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Depoliticising political violence: state-centric and individualised discourses in the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, emerging focus has been on how teachers in Norway can foster citizenship in their classrooms to strengthen democracy. Yet, in conjunction with rising concerns of homegrown terrorism, a new curriculum in Norway draws on democratic education as a bulwark against terrorism. This paper explores the securitisation of the Norwegian educational domain. We analysed three counterterrorism policy documents to explicate the governance of security in school. Analyses of terrorism discourses show a depoliticised and individualised representation in the Norwegian security policy field. These discourses are accompanied by growing urgency where educators are expected to be vigilant towards presumed vulnerable students and report concerns to relevant authorities. This article provides new insight into what security expectations are placed on educators in Norway and their potential consequences for pedagogical practice.

Introduction

One of the more recent policy developments in Europe is the implementation of terrorism prevention measures in various fields – including school and education. A key assumption underlying these developments is that security governance should be applied within the ideals of democratic education (Aly et al., 2014). As such, few legal requirements have been imposed on educators. Lately, however, the varied success in securing European societies from terrorist attacks appears to have led to the ascendance of plural policing in attempt to predict and counter future terrorists in classrooms and on campuses (O'Donnell, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the peacebuilding purpose of education is important given how conflict, populism, polarisation and exclusionary identities threaten European democracy and peace. Yet, merging security and education have drawn schools into a contested space (Gearon, 2015). In particular, there are concerns that implementing security measures can impede human rights. Scholars warn about the growing pressure on educators to use their classrooms to detect future terrorists and report violent crimes that have not yet been committed (Davies, 2008; O'Donnell, 2018).

Despite the hyperbole of the global war on terror, translating countermeasures in educational systems is controversial. However, in what seems to be an unprecedented educational reform, Norwegian authorities recently launched a national curriculum describing that "students should be helped to participate in and further develop democracy and to prevent extreme

attitudes, extreme behaviours, and terrorism" (Directorate of Education, 2020, p. 4). This is perhaps the first time a democratic European state securitises education by introducing counterterrorism expectations in formal curricula. What is the background for this curricular development and what are the political assumptions underpinning the securitisation of Norwegian schooling?

Many questions remain unanswered not least how these security assumptions should be translated into educational practice. We argue that a more nuanced understanding of this securitisation can be unveiled by studying the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field. After all, curricula are influenced by the socio-political context within which they exist (van Dijk, 2001). In view of the emergence of counterterrorism into European education and its many ambiguities, this study explores security policy in the context of Norwegian schooling.

Drawing on critical discourse analysis as its framework, this research asks: *What discourses on terrorism emerge in the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field and how is education manifested in these security documents?* Three concepts from the critical discourse analytical framework are applied in the study, which are "intertextuality", "implicature", and "political/moral evaluation". "Intertextuality" deals with the historicity of texts by analysing how texts directly draw upon other texts. "Implicature" involves studying how texts implies certain logics, while simultaneously withholding the logic hidden from the reader. "Political/moral evaluation" is the legitimisation of certain value systems (Fairclough, 2003).

The article is structured such that, in the following section, we account for previous research followed by methodology. Thereafter, we present the research findings, analysis, and conclusions, respectively.

Education, security, and terrorism

In response to growing concerns of terrorism, most European governments have prioritised the pursuit of a terrorism-safe, -secure, and -resilient society in their political agenda (Sjøen, 2021). Historically, counterterrorism policy has not been prioritised in Europe; however, in conjunction with growing societal fears, policymakers have highlighted the notoriety of democratic education to counterweigh terrorism.

Because of the potential peacebuilding purposes of education, schools are considered important in helping to develop students' political orientations and behaviours in support of human rights and peace (Davies, 2008). Moreover, education is related to mitigating social grievance and facilitating social cohesion and mobility choices, which might prevent or reduce circumstances that moderate conflict and violence. While these functions of education are not new, empirical research suggests that peacebuilding in schools may hold promising potential in reducing violence, especially in conflict-torn societies (Østby et al., 2019).

Still, the merger of education and security evokes certain problems. On one hand, schools can be a promising mechanism for preventing conflict as the peacebuilding functions of education are something that governments can affect relatively easily through their policies. On the other, curricula can be a mechanism introducing children to nationalist ideology, violence, and indoctrination. As Davies (2008) notes, schooling has a complex relationship with security governance and historical analysis reveals that many educational systems have been misused through oppressive political powers.

