

NOVEMBER 2016

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# TURNING POINT

A New Comprehensive Strategy  
for Countering Violent Extremism



COMMISSION COCHAIRS

Tony Blair & Leon Panetta

SENIOR ADVISERS AND COMMISSIONERS

Juan C. Zarate & Farah Pandith

AUTHORS

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**CSIS** | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Thomas J. Pritzker was named chairman of the CSIS Board of Trustees in November 2015. Former U.S. deputy secretary of defense John J. Hamre has served as the Center's president and chief executive officer since 2000.

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Members of the CSIS Commission on Countering Violent Extremism served in an advisory capacity. Their participation and listing herein does not necessarily imply that they, or their institutions, subscribe individually to each and every recommendation or finding in the report.

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## Executive Summary

The United States lost nearly 3,000 lives in the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. On that day, a problem that had been slowly festering and barely noticed in the West broke onto the world stage in a forceful and heart-wrenching way.

Those events and many that would follow have prompted trillions of dollars to be poured into military, law enforcement, and intelligence operations. Yet the problem of violent extremism has grown more severe and urgent. Despite the many efforts to extinguish the flames of violence, new and powerful extremist movements have taken root. Terrorist groups around the world have used technology, the media, religious schools and mosques, and word of mouth to sell their twisted ideologies, justify their violence, and convince too many recruits that glory can be found in the mass murder of innocent civilians.

The spread of extremist ideologies and increasingly frequent terrorist attacks are stoking anxiety and fear across the globe. According to a survey conducted by the Commission on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), people are willing to try just about anything to stop the bloodshed: from military action to stronger border controls and mandatory identification cards to relinquishing privacy and accepting constraints on speech. The increasing potency and reach of terrorist groups—and a sense that governments' response to the threat has been inadequate—is creating deep political divisions and fueling support for populist solutions.

There are no easy solutions to this problem. Neither troops nor police nor economic sanctions alone can address this threat. We cannot close our borders and hope that

the problem goes away. And we cannot abandon our commitment to human rights and freedom of expression in an attempt to quell violent extremism.

Diminishing the appeal of extremist ideologies will require a long-term, generational struggle. The United States and its allies must combat extremists' hostile and apocalyptic world view with the same level of commitment that we apply to dealing with its violent manifestations. We urgently need a new comprehensive strategy for countering violent extremism—one that is resolute, rests in soft and hard power, and galvanizes key allies and partners from government, civil society, and the private sector.

It is time for the U.S. government and its allies to go all in to prevent the radicalization and recruitment of a whole new generation. This is a problem that affects everyone. All segments of society must pull together to defeat this global scourge. Yet, they should not have to do so alone. The U.S. government, its allies, especially from Muslim-majority countries, and the private sector have an essential role to play—providing leadership, political support, funding, and expertise.

The Commission's goal was to clearly articulate what the next U.S. administration, in close collaboration with governmental and non-governmental partners, must do to diminish the appeal of extremist ideologies and narratives. The plan has eight major components:

**1) Strengthening resistance to extremist ideologies:** The international community must forge a new global partnership around education reform to stop the teaching of extremist ideologies in schools. At the same time, we must redouble efforts to enhance respect for religious

diversity, stem the spread of intolerance, and reinforce community resilience to extremist narratives.

- 2) Investing in community-led prevention:** Governments should enable civil society efforts to detect and disrupt radicalization and recruitment, and rehabilitate and reintegrate those who have succumbed to extremist ideologies and narratives. Community and civic leaders are at the forefront of challenging violent extremism but they require much greater funding, support, and encouragement.
- 3) Saturating the global marketplace of ideas:** Technology companies, the entertainment industry, community leaders, religious voices, and others must be enlisted more systematically to compete with and overtake extremists' narratives in virtual and real spaces. It is the responsibility of all citizens to rebut extremists' ideas, wherever they are gaining traction.
- 4) Aligning policies and values:** The United States should put human rights at the center of CVE, ensuring that its engagement with domestic and foreign actors advances the rule of law, dignity, and accountability. In particular, the U.S. government should review its security assistance to foreign partners to certify that it is being used in just and sustainable ways.
- 5) Deploying military and law enforcement tools:** The international community needs to build a new force capability and coalition to quickly dislodge terrorist groups that control territory, avert and respond to immediate threats, weaken violent extremists' projection of strength, and protect our security and the security of our allies and partners.
- 6) Exerting White House leadership:** The next administration should establish a new institutional structure, headed by a White House assistant to the president, to oversee all CVE efforts and provide clear direction and accountability for results. The Commission finds that strong and steady executive leadership is essential to elevating and harmonizing domestic and international CVE efforts.
- 7) Expanding CVE models:** The United States and its allies and partners urgently need to enlarge the CVE ecosystem, creating flexible platforms for funding, implementing, and replicating proven efforts to address the ideologies, narratives, and manifestations of violent extremism.
- 8) Surging funding:** The U.S. government should demonstrate its commitment to tackling violent extremism by pledging \$1 billion annually to CVE efforts, domestically and internationally. These resources are meant to catalyze a surge in investment from other governments, the private sector, and philanthropic community.

