

**COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIOLENCE:
COGNITIVE DISSONANCE THEORY AND POLARITIES OF DEMOCRACY
MODEL UNDERPINNINGS**

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ABSTRACT

Literature reviewed indicated a lack of empirical studies on why individuals renounce and disengage from acts of violence and terrorism. The studies of Tobor (2014) and Shajkovci (2015) filled that gap and added to the body of global literature on the topic. The purpose of this study was to employ cognitive dissonance theory and polarities of democracy model to offer possible explanations on why individuals may engage in or renounce violence, specifically as it is related to violence in Nigeria, Iraq, and Syria. While actions of all individuals engaged in violence or terrorism cannot be explained through cognitive dissonance and polarities of democracy principles, the discussions in this article may offer invaluable insight for safety and security agencies and policy makers in African countries and the Balkans to advance effective policy initiatives that facilitate and promote disengagement from violence and terrorism. Such understandings may consequently strengthen global counter radicalization and counterterrorism efforts as well.

Keywords: The Balkans, foreign fighters, counterterrorism, Kosovo, Niger Delta, Nigeria, radicalization, terrorism, violence.