Scholars have therefore warned about how securitisation embodies tensions, particularly by how educators globally are increasingly requested to appraise students' ideas through the lens of a security framework and carry these ideas out in their safeguarding practices (Aly et al., 2014; Busher et al., 2017; Gearon, 2015; Mattsson, 2018). In addition, many argue that counterterrorism objectives should fall outside the scope of education, particularly considering how security governance in schools can lead to the normalisation of fear and suspicion directed at students who are deemed vulnerable to extremist influence (O'Donnell, 2017).

Performing security governance in school

As noted, the securitisation of education has been the subject of critical scrutinising analysis (Mattsson, 2018). The bulk of criticism has been directed at the United Kingdom's educational system, which describes the counterterrorist responsibilities of educators in section 26 of the "Counter-Terrorism and Security Act". As Gearon (2015) argues, the UK Prevent strategy, which was launched in 2007, has been influential in securitising education in the UK and internationally.

In their study of schools and colleges in England, Busher et al. (2017, p. 43) found examples of school staff responding to the "Prevent duty" by initiating a range of curriculum activities which suspended ordinary teaching to allow groups of students, or even the whole school, to focus on what was perceived to be terrorism-related issues. Assessing the impact and effectiveness of counterterrorism policies in Denmark, Lindekilde and Sedgwick (2012, p. 55) identified several changes in the outcomes of school curricula, including cultural "othering" and increased pressusre on immigrants to assimilate majority group values and conform to dominant conceptions of appropriate behaviours. In Australia, the securitisation of curricula activities has been problematic, often targeting Muslims as suspect communities, potentially leading to an informal criminalisation of Islamic practices (Aly et al., 2014).

In Norway, research on securitising education is at an early stage. However, Norway represents a relevant case for the study of these issues considering its relatively long history of right-wing youth violence, alongside contemporary experiences with the foreign fighter phenomenon. Turning to the empirical literature, a recent study showed that Muslim students were most often the subject of educational concern of engagement with extremism (Sjøen, 2019). Furthermore, there are signs that some school staff reproduce the dominant political and normative understanding of individualism, psychopathology, and depoliticisation as the root causes of young people committing to extremism and terrorism (Sjøen & Mattsson, 2020).

While it is important to note that these studies were carried out prior to the 2020 securitisation of the Norwegian curriculum, these findings are consistent with previous research. Although precise data are difficult to find, past analysis of educationalists' perspectives, textbooks, and curricula indicate that issues like racism, nationalism, and violent extremism are framed as individualistic and depoliticised phenomena in Norwegian schooling (Osler & Lindquist, 2018; Røthing, 2015).

The discursive production of (counter)terrorism in school

The discursive production of (counter)terrorism is saturated with ideological effects that are typically assumed and presented rather than justified. Moreover, the political framing of terrorism tends to be ambiguous to allow the most convenient application of countermeasures (Jackson, 2008). The fact that "terrorism" can usually be written without much explanation, and that writers have sufficient confidence that the reader will understand its meaning, may demonstrate the underlying ideological power of hegemonic terrorism discourses (Ford, 2019).

Critical terrorism scholars have shown how hegemonic terrorism discourses are often geared towards absolutism, where descriptions of groups who perpetrate terroristic violence are void of historicity, social contexts, or political motives (Jackson, 2008). Political discourse on terrorism also draws on a binary understanding of the social world, which divide people between the innocent victims of terrorism and their counterparts, the barbaric evildoers (Ford, 2019). Moreover, contemporary terrorism tends to be described as an existential threat to democracy, while counterterrorism is framed as a civic virtue and moral obligation (Jore, 2020).

As noted by Fairclough (2003), referring to values while creating discursive links between different social issues, for instance democracy and counterterrorism, can be effective choices for normalising ideology in texts. Ideological constructions can hinder the constructive description and explanation of social phenomena. However, it can be difficult for people to challenge ideological discursive productions.

Concerning how ideological effects can be found in discourses, after the 9/11 attacks, terrorism has primarily been associated with Islamist fundamentalism. Furthermore, hegemonic terrorism discourses in Europe often individualise the reasons why people engage in violent extremism and terrorism (Mattsson, 2018). Limited attention has been paid to state terrorism as a catalyst for political violence, and in most cases, terrorism, a term that mainly applies to non-state groups, is defined by the state (Jackson, 2008). This applies also to curricular activities, as state terrorism is rarely addressed in formal education (Davies, 2008; Ford, 2019).