We can change the course of this threat. Doing so will require aligning all of these pieces into a comprehensive strategy and investing in CVE programs, partnerships, and policies at scale and over the next decade or more.

## Letter from the Cochairs

Throughout both of our careers, we have personally witnessed the devastation wrought by violent extremism. The cost measures not only in the lives lost, but also in the profound toll it has taken on our sense of security, societal cohesion, and international norms and values. Since September 11, 2001, efforts to combat terrorism have been far-reaching and mostly effective in preventing another large-scale, complex attack in the United States. Yet, terrorist groups continue to gain strength and spread to new corners of the globe, threatening to derail an entire generation of Muslim youth and destabilize every country on earth.

Current approaches are insufficient to cope with this intensifying threat. We urgently need a new paradigm—one that recognizes violent extremism as the global, generational challenge that it is and leverages all tools available to defeat it. In this fight, military and law enforcement solutions are essential. We will need to continue to take terrorists off the battlefield, disrupt plots, and safeguard our borders. But we will never eradicate the violence caused by these groups until we defeat their ideologies.

We must be clear-eyed about the nature of the enemy. This Commission focused on terrorist organizations that claim the religion of Islam as their motivating source and to justify their nefarious goals. Due to their perversion of Islam and their targeting of Muslims as both recruits and victims, a peaceful and honorable religion is under attack. This is an ideological threat that requires a confident and robust response from the West and our Muslim allies. We also need civil society and the private sector to step up and challenge extremist narratives. The United States must lead but cannot face this challenge alone.

We are at a turning point. Continuing to address extremist ideologies sporadically and on the cheap guarantees that terrorist attacks—and the related bloodshed—will continue indefinitely. To defeat the scourge of violent extremism, the United States and its allies need a new comprehensive strategy that has weight, is capable of building the right alliances, and can be a practical guide for policymakers. This report offers such a strategy, so that nations, faiths, and cultures can live in peace and stability with each other, and so that our citizens can live free from the fear of terrorism that has taken the lives of so many innocents.

## Purpose and Process

In the fall of 2015, CSIS president and CEO John J. Hamre asked us to chair a Commission that would produce an innovative CVE strategy for the next U.S. administration.

This bipartisan Commission, managed by Shannon N. Green, senior fellow and director of the CSIS Human Rights Initiative, was composed of 23 public- and private-sector leaders from technology companies, civil society, the faith community, and academia. Juan Zarate and Farah Pandith were central to this effort. Serving as senior advisers and commissioners, they lent their tremendous expertise, historical knowledge, energy, and passion to shaping the Commission's analysis and recommendations.

Since its public launch in February 2016, the Commission met six times—in February, June, September, and November in Washington, D.C., in March in New York City, and in April in Silicon Valley—and consulted with more than a hundred experts and practitioners throughout the United States, Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The Commission's consultations were

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augmented by extensive research and a survey conducted in China, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

The report generated through this process provides an actionable blueprint for the next administration on how to effectively combat the growing blight of violent extremism within the United States and abroad. We endeavored to chart a clear path forward for the incoming U.S. president, a way of overcoming the deep divisions that have plagued CVE efforts. Following a diagnosis of the challenge, the report outlines a comprehensive strategy, combining bolstered investments in soft power with sustained military and law enforcement efforts. To implement this strategy, the report calls for a major infusion of resources, strong and steady U.S. leadership, and an expansion of public-private partnerships to scale up proven CVE interventions. Not all of the commissioners agreed with every recommendation in this report. However, overall, this document represents a consensus view of the challenge that we face and how best to combat it.

While the primary audience is the U.S. government, we anticipate that the ideas presented in the report will also resonate with other governments, the private sector, and civil society. It is our sincerest hope that this report leads to more effective and robust CVE policies and programs, ultimately helping prevent future terrorist attacks and giving individuals and communities the tools they need to reject the siren call of extremism.

**COCHAIRS**

**TONY BLAIR**, *Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom*

**LEON PANETTA**, *Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and Former Secretary of Defense*



# INTRODUCTION

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Fifteen years after September 11, 2001, violent extremism has spread, gained favor among a new generation, and now casts an ever-larger shadow over the globe.<sup>1</sup> From all corners of Africa to Europe, from the Caucasus to South and East Asia, from North to South America, the threat of violent extremism continues to evolve in real and virtual spaces, enticing thousands of recruits and inciting the sympathies of many more.

In one day in February 2016 alone, the Center for Religion and Geopolitics recorded terrorist incidents in Syria, suicide attacks in Cameroon, roadside bombs in Somalia, the destruction of a girls' school by the Taliban in Pakistan, the ghastly decapitation of a Hindu priest in Bangladesh, the arrest of suspected terrorists in Indonesia, Islamic State (ISIS) beheadings of alleged spies in Egypt, operations against al Shabaab in Kenya, concerns about al Qaeda-linked violence in Mali and Burkina Faso, arrests in Russia connected with terrorism, and moves to overcome extremism and establish peace in the Philippines.

