



ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF RADICALIZATION PROCESSES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Jihadist terrorism has become one of the principal challenges facing the international community. Terrorist organizations such as Daesh have succeeded in persuading thousands of followers to travel to Syria and Iraq in order to join their ranks. Indeed, it can be regarded as one of the few terrorist organizations that has been able to capitalize effectively on new technologies to recruit and indoctrinate individuals who, in some cases, have no prior connection to Islam.

Radicalization, and particularly online radicalization, is considered one of the major concerns of democratic states due to the specific difficulties involved in the commission, detection, and prevention of criminal activities through new technologies, especially via the Internet.

It is therefore evident that the ability to identify typical patterns of behavior is of crucial importance for both prevention and intervention. Accordingly, this paper proposes a "guide" outlining the most relevant elements to be taken into consideration. In addition, a more in-depth approach will be adopted with regard to crimes linked to indoctrination, including an analysis of their jurisprudential development.

2. TERRORIST RADICALIZATION AND THE CRIMINAL CODE

The terrorist phenomenon has evolved over the last one hundred years and, in parallel, so has the legal classification of terrorism as a criminal offense. Nevertheless, it has consistently been regarded as an extremely dangerous and harmful form of conduct against the rule of law and against citizens' fundamental rights and public freedoms. However, since the historical evolution of anti-terrorist legislation does not constitute the object of this study, the analysis will focus exclusively on the current legal framework designed to combat this form of violence.

Terrorist offenses are regulated in Chapter VII ("On terrorist organizations and groups and terrorist offenses") of Title XII, entitled "Offenses against public order." This section will focus specifically on offenses related to terrorist recruitment and training.

2.1. Offenses of membership in a terrorist group or organization (Arts. 571 and 572 of the Criminal Code)

Before addressing the typical conduct involved, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by a “terrorist group” and a “terrorist organization.”

A “terrorist group” is defined as “the association of more than two persons who, without meeting one or more of the characteristics of the criminal organization defined in the preceding article, has as its purpose or objective the concerted perpetration of crimes” (Art. 570 ter of the Criminal Code). By contrast, the Criminal Code provides the following definition of a “terrorist organization”: “a grouping formed by more than two persons on a stable or indefinite basis, who, in a concerted and coordinated manner, distribute different tasks or functions among themselves for the purpose of committing crimes” (Art. 570 bis of the Criminal Code).

Within the offense of membership, two distinct forms of conduct can be identified: mere membership, on the one hand (Art. 572.2 of the Criminal Code), and leadership or direction of a terrorist group or organization, on the other (Art. 572.1 of the Criminal Code).

With regard to the offense of mere membership, it should be noted that it has generated significant controversy in legal doctrine, as it may not easily be understood as an actual “conduct.” Nevertheless, the case law of the National High Court (Audiencia Nacional, hereinafter AN) has clarified this issue. In Judgment SAN 71/2009 of 23 October (TOL 1.761.573; Reporting Judge: Ángel Luis Hurtado Adrián), the court held that such conduct “entails placing oneself at the organization’s disposal,” explaining that “mere formal affiliation is insufficient to satisfy the elements of the criminal offense; a will to collaborate through actions with the activities of a group known to be terrorist is essential.”

As regards the conduct of leadership or direction, this is reserved for the “heads” or “leaders” of the terrorist organization or group.

2.2. Terrorist offenses (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code)

Terrorist offenses may be described as a “catch-all” category due to the wide range of different criminal behaviors encompassed within this provision. First, it must be noted that both the objective and the subjective elements of the offense must be fulfilled; otherwise, the conduct would constitute an ordinary or “basic” offense.

Accordingly, any serious offense may qualify as a terrorist offense provided that it meets the requirements set out in Article 33.2 of the Criminal Code. Serious penalties include:

- a) Reviewable permanent imprisonment.
- b) Imprisonment exceeding five years.
- c) Absolute disqualification.
- d) Special disqualification for a period exceeding five years.
- e) Suspension from public office or employment for a period exceeding five years.
- f) Deprivation of the right to drive motor vehicles and mopeds for a period exceeding eight years.
- g) Deprivation of the right to possess and carry weapons for a period exceeding eight years.
- h) Deprivation of the right to reside in or enter certain places for a period exceeding five years.
- i) Prohibition from approaching the victim or any of the victim’s relatives or other persons determined by the judge or court for a period exceeding five years.