In Norway, research suggests that hegemonic terrorism discourses can affect educational narratives, media framing, public perceptions, and policymaking (Jore, 2020; Larsen, 2018; Sjøen, 2020; Solheim, 2019). However, there has been limited research studying terrorism discourses in Norwegian schooling. Turning to the renewed national curriculum, there are only two mentions of the word "terrorism" in which the first states that:

> Social studies must help students to participate in and further develop democracy and to prevent extreme attitudes, extreme behaviours, and terrorism. (Directorate of Education, 2020, p. 4 [authors' translation])

The above excerpt enables one's imagination on how and why schools should contribute to preventing extreme behaviours and terrorism; specifically, the curriculum offers no description of how democratic education might serve as a bulwark against terrorism. The intertextual link between democracy and counterterrorism is evident in the excerpt. This citation is also characterised by implicature (Fairclough, 2003), seeing that there is a little description of how democracy or democratic education can counterweigh terrorism.

The second reference is related to a specific competence goal listed after tenth grade in social studies, which describes how students should be able to:

> Explain the causes and consequences of terrorist acts and genocides, such as the Holocaust, and reflect on how extreme attitudes and extreme behaviours can be prevented. (Directorate of Education, 2020, p. 10 [authors' translation])

The association between terrorism and genocide, which is exemplified by the mention of the Holocaust, indicates the use of political assumptions. Although terrorism and genocide are both linked to the indiscriminate use of violence, the former is commonly considered a form of political violence, while the latter is considered the intentional and often institutional destruction of people, usually committed by state or state-supported actors. One can certainly question the language choices that draw intertextual links between these two forms of violence. However, there is reason to surmise that exemplifying extreme forms of violence by mentioning "terrorism" and "genocide" together serves an ideological purpose by drawing on the binary "Manichaean theory" of good versus evil, where terrorism is portrayed as a senseless evil on par with the worst human atrocities including the Holocaust.

Despite the limited references to "terrorism", the language choices in the curriculum are likely indexed according to hegemonic political discourse. After all, curriculums and textbooks tend to canalise perceptions that are embedded in "official" political positions (Ford, 2019; van Dijk, 2001). Hence, by analysing security documents, one might expect to produce insight into the discursive practices that operate linguistically in the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field.

Methodology

This research applied a critical discourse analytical (CDA) approach as the theoretical and methodological basis to answer: What discourses on terrorism emerge in the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field and how is education manifested in these security documents? CDA looks at how discourses reproduce society, as well as being reproduced by society. In CDA, discourses are seen as language practices regulated by "discursive orders", such as a democratic education discursive order

or a security order. The discursive order regulates subjects and objects are related to each other and how they can be understood in a meaningful way within the discursive practice. In this sense, CDA separates the discursive practice from the social practise, acknowledging both discursive practice and discursive order as constitutional of each other (Fairclough, 2003).

In our study, the aim was to analyse the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field, understand how schools are manifested in security discourse, and identify the preventive expectations placed on educators. With the renewed national curriculum being implicit as to what, how, and why terrorism should be prevented in schooling, we deemed it necessary to study other documents to uncover the logic embedded in the political expectations behind the securitisation of education. Specifically, this study explored the description of radicalisation, violent extremism, and terrorism in the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field, including how these issues are explained as phenomena, what their causes are, and what preventive logic surrounds the role of schools in counterweighing them. Lastly, we speculated how these discursive constructions may affect pedagogical practices based on the empirical research literature, thus, providing attention to potential changes in social practices.

In this study, three theoretical concepts are extracted from the comprehensive and rich catalogue of tools for critical discourse analysis, which are "intertextuality", "implicature", and "political/moral evaluation". Intertextuality refers to how texts intentionally and unintentionally draw on or relate to other texts. Thus, it revolves around the historicity of texts and how they construct a relationship, often based on assumptions between different texts and their embedded meanings. Emphasis was placed on searching for intertextuality between security and educational discourses in a democratic welfare society. Implicatures are implicit meanings that can be inferred based on normal assumptions or sometimes by avoidance of explicitness. What is "said" in a text always rests upon "unsaid" assumptions, so part of the text analysis attempts to identify what is implicit or missing in texts. Moral/political evaluation is the legitimisation to value systems that can often be taken for granted by the reader (Fairclough, 2003), for instance by referring to binary value systems composed of the "good" democratic people and the "evil" terrorists (Ford, 2019).