The repercussions of violent extremism are acute and wide-ranging. Humanitarian crises, persecution of human rights defenders, destruction of sacred historical and cultural sites, threats to religious diversity, eradication of educational and development gains, and fear and insecurity in communities are all exacerbated by the spread of extremist ideologies. Today's catastrophic global refugee and migrant crisis—resulting in an unprecedented 65 million people displaced—has largely been driven by state violence alongside the

rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Violent extremists are even altering the political landscape and erasing national borders, and in so doing, destroying evidence of people, history, and cultures that threaten their world view.<sup>2</sup>

## The Nature of the Threat

A major political fault line for CVE has been what to call the threat we are facing. Some argue vociferously for using language like "radical Islamic extremism" to describe the phenomenon and its connection to Islam. Others argue equally passionately that a lexicon that uses Islamic terms is deeply problematic because it can cause confusion; alienate critical partners and allies; reduce complex religious concepts to narrow, typically negative associations with violence; and lend support to terrorists' claims to legitimacy.

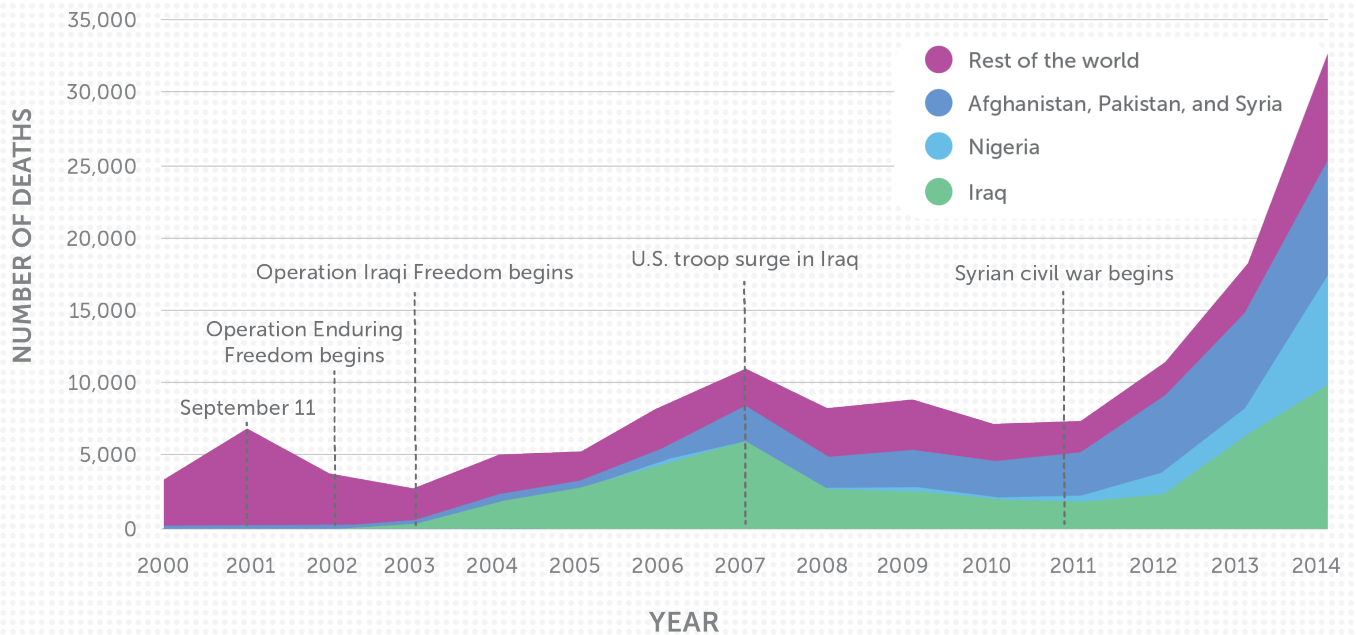
In determining what language to use throughout this report, the Commission was guided by three principles: 1) the need to be explicit about the nature of the enemy and ideologies we are confronting at home and abroad; 2) the need to appeal to partners who are instrumental in advancing our common goals; and 3) the need to ensure that we do not reinforce narratives put forth by our adversaries.

Therefore, throughout this report, we use the general term "violent extremism" to refer to the subset of violent extremist organizations that claim the religion of Islam as their motivating source and to justify their nefarious goals, and the term "extremist" to describe the ideologies and narratives deployed by these groups. Although there is

<sup>1</sup> Tony Blair, former prime minister of the United Kingdom (remarks at "CSIS Commission on Violent Extremism," CSIS, Washington, DC, February 23, 2016, <https://www.csis.org/events/csis-commission-countering-violent-extremism>).