- j) Prohibition from communicating with the victim or any of the victim's relatives or other persons determined by the judge or court for a period exceeding five years.
- k) Deprivation of parental authority.

On the other hand, these serious offenses must affect a specific legally protected interest. The legally protected interests that may be affected include the following: offenses against life or physical integrity; liberty; moral integrity; sexual freedom and sexual integrity; property; natural resources or the environment; public health; catastrophic risk; arson; document forgery; offenses against the Crown; assault; and the possession, trafficking, and storage of weapons, ammunition, or explosives provided for in this Criminal Code, as well as the seizure of aircraft, vessels, or other means of collective or goods transportation.

Finally, such conduct must be committed with one of the following purposes:

“1) To subvert the constitutional order, or to suppress or seriously destabilize the functioning of political institutions or the economic or social structures of the State, or to compel public authorities to perform an act or to refrain from doing so.”

According to case law, subverting the constitutional order is understood as the will to alter or cause the disappearance of an order or way of life within the democratic system of a state governed by the rule of law (Supreme Court Judgment 503/2008, of 17 July).

Moreover, the purpose of suppressing or seriously destabilizing the functioning of political institutions or the economic or social structures of the State, or of compelling public authorities to act or to abstain from acting, was introduced by the reform enacted through Organic Law 2/2015. In the words of Castellví Monserrat (2015, p. 1760), this purpose “overlaps with the interpretation that had previously been given to the aim of subverting the constitutional order.”

“2) To seriously disturb public peace.” According to Castellví Monserrat (2015), this refers to the creation of an atmosphere of fear and anxiety that affects, in a general manner, an indeterminate number of citizens. This, in turn, would endanger the normal functioning of institutions and democratic coexistence itself (Judgment of the National High Court 05/2012, of 6 February).

“3) To seriously destabilize the functioning of an international organization.”

This purpose was introduced by Article 1.1 of Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, equating it with the intent to achieve the same effect with respect to state institutions (Castellví Monserrat, 2015).

“4) To provoke a state of terror in the population or in part of it.” In this instance, the legislator has conflated means and ends. Although it is true that terrorism seeks, through its actions, to generate a situation of fear among the population or a segment thereof, this is done in order to achieve a further objective. Terrorism does not seek to cause terror for terror's sake; rather, terror functions as a tool to exert pressure on governments to accede to its demands (González Vaz, 2021).

2.3. Offenses of recruitment, indoctrination, self-indoctrination, and travel to foreign territory under the control of a terrorist group or organization (Art. 575 of the Criminal Code)

In the offense of passive training, the typical conduct consists of receiving indoctrination or military or combat training, or training in techniques for the development of chemical or biological weapons, or for the manufacture or preparation of explosive, flammable, incendiary, or asphyxiating substances or devices, or those specifically intended for such purposes.

The offense of terrorist self-training was introduced into the Spanish legal system by Organic Law 2/2015, of 30 March. The rationale for criminalizing this conduct refers to the recruitment phenomenon developed by jihadist terrorist organizations, primarily Daesh, and in particular to attacks carried out by the so-called “lone wolves.” Although the new provision sought to adapt to the new reality of jihadist-inspired terrorism, it was strongly criticized by legal doctrine, to the point of earning the label of an “Orwellian thought crime” (Terradillos, B., 2016). As interpreted, this offense of self-training or self-radicalization entails the infringement of numerous fundamental rights, public freedoms, principles, political-criminal values, and procedural guarantees.