The empirical material

The data set used in the analysis includes three national action plans for the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, 2020; Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010). The documents were first read and analysed to clarify the textual content. Here we searched for patterns in the texts regarding how the terms "radicalisation", "violent extremism", and "terrorism" are defined and explained and, further, how the dominant textual themes describe the preventive responsibilities and capabilities of schools.

Studying the texts for their manifest textual content allows venturing into the next analytical step, which is to analyse them for their discursive practice. This entails a different analytical level, as it requires going beyond individual themes and images (Fairclough, 2003). At this level, attention was focused on analysing the wider social context in which the discourses are situated. As Ford writes (2019, p. 697), terrorism discourses tend to operate through the production of simplistic and absolutist structures (e.g., black/white, good/bad, etc.), which serve to install linguistic hierarchies. Thus, we focused on the discursive practices that were normalised by the language use in the texts, or how language use in the text was reinforced by different discursive actions; for example, what discourses are prioritised and which are left unchecked. A particular focus was placed on the ideological assumptions that underpin these descriptions, hoping to gain insight into how the discursive processes operated linguistically in these documents. This involved searching for intertextual features where the documents either intentionally or unintentionally draw on or relate to other texts, implicature, or the avoidance of explicitness, and moral evaluation that draw on value systems.

Lastly, we look to the empirical literature and speculate on the social and pedagogical implications of potential changes in discursive practices in Norwegian schooling, that is, the possibilities

for recontextualisation towards the securitisation of education. "Recontextualisation" is understood as an exercise of power through social change of one field by another (Fairclough, 2003), for instance, the domination of education by the security field, where the latter might appropriate or relocate ideological effects into the former.

Limitations

There are several important limitations to the project. Firstly, the sample size and distribution of the empirical corpus is a source of bias. Although the sample size comprises the entirety of Norwegian action plan on the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism released to date, policymaking is not monolithic that speaks with one voice or working towards one specific set of goals. Analysis of additional policy statements and white papers within different domains than homeland security would have generated a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Another key limitation is that the analysis of these documents is disconnected from the renewed curriculum and the lived social relations in Norwegian schooling, i.e., social practise. There is a need for empirical research into how, if at all, security governance has affected students, educators, and their wider communities (Busher et al., 2017).

Results: discerning the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field

In this section, we provide a chronological overview of the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field, with a focus on what discourses are present. Through this examination, we analysed how education manifests in the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field.

The emergence of security governance in Norwegian schooling

The first Norwegian security policy to detail the role of education was released in 2010. In a document seemingly designed to make security governance appear reasonable, responsible, and morally just, this action plan describes counterterrorism as mechanisms of a social democratic welfare society dedicated to strengthening local capacity to identify and deter vulnerable individuals from extremism and violence (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 8).

Linguistically, key concepts are vaguely bounded in this action plan with overlapping definitional borders. For instance, the term "radicalisation" is defined as the increasing acceptance to use violence, while "violent extremism" is described as the increased willingness to use violence (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 7). Both concepts are linked to the gradual adoption of extreme beliefs and attitudes, yet it remains unclear how these two forms of extreme attitudes differ. Furthermore, the embedded logic suggests a linear causal pathway of radicalisation to terrorism processes in which it is implied that violent behaviour is a consequence of upholding extreme attitudes for very long.

The document does not specify the difference between extreme attitudes and extreme behaviours, making these terms presumed self-evident. This is further compounded by how the term "terrorism" is undefined in the action plan, albeit the words "terror", "terrorist", and "terrorism" appear 113 times in the document. Consequently, the terminology applied here is mooted towards implicature, with sufficient confidence that the reader will know what these words mean.

From definition to conceptualisation, violent extremism is described as the result of negative psychological and emotional developments, as seen in the excerpt below:

> Whether a person ends up with a substance abuse problem, as a criminal or violent extremist, usually happens by chance and depends on 'who gets to you first' The common denominator is vulnerability; therefore, good preventive measures are usually general measures. (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 8)

Accordingly, this policy document associates violent extremism and terrorism with issues of individual and psychological vulnerability. The discursive practice of relating individual vulnerability to terrorism occurs at the expense of critical discussions about the political and social factors related to terrorism. There are references to social grievances and political motivations as causes of terrorism, but these are given significantly less substance than the vulnerability perspective:

> However, general political motives alone cannot explain why a few individuals become radicalised, while the majority do not, despite similarities in background and political involvement. (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 10)