<sup>2</sup> Farah Pandith and Juan Zarate, "Winning the War of Ideas," in *Global Forecast 2016*, ed. Craig Cohen and Melissa Dalton (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2015), [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/151116\\_Cohen\\_GlobalForecast2016\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/151116_Cohen_GlobalForecast2016_Web.pdf).

# DEATHS FROM TERRORISM SINCE 2001



Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database. Retrieved from <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

**“Violent extremists are altering the political landscape and erasing national borders, and in so doing, destroying evidence of people, history, and cultures that threaten their world view.”**

great diversity among such violent extremist groups, the general features of their ideologies include:

- A willingness to use force and violence to return society to “a pure form” of Islam and create their version of an ideal global community;
- Declaring Muslims who do not share this vision as “unbelievers,” subject to torture or death;
- Appropriating Islamic texts, teachings, and traditions to justify their rule and support their narratives; and

- Selectively using theology to legitimize violence and compel “true believers” to target their governments, Western powers, and even civilians.

The Commission focused its analysis and recommendations on this form of violent extremism as it presents the most immediate transnational and national security threat to the United States, its allies, and communities across the globe. Groups like ISIS, al Qaeda, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and others are unique in their global ambition: they seek to reshape borders; define the identity and beliefs of Muslims around the world; undermine international values; and normalize abhorrent behavior like human slavery, rape, and wanton violence against civilians. In pursuit of these goals, violent extremists specifically target Muslims to fill their ranks and incite conflict around the world.

The Commission noted that these terrorist organizations do not operate in a vacuum—they derive strength and momentum from other extremist groups, including on the right and the left. Thus,

while focusing on violent extremists that claim to represent or draw inspiration from Islam, this report offers broader recommendations for addressing growing intolerance and hatred.

## The Origins of Extremist Ideologies

Modern extremists’ world view did not just appear out of the blue. It has been deliberately cultivated and spread for many decades. As many Arab and Muslim-majority states throughout the twentieth century transformed into secular military dictatorships, social movements of various stripes competed to define the relationship of Islam to the state. This precipitated the emergence of Islamic religious ideologies designed to provide direction and morale to the faithful in the form of highly charged, powerful oversimplifications.

Early on, the religious establishment played a central role in trying to put forth a blueprint for sociopolitical change. Clerics such as Muhammad Abduh, Rashid



TONY BLAIR, COCHAIR

Rida, Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani sought to redefine the mission of Islam in the modern world. These thinkers thought primarily in terms of religious and intellectual reform, not organized resistance. Their call to arms was not jihad but *ijtihād*, the unmediated interpretation of Islamic scripture for the purpose of freeing modern Muslims from medieval presuppositions they saw as holding Muslims back. However, their failures, both real and perceived, saw them soon outflanked by the rise of Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jamaati Islami, and the Liberation Party (*Hizb al-Tahrir*). While not completely abandoning reform, these movements assigned greater priority to acquiring political power. They saw Muslim states' abuse of power as the source of the problem and sought to bring about change outside of the system, by force if necessary.

Commissioners hold different perspectives about the relationship between today's violent extremist organizations and these early Islamic movements. Some commissioners draw a direct link between the Muslim Brotherhood and its ilk, arguing that contemporary terrorist groups like ISIS, al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and others are the logical outgrowth of their political agenda and intolerant world view. For these commissioners, it is impossible to separate the ideology espoused by these groups and violence. The violence has its roots in extremists' core belief that everything should be subordinated to their ideology and that those who do not share it are misguided and should be forced to accept it. For example, the kidnapping of girls by Boko Haram has its roots in a far more widely shared view that women should be subordinate to men. The idea that cartoon makers should be killed has its roots in the belief that those who print such cartoons

are committing an act worthy of punishment. A recent study points to these linkages. Of a hundred prominent terrorists profiled, over half associated with non-violent extremist groups before joining violent movements.<sup>3</sup> In this light, ignoring the intimate connection between the ideology and violence is a major strategic error.

Others contend that while violence invariably played a role in early Islamic movements' programs, it would be circumscribed by the fact that they had to appeal to society at large to gain acceptance. In this view, violent extremism descends from an entirely distinct artery of Muslim activism. It begins with the wholesale condemnation not merely of Muslim-majority governments but of Muslim society in general. The centrality of excommunication or *takfir* to this ideology can be seen in the name of one of its earliest representatives: *al-Takfir wa al-Hijrah* (Excommunicating and Dissociating from Modern Muslim Society). According to Professor Sherman Jackson, renowned scholar of Islamic thought and culture and commissioner, this is the first step in justifying the most violent and inhumane treatment of adversaries—as apostate traitors to the faith. It also sustains these groups' view that they are the only true representatives of Islam, which they sell to potential recruits who are often starving for absolution, belonging, or identity. On this logic, to oppose these groups is presented as opposing Islam itself. And not to oppose the West is to oppose these groups. In contrast to the religious establishment and earlier Islamic movements who viewed *shari'ah*, at least in theory, as serving society, contemporary violent extremists tend to conceive of *shari'ah* as punitive retaliation against society.