The criminal conduct comprises two modalities:

- **Possession.** Possession entails holding or controlling a specific object, which may or may not be inherently dangerous. As noted by Cuerda Arnau and Fernández Hernández (2016), “the possession of dangerous objects is not in itself harmful to legally protected interests, but it is accompanied by a criminal plan (intent) to commit an offense, a plan that must be proven on the basis of objective indicia” (p. 211). In this sense, the legislator considers that possession of this type of terrorist-related material may become dangerous to the legally protected interest. Consequently, the individual must download the content onto their device in cases where it is in digital form, thereby enabling access to the content at any time.
- **Habitual access.** “Access” is understood as visiting a website, without requiring the content to be downloaded onto the user’s device, since otherwise the conduct would fall under the modality of possession.

However, the notion of “habitual” access must be interpreted, in accordance with Cuerda Arnau and Fernández Hernández and Judgment SAN 11/2017 of 17 March, as “reiterated and repeated access, persistent over time,” albeit within a relatively short period.

- **Object of the offense.** The provision establishes that the material to be “consumed” must be of a terrorist nature and, in turn, be suitable for inciting an individual to join a terrorist organization or to collaborate in its objectives. The wording of the provision does not clearly specify what should be understood by such “suitable” material that simultaneously inspires the individual to “join” a terrorist organization or to collaborate in its aims. The direct consequence of this indeterminacy is an infringement of the principle of legality and specificity (*nullum crimen sine lege certa*), whereby “the legislator is prohibited from formulating norms through the use of illustrative lists of facts or cases (...) The obligation of specificity translates into the prohibition of analogy” (Palazzo, 1979, p. 6). Moreover, the provision fails to clarify what type of material is encompassed—whether viewing Daesh or Al-Qaeda magazines is required, or whether merely watching recordings of attacks that are sometimes broadcast by news outlets would suffice—thus generating legal uncertainty (González Vaz, 2021).

- **Subjective element.** The subjective element constitutes the core of this offense and is, without doubt, the aspect that has generated the greatest controversy. According to the literal wording of Article 575.2 of the Criminal Code, the conduct must be carried out with a dual purpose: first, to “train oneself,” and second, to commit terrorist offenses. However, this first purpose (“to train oneself”) has not been correctly interpreted.

The first purpose of the subjective element consists of “training oneself,” but what is meant by “training” or “capacity-building”? The Spanish Royal Academy defines it as “to become fit or capable of something.” This definition is coherent: in accordance with the literal wording of the provision, the law would punish an individual who autonomously becomes fit or capable of committing terrorist offenses at some undetermined point in the future. This, however, is not how jurisprudence and legal doctrine have interpreted the provision.

Case law has equated the concepts of “training” and “indoctrination,” an equation that is particularly problematic. Turning again to the definition provided by the Spanish Royal Academy, indoctrination refers to “the adoption or internalization of ideas or doctrines,” which in this specific context would correspond to radical Salafist ideology. An analogy is therefore being drawn between terms that are not synonymous. Moreover, this analogy operates in *mala partem*, as it harms the individual who may have engaged in habitual access to or possession of terrorist-related content.

Regardless of how socially reprehensible this ideology may be, criminal law cannot punish an individual merely for holding such beliefs. This was expressly recalled by the Supreme Court in Judgment 95/2018 of 26 February, which stated in its legal reasoning that “criminal law cannot prohibit hatred; it cannot punish the citizen who hates.”

It must therefore be stressed that punishing the mere adoption of radical ideas would amount to the criminalization of thought and would inevitably lead to a form of offender-based criminal law (*Derecho Penal de Autor*) (Cuerda Arnau, 2018). This approach has had serious consequences and has already manifested itself in judicial decisions. The National High Court itself stated in Judgment SAN 39/2016 of 30 November that “the individual has adopted the tenets of the Islamic State” in order to conclude that the first purpose of the subjective element of the offense had been proven. In other words, the individual is being punished for adhering to a radical ideology, which may come into conflict with the right to freedom of conscience, ideology, and religion enshrined in Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution (González Vaz, 2021b).

