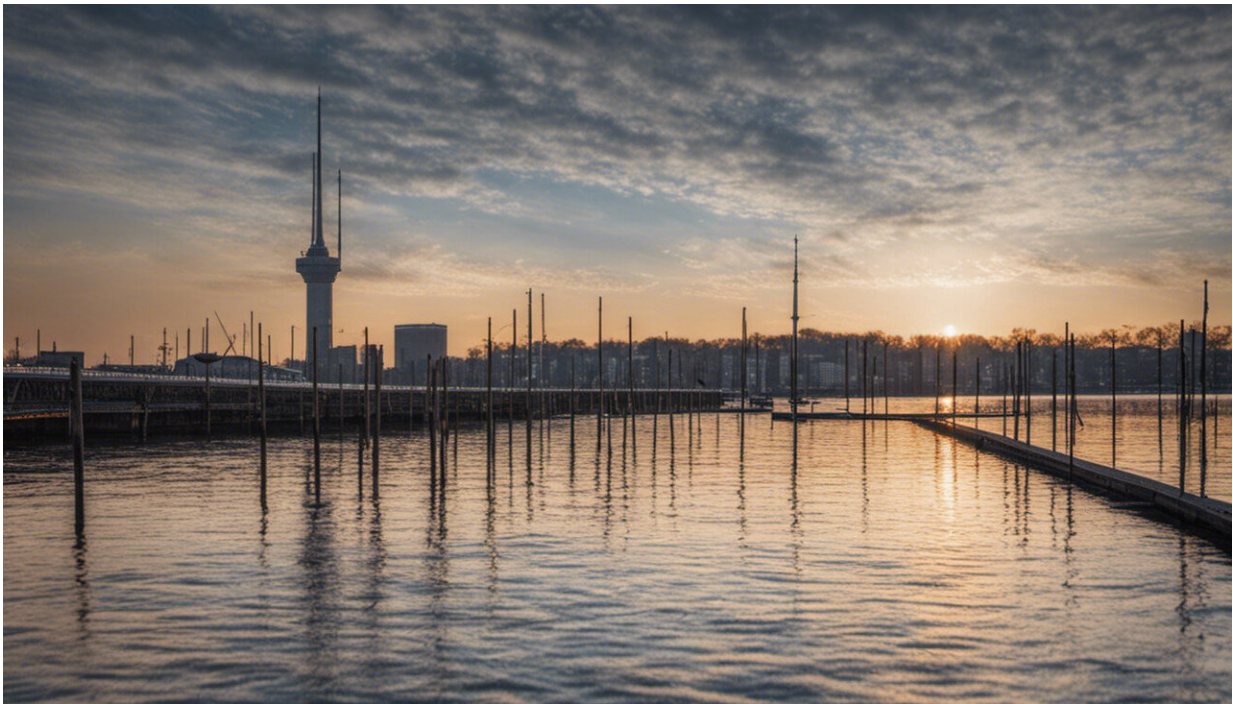


Understanding radicalization and building resilience to counteract polarization

May 18 2020



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

In an increasingly uncertain environment with polarization rising, it's crucial to address challenges associated with radicalization and religious diversity to foster community resilience. A team of researchers involved with the EU-funded projects GREASE and BRaVE is seeking to unravel the dynamics related to such critical issues.

As part of the GREASE project, the team recently published an article examining the ways in which religion is governed in various European countries. The researchers "have found that Europe today has a bewildering variety of church-state models as well as legal, institutional and political arrangements when it comes to the management of religious [diversity](#)." They continue: "This variety renders attempts to talk of a 'European' approach to the governance of religious diversity extremely difficult if not something of a fool's errand. There are a few common features, nevertheless, in how religious diversity is managed in Europe."

The team says that "political autonomy and the guaranteeing of basic religious freedoms" is an aspect seen in all European states, although "the privileging of one or more religious traditions" is also common, to varying degrees. "The trend towards institutional and political secularization that has accompanied the long term fading of Christianity can be observed across the continent, albeit with marked variations, and shows no sign of reversing. There continues to be (dis)establishments or loosening of ties between church and state, [political parties](#) like Christian Democrats becoming less or not at all confessional in appeal and base, while on the other hand, there is increased, closeness of some Orthodox churches to the state."

The researchers also state: "Groups and controversies initially defined in terms of race or foreignness have come to be redefined in terms of religion; thus the accommodation of Muslims came to be the dominant issue in relation to multiculturalism and religious diversity and also gave it particular political characteristics." They point to the existence of "comparable discourses of anti-Muslim sentiment" in European countries and add: "All European states are thus seeking a balancing act between forms of majority privilege and the challenges raised by new and complex religious pluralism."

Diversity and governance

The GREASE research consortium recently launched documentaries that focus on religious diversity governance and the prevention of religiously oriented radicalization. Looking at examples from various countries on different continents, the documentaries cover "Religion and Society—How Faith Fits in Around the World" and "Countering Religious Extremism—Pathways to Peace," according to the project website.

The GREASE and BRaVE research initiatives examine religiously inspired violent radicalization and far-right extremism on their blog, which is hosted by the global media organization openDemocracy. The GREASE (Radicalization, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing together European and Asian Perspectives) project will run until March 2022, while BRaVE (Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism and polarization) ends in June 2021. As noted in a joint booklet, the two separate yet related projects both cover strategies for fostering resilience. "While BRaVE focuses on Europe, GREASE compares developments in multiple cultures on different continents."

More information: BRaVE project website: brave-h2020.eu/

Provided by CORDIS

Citation: Understanding radicalization and building resilience to counteract polarization (2020, May 18) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-05-radicalization-resilience-counteract-polarization.html>

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