<sup>3</sup> Mubarak Ahmed, Milo Comerford, and Emman El-Badawy, "Milestones to Militancy" (Tony Blair Faith Foundation, Centre on Religion and Geopolitics, April 2016), <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Milestones-to-Militancy.pdf>.

According to these commissioners, violent extremists' pursuit of political power is palpably different from that of the earlier movements, for they have little to no sense of accountability to society at all. It is from this artery (both ideologically and in terms of actual personnel) that later groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS would descend.

Despite these differences, all of the commissioners agree that violent extremism as we experience it today took shape in the crucible of geopolitical and ideological contestation through the second half of the twentieth century. Saudi support of extremism began in the 1960s as an effort to counter the Arab nationalism championed by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The strategy's apparent success in helping contain Nasserism encouraged segments within the Saudi elite, who, in propagating extremist ideas, believed they could control the beast.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, even the Saudis would not be entirely spared the lethal effects of violent extremism. In November 1979, militant groups, led by radical Saudi preacher Juhayman al-Otaybi, seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca and declared the arrival of the Madhi, or redeemer. A spectacular, drawn-out hostage crisis ensued. The "Siege of Mecca" was a harbinger of terrible things to come.<sup>5</sup> The militants' demands—the overthrow of the royal family, ending oil exports to the West, and the imposition of an extreme interpretation of the *sharī'ah*—foreshadowed Bin Laden's demands 15 years later. However, in the aftermath of the siege, instead of changing



LEON PANETTA, COCHAIR

course, Saudi Arabia doubled down, perhaps feeling compelled to demonstrate its religious legitimacy.<sup>6</sup>

Earlier that year, a youth-led revolution in Iran brought a clerical regime to power with its own transnational ideology, threatening to undermine Saudi Arabia's perceived hegemony over the faith.<sup>7</sup> Tehran's strategy of exporting revolution through its own roster of militant groups, notably Hezbollah, would escalate the dangerous proxy war between competing violent extremist groups.

The December 24, 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed the course of history. If Afghanistan proved to be the graveyard of empires, it was also a proving ground for a new generation of violent extremists. Eager to contain communism, the United States and Saudi Arabia poured arms, money, and tactical assistance to Afghan and foreign fighters that flocked to Afghanistan from all over the world. These militants ground down the Soviets, perhaps hastening the end of the Cold War, but their success also raised the profile of an international extremist movement hostile to Saudi Arabia and Western powers.

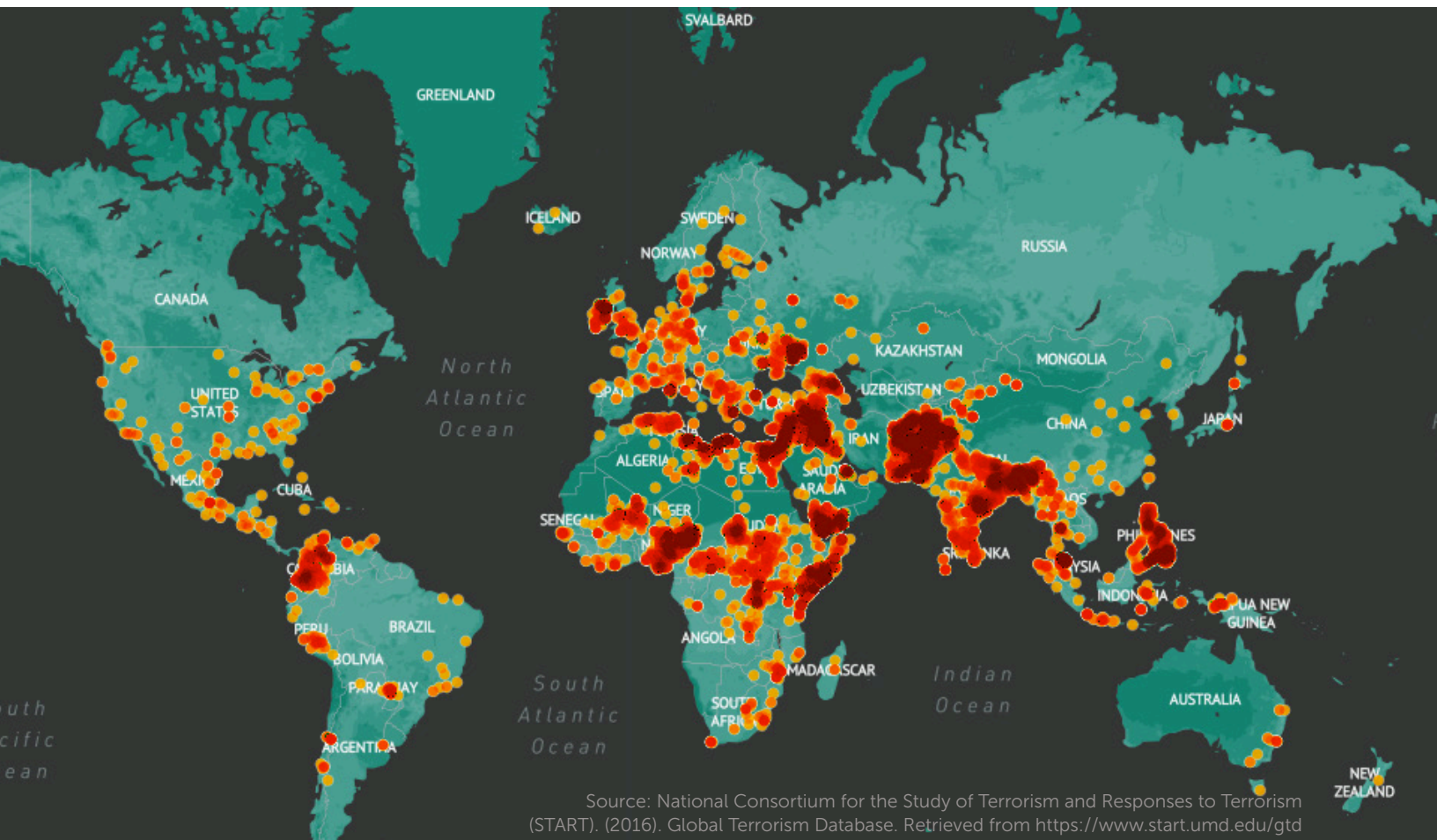
<sup>4</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad, "We Misled You': How the Saudis Are Coming Clean on Funding Terrorism," *Politico*, September 14, 2016, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/saudi-arabia-terrorism-funding-214241>.