Fundamental to the above statement is arguably a depoliticised and individualised understanding of what drives people towards violent behaviour. On the one hand, post-war European terrorism is recognised through political motives in this document, with claims that terrorism was historically carried out by "activists who have resorted to violent methods to achieve their political goals" (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 9). Contrastingly, contemporary terrorism, especially Islamic terrorists, are described as marginalised and excluded individuals who have decided that "violent radical groups offer an easy answer to the complex challenges they face" (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 10). The embedded logic in these assumptions seems to reduce the "political" element. As noted by Mattsson (2018), the problem with depoliticised assumptions is that they do not address the structural motivations for groups utilising terroristic violence, motivations which may therefore persist, ultimately enabling continued recruitment to political violence.

Moving further, we might see this framing of "old" and "new" terrorism as ideological in itself, in the sense that it evokes certain value systems about what are more or less legitimate forms of political struggle. Questions concerning old versus new terrorism have been discussed vigorously among scholars. The empirical literature does not give rise to the new terrorism thesis where contemporary terrorists are seen as barbaric and religious fundamentalists (Sjøen, 2020). However, framing terrorism as religiously motivated violence can be an effective way of promoting value systems in an attempt to mobilise social support for security policies. After all, threats are perceived as threatening because of our values and fears of loss. In the action plan, there are several mentions of how Islamic fundamentalism is an existential threat to safe democratic living with the risk assessment of terrorism mainly stemming from "groups inspired by extreme Islamist ideologies" (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 8).

In the document, political and social grievances are not explicated as social problems that should be addressed in their own respect, but rather as a challenge that terrorists can misuse for their own objectives. Regarding the role of state-driven terrorism and foreign policy as political violence and terrorism catalysts, the former is not addressed in the document, while the latter is described as follows:

> There are those who believe that the West is operating with a double standard, which has been seen as an important driving force behind further radicalisation (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, pp. 24–25)

This statement suggests that the potential provocative and suppressive role of Western foreign policy or military invasions is a matter of "belief". As the above might indicate, this can be read as a presupposition containing political dismissal of social grievances, discrimination, and power abuse carried out by Western states.

The preventive logic embedded in this policy is geared towards so-called "soft" counterterrorism, describable as preventive objects, events, or ideas that are placed on the "outside" of harder military or policing strategies. This position is explicated by the claim that, in Norway, violent and extreme views should foremost be "combated with words" (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 5). Educators are described as important preventive actors within this softer counterterrorism, as "School staff will usually notice children and adolescents with problems, because they meet these children every day" (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 22).

The impetus of soft counterterrorism is further confirmed by the claim that at-risk and vulnerable students should be motivated for active democratic citizenship (Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2010, p. 12). Accordingly, there are several intertextual connections to how a democratic society – characterised by an inclusive educational system, labour mobility, and welfare facilities – may serve as a bulwark against individual vulnerability as a threat to homeland security.

To summarise, while this action plan appears to individualise and, thus, downplay the social and political factors that can motivate individuals' engagement in terrorism, the main assumption underlying the policy is that security governance in schools should be applied within democratic educational frameworks that emphasise active citizenship and inclusion.

From safety through citizenship to security through educational vigilance

In 2011, Norway experienced one of the deadliest right-wing terrorist attacks after the World War II, prompting a proliferation of local and national policies on the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism (Jore, 2020). As a follow up to the 2010 policy document explored in the prior section, the Norwegian government released another policy in 2014: an action plan that built on its predecessor, but also claimed to provide a more dynamic approach to security governance suitable for the "fluid nature of extremism" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 9).

This revised policy was accompanied by 30 specific sectorial security strategies, many of which were aimed at professionals, including school staff. The specificity used for instructing prevention measures suggests greater urgency compared with the previous action plan, where violent extremism was framed as a problem that should be prevented through a well-functioning democratic welfare society.

Despite calling for greater social vigilance, the 2014 action plan shares some similarities with its predecessor. It maintains the definition of "radicalisation", describing it as a "process whereby a person increasingly accepts the use of violence to achieve political, ideological or religious goals" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 7). The term is described as the gradual adoption of extreme beliefs and attitudes. Violent extremism is otherwise reappraised in this document, where it is described as "activities of persons and groups that are willing to use violence in order to achieve their political, ideological or religious goals" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 7). This marks a definitional demarcation between "radicalisation" and "violent extremism", where the former is associated with attitudes, while the latter is viewed as behavioural phenomena.