That said, this right comprises two dimensions: an external and an internal one (Díaz Revorio, 2007). With regard to the external dimension, it corresponds to the right to freedom of expression and worship, insofar as it involves the manifestation of one’s beliefs so that others may become aware of them (Valero Heredia, 2013). However, not all expressions are protected by the Constitution. Indeed, the external dimension of freedom of thought finds its limit in public order. Accordingly, when an expression comes into conflict with public order, the right to freedom of ideology in its external dimension, or the right to freedom of opinion, may not be invoked.

However, the same does not apply to the internal dimension. In its internal dimension, the individual has not manifested these thoughts; they remain within the most intimate sphere of the person (Valero Heredia, 2013). Consequently, no legally protected interest is harmed or placed at risk. This internal dimension also coincides with the internal phase of the *iter criminis*, which is not available to the State's *ius puniendi*, since "thought does not constitute a crime." Therefore, this dimension is unlimited (Valero Heredia, 2013) and finds no restriction, as, by virtue of the principle of liability for the act and the principle of culpability, an individual may only be punished for conduct, not for ways of being.

Nor is this the only right infringed by this offense; it also affects several political-criminal principles that are essential to the democratic quality of a state governed by the rule of law.

Punishing the adoption of an ideology that may be considered terrorist also entails attributing guilt without allowing any real possibility of defense. This equivalence between being "radicalized" or "indoctrinated" and being a "terrorist" (Gorjón Barranco, 2018; Pérez Cepeda, 2018) gives rise to a presumption of guilt, as it is the individual who must demonstrate that they are not a terrorist but merely someone who has adopted an ideology. This leads to an inversion of the burden of proof, commonly referred to as *probatio diabolica* (Cobo del Rosal, 2008; Gimeno Sendra, 2015).

As can be observed, if this first purpose is understood as "indoctrination," numerous principles and rights would be severely compromised, potentially giving rise to a form of Enemy Criminal Law (*Derecho Penal del Enemigo*).

It would therefore be more appropriate to adopt a highly restrictive interpretation of the provision, since terrorist activity entails more than the mere sharing of ideas (Supreme Court Judgment 503/2008, of 17 July). Accordingly, the first purpose should be understood as "capacity-building," that is, becoming fit or capable. This term inherently contains an objective dimension, referring to a learning or training process. This interpretation is also more coherent when the second purpose of the subjective element is taken into account. Indeed, once preparation begins, there is already a manifestation in the external world, meaning that the conduct is no longer confined to the internal phase of the *iter criminis*. In this way, the right to freedom of conscience, ideology, and religion enshrined in Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution would be safeguarded.

It should also be recalled that the two purposes are *conditio sine qua non* for one another. This can be illustrated by an example. Consider the case of an individual who wishes to carry out a bombing in the name of Daesh or Al-Qaeda but, unfortunately for them, does not know how to manufacture an explosive device. To that end, the individual decides to consult online magazines or forums available on the Internet, where the steps required to build such a device are detailed.

Once this first purpose has been fulfilled, the analysis turns to the second purpose, namely the commission of terrorist offenses. As noted above, capacity-building is a *conditio sine qua non*; that is, if the individual does not acquire such capacity, the offense cannot be deemed to have been committed. Accordingly, individuals who already know how to commit the terrorist

offense they intend to perpetrate, but who consult Daesh or Al-Qaeda publications out of mere curiosity or interest, must be excluded.

Having made this clarification, it is important to note that not all terrorist offenses are amenable to such capacity-building due to their incompatibility with a learning process.

Therefore, only those terrorist offenses that require a process of training or preparation may fall within the scope of the offense of terrorist self-training. In fact, only the following offenses may be considered susceptible to such a learning process and, consequently, compatible with the offense of terrorist self-training (González Vaz, 2021):