<sup>5</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam's Holiest Shrine and the Birth of Al Qaeda* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Anthony F. Roberts (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

# GLOBAL TERROR ATTACKS SINCE 2012



With the Soviets' withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, a global terrorist network emerged. Under the leadership of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda became the refuge for battle-hardened and highly motivated militants from Afghanistan. Al Qaeda would become emblematic of a new breed of terrorism: transnational, well-financed, savvy to the theatrical nature of terrorist tactics, and focused less on Arab autocrats than on the "far enemy." The 1992 bombing in Aden, the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, the 1998 embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the attack on the USS Cole in 2000 all pre-saged the tragedy of September 11.<sup>8</sup>

## September 11, 2001, and beyond

For much of the twentieth century, the spread of extremist ideologies went largely unchallenged by the West. The devastating terrorist attacks of September 11 brought the danger home to the United States, prompting a response that has relied heavily on mil-

itary and intelligence actions as well as policing and defensive measures.

These measures, aimed at thwarting opportunities for terrorists to plan and execute complex attacks on the homeland, included: hardening and expanding physical barriers around sensitive locations and critical infrastructure; improving security procedures and equipment, identity checks, and luggage screening at airports; enhancing detection and screening processes for cargo coming into the United States via sea-ports, land border ports, and mail facilities; strengthening investigation and prosecution capabilities for terrorism-related cases; tightening controls on people entering the United States; and training personnel to effectively implement these measures.

More than 263 government entities were either created or reorganized in response to the September 11 attacks.<sup>9</sup> Chief among them were the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which integrated all or part

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, "A Hidden World, Growing Beyond Control," *Washington Post*, July 19, 2010, <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america/articles/a-hidden-world-growing-beyond-control/print/>.

of 22 different federal departments and agencies to create a more unified approach to safeguarding the United States against terrorism, and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), which centralized and standardized airport security. Intelligence cooperation was bolstered by the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004*, which established the position of director of national intelligence and the National Counterterrorism Center to integrate terrorism-related intelligence.

Internationally, the United States invested vast sums on countering terrorism and building the capacity of partner security and intelligence services. According to estimates, Congress has appropriated \$1.6 trillion to the Department of Defense (DOD) for war-related operational costs since September 11. When combined with an estimated \$123.2 billion for relevant State Department and Foreign Operations, the DOD, Department of State, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have received over \$1.7 trillion for activities and operations since the attacks.<sup>10</sup> This is comparable to more than 10 years of federal funding for education. Likewise, intelligence budgets have significantly expanded. In 2007, Congress appropriated \$43.5 billion to the National Intelligence Program (NIP).<sup>11</sup> Ten years later, the budget requested for the NIP rose to \$53.5 billion.<sup>12</sup>

The massive human and financial resources devoted to security since September 11 have made us safer in some respects. It is more difficult for terrorists to get into the United States and, if they do, harder for them to pull off a complex attack.<sup>13</sup> However, as the U.S. government—and its allies and partners—improved counterterrorism capabilities, terrorists quickly moved to exploit gaps in the response. As David Kilcullen explains, these counterterrorism, law enforcement, and intelligence efforts imposed “strong evolutionary pressure on terrorist organizations,” since a technique that worked once was highly unlikely to work again, at least not in the same form.<sup>14</sup> Terrorist groups adapted by choosing softer targets, conducting less complicated attacks, and relying on decentralized cells and individual actors (so-called “lone wolves”), making it harder for law enforcement to detect and disrupt plots. These groups have also become much more proficient at using social media and modern digital technologies to target recruits, build their brand and market share, and expand their reach globally. The terrorist threat today is therefore more atomized, pervasive, and challenging to counter than it was at the turn of the century.