On closer reading, the 2014 action plan is still characterised by some conceptual ambiguity. For instance, the document refers to both "Islamic extremism" and "violent extremism", which may reveal a linguistic inconsistency. Here the consistency lies in how the document does not make explicit how "Islamic extremism" differs from "radicalisation" or "violent extremism". Perhaps this relates to the previously mentioned political evaluation that contemporary Islamic extremism is essentially more violent and illegitimate than other forms of political violence. This is further compounded by the fact that the term "terrorism" remains undefined, although the document notes that terrorism is the "most extreme consequence of radicalisation and violent extremism" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 5). In other words, vaguely bounded concepts also characterise this policy document.

The 2014 action plan maintains the impetus of soft counterterrorism aimed at strengthening resilience factors among people and groups. Educators are manifested in the document as important preventers of extremism, particularly through their roles in safeguarding students. Steering young lives away from antisocial behaviours and towards the labour market is the main neoliberal and security objective of schools, as the policy plan describes that counterterrorism is the same as preventing general crime (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 13). The policy document resembles key assumptions that are present in the 2010 action plan as marginalisation, social exclusion, and vulnerability issues are described as causes of terrorism. That is, the discursive

practice is mooted towards the framing of individualism and psychopathology as root causes of violent extremism and terrorism.

While limited attention is directed at kinship and social ties in describing radicalisation processes, the 2014 action plan includes what appears to be greater acknowledgement of social media and geopolitical circumstances as factors of terrorism:

> Norway's foreign policy and security policy has resulted in changes in our potential enemies. In addition, threats have increasingly been aimed at Norway and Norwegian authorities (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 9)

However, the document contains a similar political evaluation as its predecessor where socio-political grievances are not necessarily seen as a problem that should be addressed in their own respect, but as problems that terrorist groups can take advantage of.

Early interventions aimed at young people are one of the main preventive strategies described in the 2014 document. This would again suggest that educators are framed as important security actors. However, this policy goes further in describing the preventive responsibility that was prescribed to educators in the 2010 action plan. For instance, the revised action plan places instruction on the educational authorities to develop specific teaching resources for use in lower and upper secondary schools (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 19). The specific instruction to develop curriculum activities might be seen as a prelude to the securitisation of the curriculum in 2020.

Moving from teaching resources to safeguarding practice, numerous mentions in the document urge first-line practitioners to be observant of vulnerable students. Emphasis on the need to report concerns to relevant authorities such as the police and security services is also increased. Conveying concern about vulnerable people to the police and the security services is discursively framed within a social welfare logic, which is based on the premise of having the interest of the individual student at heart.

Still, a case could also be made regarding the ideological effect of these language choices might normalise the vigilant surveillance of young people. One example of urging surveillance is found when reading the document's proposed early signs of violent extremism, which include descriptions such as "fascination for violence", "change of apparel", "lack of interest in school and homework", and "altered social network" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014, p. 29). This policy appears to construct a normative perspective through which vigilant surveillance directed at students is sanitised. Seemingly, this document combines preventive logic from soft and hard counter-terrorism, while drawing intertextual links between democratic citizenship and security governance.

Towards a comprehensive securitisation of the Norwegian educational system

In 2020, the Norwegian government revised the 2014 action plan, releasing a new policy that added 45 sectorial preventive strategies to meet the complex nature of terrorist threats. When launching this policy, the national security services had presented annual threat assessments stating that Norway would "likely" be struck by Islamic terrorism. Accordingly, this action plan was released during a period characterised by great political urgency to ensure homeland security.

The 2020 action plan introduces its principal objective described as increasing knowledge and competence about violent extremism, while strengthening collaboration and coordination between preventive actors and sectors in Norway and internationally (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 5). This policy upholds the "soft" preventive descriptions articulated in previous action plans usually related to mechanisms of social welfare, yet it also makes a shift emphasising targeted interventions aimed at people already engaged in high-risk or extreme behaviours. The document accentuates a discursive change from describing the need to "prevent" extremism through social welfare mechanisms, to "counter" extremism through targeted and potentially harder security measures.

The security document resumes previous moral evaluations related to the preventive capacities of a well-functioning democratic welfare system. For instance, the political framing of terrorism remains mooted towards dichotomous structures, where terrorism is portrayed as a battle between "good" and "evil". This is exemplified with statements like: "Unfortunately, there are people and groups which do not end up about our open, democratic and free societies" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 2). Linguistically, the document includes various metaphors that highlight this urgency, for instance by framing counterterrorism as an existential struggle for democracy through statements like: "The fight against radicalisation and violent extremism must be waged on several fronts" (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 2).