- Offenses against life (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses against sexual freedom and sexual integrity (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses against property (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses against natural resources, the environment, public health, catastrophic risk, and arson (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses of document forgery for terrorist purposes (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses against the Crown (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses of assault and the possession and storage of weapons, ammunition, or explosives (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses involving the seizure of aircraft, vessels, or other means of collective or goods transportation (Art. 573 of the Criminal Code).
- Cybercrime offenses (Arts. 197 bis and ter, and Arts. 264 to 264 quater of the Criminal Code).
- Offenses involving the possession, storage, manufacture, trafficking, and use of weapons and explosive or flammable devices or substances (Art. 574 of the Criminal Code).
- Offense of terrorist financing (Art. 576 of the Criminal Code).
- Offense of collaboration with a terrorist group or organization under Article 577 of the Criminal Code. With regard to the “organization of training activities or attendance at such activities, and the provision of technological services,” these would be compatible with the offense of terrorist self-training, as would active training under Article 577.2 of the Criminal Code, but not forms of collaboration consisting of “surveillance or reporting on persons, assets, or facilities; the construction, adaptation, provision, or use of accommodation or storage facilities; or the concealment, sheltering, or transfer of persons.”

In the offense of travel to foreign territory under the control of a terrorist organization or group, the active subject must travel or relocate to a territory that is under the control of a terrorist organization or group. A paradigmatic example can be found in the cases of Syria or Iraq in recent years, when thousands of individuals sympathetic to Daesh traveled to these territories in order to carry out “jihad” and fulfill what they perceived as their religious duty.

As can be observed, predicting the commission of an offense of terrorist self-training is highly complex. Nevertheless, the consequences of repressing such conduct would be catastrophic for criminal law, just as it would be equally catastrophic to allow the individual to continue along a path of radicalization that could ultimately result in a terrorist attack.

For this reason, and in order to remain fully respectful of the rule of law and its foundational principles, it is considered essential to provide society with a tool capable of detecting whether an individual is radicalized and of assessing the degree of such radicalization.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROTOCOL

With the aim of designing a tool that is as effective as possible for application to individuals who are presumed to be undergoing a process of radicalization, the following protocol has been developed.

Its sole purpose is to determine whether or not an effective capacity-building process is taking place. Where the individual is in the midst of a recruitment process, various factors will be analyzed through a questionnaire, on the basis of which it will be possible to determine the level of risk that a person may be subject to such processes.

Although this questionnaire has been developed exclusively on the basis of existing literature (at the national, European, and international levels), a far more precise assessment could be achieved if access were available to a group of voluntary participants who could objectively be considered to be undergoing such a process. Access to reports concerning individuals who have been charged with offenses related to radicalization would also be required.

This tool has not been designed to be administered as a self-report questionnaire to the individual under assessment, as such individuals would tend to provide responses that could distort the true outcome of the evaluation. Instead, it has been conceived as a simple, direct, and easily applicable instrument. It is primarily intended for use by members of law enforcement and security forces who may have access to more detailed reports on the individual, who may be aware of their criminal background, and who may also be able to conduct the necessary interviews with close associates, from whom a significant portion of the relevant information can often be obtained.

The instrument consists of a multiple-choice questionnaire comprising a total of 33 items, through which it is possible to assess the principal factors that, according to national and international scientific literature, have been identified as the most relevant and determinative when carrying out this type of risk assessment.

A systematic review is required in order to evaluate how and to what extent previous studies have been conducted. To this end, the following objectives are proposed:

- To identify the main characteristics of the studies, including countries, journals, authors, and type of study.
- To determine the scope of these studies and the potential measures derived from their findings.
- To examine the level of interest within the scientific community in exploring the relationship between predisposing factors and radicalization.

For the purposes of this study, a quantitative systematic review of all the relevant literature was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009) and the framework proposed by Pickering and Byrne (2014), with the aim of identifying peer-reviewed articles addressing the detection of potential common factors in processes of

jihadist radicalization. This review involved conducting a series of searches across scientific databases and other sources in order to locate previously published studies on the core topic of this research. Once the studies were identified, a proprietary database was constructed containing all relevant information, thereby enabling an assessment of the state of the art in this field. The use of quantifiable and reproducible methods of this kind is recommended in order to identify potential methodological shortcomings or areas that have not yet been sufficiently explored (Pickering & Byrne, 2014).