As a result, the methods the U.S. government has used in the past to prevent large-scale terrorist attacks will likely not be as effective in the future at preventing smaller decentralized attacks.

<sup>10</sup> Susan B. Epstein and Lynn M. Williams, “Overseas Contingency Operations Funding: Background and Status,” Congressional Research Service, July 13, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44519.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “DNI Releases Budget Figure for FY 2017 Appropriations Requested for the National Intelligence Program,” press release, February 9, 2016, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/215-press-releases-2016/1315-dni-releases-budget-figure-for-fy2017-appropriations-requested-for-the-national-intelligence-program>.

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “DNI Releases Budget Figure for National Intelligence Program,” press release, October 30, 2007, [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Press%20Releases/2007%20Press%20Releases/20071030\\_release.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Press%20Releases/2007%20Press%20Releases/20071030_release.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Steven Brill, “Is America Any Safer?,” *Atlantic*, September 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/09/are-we-any-safer/492761/>.

<sup>14</sup> David Kilcullen, *Blood Year: Islamic State and the Failures of the War on Terror* (London: C. Hurst, 2015).

# What is “CVE”?

The field of countering violent extremism emerged from a recognition that military and law enforcement operations are essential to taking terrorists off of the battlefield and disrupting plots, but are insufficient for extinguishing the underlying ideologies and grievances that motivate scores of recruits to join violent extremist groups. The White House reflected this understanding in the 2006 National Security Strategy. The Strategy defined its short-run goals as “using military force and other instruments of national power” to cut off terrorists’ activities and sources of support, while underscoring that in the long run, success would mean “winning the battle of ideas, for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims.”<sup>15</sup>

The competition of ideas would eventually come to be known as CVE.<sup>16</sup> CVE refers to the noncoercive, longer-range tools deployed in an effort to counter extremists’ ideologies and narratives, reducing their appeal and ultimately neutralizing the threat of violence.<sup>17</sup> Initially focused on the ideological dimension, over time, the parameters of CVE have

expanded to address the structural social, economic, and political grievances that can be conducive to terrorist radicalization and recruitment. CVE includes efforts to shrink public support for violent extremist movements; build the resilience of local communities; offer peaceful alternatives to potential recruits; dissuade radicalized individuals from committing criminal acts; and rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals who have either served their prison sentences or are otherwise no longer deemed a security threat. Though the precise definition and boundaries are widely debated, in essence, CVE encompasses a spectrum of interventions aimed at preventing the recruitment and radicalization of individuals into violent extremist organizations.

## The Need for a New Comprehensive Strategy

Despite the security enhancements made in the last 15 years, the United States and its allies do not yet have an effective strategy, with broad bipartisan support, for undermining the appeal of extremist ideologies and narratives and stemming recruitment and mobilization to terrorism. Populist figures on both sides of the Atlantic have taken advantage of this gap—and the fear created by terrorist attacks—to sell their own isolationist remedies. Yet, closing

<sup>15</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2006), 9, <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/nss2006.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> The U.S. government defines CVE as “efforts focused on preventing all forms of ideologically based extremist violence, to include prevention of successful recruitment into terrorist groups. It is distinct from disruptive actions which focus on stopping acts of terrorism by those who have already subscribed to violence.” See U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “A Comprehensive U.S. Government Approach to Countering Violent Extremism,” n.d., <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/US%20Government%20Approach%20to%20CVE-Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> The term “preventing violent extremism,” or PVE, has gained traction, particularly within the United Nations and European countries. For some, PVE suggests a more proactive, longer-term effort to address the underlying conditions and root causes associated with support for violent extremism, whereas CVE is more reactive. The Commission does not see this distinction. For the purposes of this report, CVE is inclusive of preventative efforts at the societal, community, and individual levels.

off our borders will not prevent extremist ideologies from taking hold and inspiring people to commit horrific attacks using any means available. So long as individuals throughout the world are attracted to violent extremist groups and the revolutionary ideologies they espouse, we must continue to use our military, intelligence, and law enforcement capabilities to protect our safety. Until we defeat the ideologies themselves, however, we will not achieve lasting security.