This document mirrors parts of its predecessors' poorly bounded "radicalisation" and "violent extremism" descriptions, and the term "terrorism" remains undefined. Moreover, the dominant cause of violent extremism and terrorism remains individual vulnerability, with intertextual links being drawn between extremism and psychological health problems. However, there seems to be greater recognition of the role of kinship and social factors in explaining why some individuals become involved in extremism:

> Radicalisation can occur among friends and family in the private sphere, but it can also occur through people with ambitions to reach individuals they do not know. (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 9 [authors' translation])

Preventing the marginalisation of young lives is given particular attention in this document, and naturally, the preventive role of schools is maintained. There is also a greater emphasis on curricular activities, with the development of specific teaching resources being reportedly highly prioritised. Another significant change in the 2020 policy document compared with its predecessors is the expansion of the role of the educational system in Norwegian counterterrorism field. Notably, the preventive expectations are widened, with the authorities describing the need to develop preventive resources for use in kindergartens (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 17). Furthermore, the document refers to a list of security instructions that have been sent to higher education institutions in Norway (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 38). Hence, this policy has incorporated the entire Norwegian educational system in its national efforts to prevent violent extremism and terrorism.

A key factor for preventing terrorism is understanding international political circumstances suggesting that global developments are framed as important for the challenge of violent extremism at local levels (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 10). Western foreign policy remained unscrutinised regarding their potential to fuel recruitment to violent groups. In fact, Western military invasions are described as crucial in the global war against terrorism (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 40). Perhaps this stance is indicative of a tendency to return to military power as a catalyst of counterterrorism, which dominated security geopolitics post-9/11.

Overall, this document conveys greater urgency regarding the use of the educational system to prevent violent extremism. These developments could imply that the traditional role of the school system in educating and safeguarding students is no longer regarded as sufficient for preventing terrorism in Norway. Moreover, the role of first-line worker surveillance seems reinforced, with several mentions of an online communication link where these professionals should report their concerns (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020, p. 5).

Discussion: state-centric and individualised security discourses

Our study indicates that the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field is characterised by a simplistic and normative implicit security logic. Despite the acknowledged scholarly complexity of terrorism as a social phenomenon, the analysis shows that, in Norwegian policy, terrorism-related preventive reasoning often inclines towards state-centric and individualised explanations. Moreover, security discourses in Norway portray contemporary terrorism within a binary moral

understanding that feed into the categorisation of "good" and "evil". This binary moral evaluating discourse sees security governance as mainly part of a battle between Western democracy and Islamic fundamentalism, although the threat of right-wing terrorism is also increasingly acknowledged in recent years.

One of the most prominent discursive features in the counterterrorism policy field is negligence to define or explicate the concept of "terrorism". It is unclear whether this neglect is because the policy field assumes that readers will automatically know what is meant by this word, or if it is a question of "strategic avoidance of explicitness" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 60). There might be reason to believe that defining "terrorism" in policy would be problematic as many governments would risk finding their own actions labelled as terroristic violence. Implicature can also serve political and normative ends by calling for an unspoken understanding to justify policy actions. On this note, while there are political and ontological obstacles to defining terrorism-related concepts (Jackson, 2008), in a preventive sense, it would make sense to distinguish key issues from each other as this may allow for conceptualising more precise countermeasures.

Although there is much ambiguity surrounding the concepts that are used in the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field, schools are discursively framed as important social fields in these security documents. In particular, studying the action plans launched in 2010, 2014, and 2020 chronologically reveals the increasing political urgency in which security governance is manifested in school and education. At least two important issues arise that exemplify this. The first is how security governance in education is gradually expanded from detailing primary and secondary schooling in 2010, to incorporating the entire educational system including Norwegian kindergartens and higher education institutions in 2020. Moreover, educational prevention is widened from initially describing safeguarding vulnerable students, to increasingly also instructing the development of curricular activities. Perhaps this serves as part of the agenda-setting process that led to the securitisation of counterterrorism objectives in the renewed Norwegian curriculum.