4.1. Literature Search and Procedure

The Scopus database was used, as it provides a broad range of scholarly works and facilitates the application of filters that allow for the identification of all relevant articles. A careful selection of the keywords to be used in the search was carried out, as they needed to be as representative of the study as possible. Ultimately, the selected terms were “radicalization” AND “recruitment process.” The terms were entered in English in order to obtain more comprehensive results, which were subsequently refined by language.

When the search terms were applied to any section of the documents, a total of 1,341 articles were retrieved. The first limitation applied was to restrict the search to articles in which the keywords appeared in the title, abstract, or keywords section, thereby reducing the number of results to 69. Subsequently, an additional filter was applied to include only full-text, peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals in either English or Spanish, available in Open Access format, and published within the last five years.

4.2. Selected Variables

The various variables and factors analyzed across the selected articles were organized into categories in order to facilitate comparison between studies. A set of variables was selected as the most appropriate for addressing the objectives of the study. To this end, particular attention was paid to the year of publication, as well as to the characteristics or factors examined in each article, as these elements help to assess the level of scientific interest and the validity of the selected factors.

4.3. RESULTS

4.3.1. Study Characteristics

In order to address the first objective of this review—namely, to identify the most common characteristics and the geographical distribution of the studies—the findings indicate a wide diversity of origins. The reviewed studies come from regions such as Spain (Trujillo, Alonso, Cuevas, & Moyano, 2018; González, Moyano, Lobato, & Trujillo, 2022; Vicente, 2022), the Netherlands (Neve, Weerman, & Eris, 2020; Övet, Hewitt, & Abbas, 2022), Belgium and Italy (Farahbakhsh & Paolucci, 2022), Germany (Odag, Leiser, & Boehnke, 2019; Haq, Shadeed, & Stephan, 2020; Orozobekova, 2021), the United States (Speckhard, Ellenberg, & Baddorf, 2021; Khoo & Brown, 2021), Indonesia (Paripuma, Sarwirini, & Subandi, 2021), Canada (Masys, 2018; Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020), South Africa (Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020), Italy (Tolis, 2019), Australia (Hettiarachchi, 2019; Aytekin, 2019), and North Macedonia (Nacev & Bogatinov, 2018).

This heterogeneous distribution of countries and counterterrorism policies suggests that processes of radicalization and terrorist communication constitute a sufficiently broad and relevant field of study to attract researchers worldwide who are interested in understanding these processes in order to intervene effectively and prevent their undesirable consequences.

In addition to the scientific literature, various protocols issued at both the national and European levels on the prevention of jihadist terrorism were also considered. These include, *inter alia*, Order PCI/179/2019 of 22 February, which publishes the 2019 National Counterterrorism Strategy approved by the National Security Council; the *Protocol for the Prevention of Radicalization and Terrorism in Catalonia* (2017); *Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen* (2017), *Wegweiser – Präventionsprogramm gegen gewaltbereiten Salafismus*; HM Government (2015), *Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism. Statutory Guidance for Channel Panel Members and Partners of Local Panels*; *Departament d'Ensenyament / Departament d'Interior* (n.d.), *Prevention, Detection, and Intervention in Radicalization Processes in Educational Centers*; European Commission (2014), *Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions; and *The Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes* (2013), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

4.3.2. Recruitment Pathways and Tools

The sociocultural and globalized context that has developed over the last decade has facilitated an exponential expansion of recruitment networks and contact channels, driven largely by the use of new technologies and the Internet. In Spain alone, over a six-year period (2013–2019), a total of 44 individuals were arrested for their direct involvement in the recruitment of minors under the age of 18. In many cases, recruitment was carried out through direct contacts or intermediaries who were themselves already undergoing a process of indoctrination. However, significant support was also identified through social media and the Internet, and, to a lesser extent, within the minor's family environment.

Recruitment processes typically unfold gradually, often without the recruited individual becoming fully aware of the process until a final decision is made to join the organization's ranks or to commit some form of terrorist action aimed at causing maximum harm accompanied by fear and terror among the population. Regardless of the specific pathway or mechanism through which recruitment occurs, a number of common elements can consistently be observed. These include behavioral control (to avoid detection during the recruitment process), thought control (through the reconfiguration of the recruit's mindset to facilitate the adoption of new beliefs), control over personal life (manifested in personal, behavioral, and emotional changes), and cognitive control supported by dissociative techniques, which foster isolation from the social and family environment and thereby facilitate the recruitment process.