Secondly, there is increasing encouragement to use surveillance and profiling strategies against vulnerable and at-risk individuals and groups. Larsson (2017, p. 105) describes such vigilant surveillance as:

> [A] little security nothing, vigilant surveillance is also a practice which is put in place relatively unnoticed via a myriad of decisions, work strategies, administrative moves, marketing plans, and so on. It is an ongoing, evolving, largely unquestioned and often obscured process, rather than a single, exceptional, rupturing "events"

While there are few implicit "exceptional rupturing" events in these action plans, the growing encouragement to use surveillance strategies marks a pre-emptive turn in which security governance in school is moved into the sphere of pre-crime (O'Donnell, 2018). This is manifested discursively through sanitised vocabulary where the construction of suspiciousness is normalised and justified by creating intertextual links between pedagogical safeguarding and surveillance. Educational safeguarding, which is conventionally applied to ensure the well-being of students, may become recontextualised to secure society from the threat posed by young individuals (Mattsson, 2018; Mattsson et al., 2016).

A potential consequence of such social change is that hegemonic security discourses can lead to an understanding that violent phenomena are problems for oppositional young individuals. O'Donnell (2017) claims that the problem with this vulnerability thinking is that the vigilance that underlies it could render almost any youth behaviour, speech or expression of identity as a risk sign of violent extremism. Mattsson (2018) argues that this security logic is resonant with instructive modes of education, resembling a pedagogy of control more than of emancipation. Empirical research supports the notion that urging educators to perform vigilance surveillance in their classrooms increases the likelihood of silencing students from fear that they are associated with terrorism (O'Donnell, 2017, 2018). This adds to the risk of a potential recontextualisation of security governance that may cause harmful and exclusionary practices by urging school staff to profile and report students to authorities.

Examination of the documents also revealed what Ford (2019) calls an orthodox rejection of state-centric violence as terrorism. Sukarieh and Tannock capture this political rejection pointedly:

> Moreover, radicalisation and violent extremism are terms that only apply to opponents of Western states and international organisations: US drone strikes that kill civilians around the world, or IMF structural adjustment programmes that severely undermine public well-being, can never be examples of violent extremism, while the terrorist attacks that might respond to such actions and programmes inevitably are. (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018, p. 9)

As noted by Jackson (2008, p. 3), there is something morally suspicious about people making laws that apply to everyone else except themselves. Moreover, depoliticised terrorism discourse may hinder constructive educational descriptions and explanations of the social phenomenon at which they point. After all, educational institutions ought to create open spaces for dissent, listening and complexity in the classroom (O'Donnell, 2018). There are, rightly so, increasing references to socio-political factors that motivate terroristic behaviours, yet these are mainly highlighted to show how terrorist groups use unfavourable social conditions in their propaganda and recruitment strategies.

Conclusion

In this paper, we scrutinised the Norwegian counterterrorism policy field in an attempt to explicate how schools are manifested in security discourses. This research yielded important findings on an understudied educational subject, yet the implications of the study need to be considered against its limitations, to avoid over-generalising the results. The scale and nature of this research, including the selective reading of security policies, limits the impact of any conclusions that are drawn here.

Our analysis of the security policy field in Norway offers several ethical and practical contributions that may represent challenges for school staff. First, the renewed Norwegian curriculum is characterised by its "implicature", which raises important questions regarding what should be prevented and how it should be prevented in Norwegian schooling. While security discourses in Norway are heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory, the dominant discourse in this policy domain represents terrorism as an individualised and depoliticised issue. Furthermore, the inherent focus on individual vulnerabilities risks normalising the surveillance of students by encouraging educators to act out a "better safe than sorry" securitised pedagogical approach.

Based on this study, we speculate that the security discursive order might colonise the democratic educational discursive order. This is demonstrated by the increasing political framing of vulnerable and at-risk students as subject to security interventions including the use of surveillance, profiling, and control mechanisms. We may, therefore, further speculate that this potential recontextualisation can cause educators to struggle to navigate between a discourse of educational inclusion and support, from the dominant logic of the security discourse that frame vulnerable students and in particular Muslim students as risk groups. A crucial issue is whether this security discourse can oppose democratic educational values in Norway.

There are well-grounded concerns that the enactment of security governance in European prevention policies and curriculums can cause harmful pedagogical practices (Mattsson, 2018). Surprisingly, the securitisation of Norwegian schooling has met limited criticism from educational scholars and practitioners. Instead of accepting potential security objectives in education, we believe that one of the most promising conflict-reducing curricular activity that Norwegian school staff could and should undertake is teaching and safeguarding the well-being of their students.

Disclosure statement

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