4.3.2. Protocol Design

Based on the analysis of 19 academic articles and official guidelines, a series of factors and critical points have been identified on which radicalization processes exert a direct or indirect

influence. These points constitute the foundation of the proposed tool, which is intended to generate a numerical score that facilitates understanding the possible stage of the radicalization process in which an individual may be situated. The domains typically affected by such processes were grouped into three categories of factors: socio-cultural and psycho-emotional factors, referring to the social environment and personality; recruitment risk factors, which are the most salient and critical for detecting influence or change; and, finally, factors related to violence, its expression, and its manifestation in any of its forms. All of these factors have been taken into account and are to be assessed in individuals who are considered to be undergoing a radicalization process that has not yet been completed. Consequently, the timing of the assessment may vary considerably, depending on the individual's level of resistance in relation to the aforementioned factors, the degree of contact with the recruiting agent, and the various levels of control exerted over the individual.

The questionnaire is designed to be administered by trained professionals who have access to classified or restricted information (law enforcement agencies, penitentiary institutions, courts of justice, etc.), and who may also have access to information provided or collected through reports submitted via the Ministry of the Interior's website (counterterrorism reporting channels) or through any other ordinary reporting mechanisms. The principal reason for not designing a self-administered questionnaire is the assumption that individuals undergoing an assessment of potential radicalization would tend to provide biased or inaccurate responses, thereby yielding an artificially lower risk index.

As a result, a questionnaire-based assessment instrument was developed, consisting of 33 questions with four possible response options each. Each response is weighted with a different score, proportional to the relevance of the factor being evaluated. The tool thus provides an index of potential radicalization ranging from 33% (values below this threshold are considered indicative of the absence of a radicalization process and therefore lack relevance at this level) to 99% (the highest critical level assessable). The three factors do not include validation or double-confirmation items, as the instrument is not intended to be completed by the individual under investigation but by professionals. The questionnaire comprises 12 items in Factor A, 9 items in Factor B, and 12 items in Factor C, with score ranges of 12–36 points (Factor A), 9–27 points (Factor B), and 12–36 points (Factor C). Responses are categorized as A (+1 point), B (+2 points), and C (+3 points), yielding total scores ranging from 33 to 99. The final score, obtained by summing the weighted responses across all items, constitutes the risk index indicating the likelihood that the assessed individual is, or may become, subject to a process of radicalization.

5. Conclusions and Study Limitations

Based on the index generated by the tool, individuals may be classified as presenting low risk (33%–49%, with a recommendation to review the case after six months), medium risk (50%–66%, with a recommendation to review the case after three months), high risk (67%–82%, with a recommendation for close monitoring of the suspect), or extreme risk (83%–99%, with a recommendation for immediate intervention by law enforcement and security forces).

Almost all of the studies and guidelines analyzed identify a series of common factors that are examined in order to prevent their exploitation in radicalization processes. Nevertheless, new recruitment pathways continue to emerge, often taking time to be identified and mitigated.

The principal limitation of this study lies in the difficulty of accessing the police reports necessary to effectively evaluate and validate the proposed tool or, alternatively, to develop a revised list of assessable factors that may not have been identified in the reviewed literature. Another significant limitation is the relatively small number of convictions and arrests in Spain for the offense of terrorist self-training, compared to the overall volume of criminal cases. In 2020, for example, only 52 such offenses were recorded out of a total of 311,271 convictions, representing merely 0.016% of the total.

Based on the theoretical framework and the results obtained from the bibliographic review conducted, it can be concluded that although numerous studies seek to understand how radicalization and recruitment processes develop, and although several have theorized and analyzed the factors influencing these processes, none has proposed a tool that can function as a diagnostic instrument for identifying whether an individual is immersed in such a process.

For reasons of security and project development, the questionnaire cannot be made publicly available to individuals outside counterterrorism law enforcement and security forces.

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