We need a new comprehensive strategy to address the ideological battle with vigor, unity of effort, and persistence over the next generation. Such a strategy must focus on *significantly reducing the number of people worldwide who are drawn to and recruited by violent extremist organizations and ensuring that such groups and their ideologies cannot gain purchase in the United States and around the globe.*

Success will require undermining the appeal and legitimacy of extremist narratives and offering meaningful alternatives to young people so they do not turn to violent extremist movements to find the meaning, belonging, and dignity they seek. This strategy must leverage soft and hard power approaches proportionally and enable the international community to address extremist ideologies and their manifestations directly, consistently, and at scale—outpacing the efforts of violent extremists.<sup>18</sup> By necessity, such an effort must appeal across the political spectrum and attract diverse allies and partners from civil society, the philanthropy community, and the private sector. And it must engender strong leadership from Muslim countries and communities, the vast majority of whom have no sympathy for ISIS, al Qaeda, or any other terrorist organization.

In this report, the Commission offers such a comprehensive strategy, incorporating lessons learned over the past decade and aligning all of the programs, policies, and capabilities that will be needed to transform the conditions and mindset that nourish violent extremist groups. This strategy is based on the following principles:

<sup>18</sup> Soft power refers here to the ability to shape the preferences and choices of others through appeal and attraction rather than by coercion (hard power). The currency of soft power is culture, political values, and foreign policies. See Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004). Also Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye Jr., coauthors, *A Smarter, More Secure America: Report of the CSIS Commission on Smart Power* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2007), [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/media/csis/pubs/071106\\_csissmartpowerreport.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/071106_csissmartpowerreport.pdf).

# VIOLENT EXTREMISM PRESENTS A GROWING GLOBAL THREAT

SEEN AS **MAJOR PROBLEM**

SEEN AS **INCREASING**

## GLOBAL



## CHINA



## EGYPT



## FRANCE



## INDIA



## INDONESIA



## TURKEY



## UNITED KINGDOM



## UNITED STATES





JUAN C. ZARATE, SENIOR ADVISER AND COMMISSIONER

- **Go all in.** The United States and its allies must build an around-the-clock operation to confront violent extremism, with the right personnel, financial support, and accountability structures. To date, CVE has been ad hoc and undervalued compared to the military, law enforcement, and intelligence aspects of the fight. We must significantly increase the resources and attention dedicated to challenging extremists' narratives and creating new pathways for those vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment.
- **Take a global approach.** The threat of violent extremism can be found throughout the world. ISIS is the most recent and brutal manifestation of the problem—but certainly not the last if we do not change course. Even as it focuses on destroying ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the international community must keep pressure on other terrorist groups, including al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Hezbollah, and al Shabaab, which continue to execute devastating attacks. However, combating existing terrorist organizations is not sufficient. We must address the spread of extremist ideologies to Africa, Europe, South and Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, Russia, and elsewhere to prevent terrorist groups from regenerating in new forms.
- **Forge dynamic partnerships.** The nature of the enemy—decentralized, globalized, committed, and crowdsourced—requires intensive and adaptable partnerships between and among governments, the private sector, and civil society. This demands more than sporadic engagements and pilot programs, which have dominated the last decade and a half. Instead, it requires harnessing the talent, expertise, and ingenuity that exist outside of government.
- **Embrace experimentation.** Although we have learned a great deal about how and why extremist ideologies are appealing, terrorists' tactics are constantly evolving. Therefore, rather than searching for a single solution, we must flood the zone with alternative narratives and

ideas, allowing the strongest to win. Programs will not always be successful, but we must encourage calculated risk-taking and innovation, and make a more concerted effort to learn from practitioners' successes and failures. Such an approach requires careful monitoring to ensure that the process is not captured by proponents of the very ideologies that we are trying to defeat.

- **Avoid reactions that play into violent extremists' hands.** Terrorism thrives on a disproportionate response to perceived and real threats. ISIS, for example, has an explicit aim of creating rifts between governments and their people, as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims in Western countries. Attacks provoke fear and often lead to a rise in anti-Muslim sentiment, which terrorist recruiters then exploit. A former al Qaeda recruiter in the United States explained, "radicals and recruiters love Islamophobia. It drives recruitment."<sup>19</sup> In the face of this dynamic, it is important for governments to avoid rhetoric and responses that estrange Muslim communities. In the United States, such an approach would necessitate redoubling efforts to engage with Muslim communities and address their concerns about stigmatization, surveillance, entrapment, and hate crimes. Abroad, this tenet would require the United States to convince its partners to shun counterterrorism approaches that alienate Muslim communities.

<sup>19</sup> Shannon N. Green, executive director, CVE Commission, interview with Jesse Morton, CSIS, June 23, 2016.



# DEFINING THE PROBLEM

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The unique challenges and opportunities facing Muslim youth, who are growing up immersed in social media in the post-September 11 world, make them a particular target for violent extremist recruiters. There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world today—a number that is expected to grow to nearly 2.8 billion in 2050.<sup>20</sup> This increase is due to the youthful nature of the global Muslim population and fertility rates that exceed the world's average. In the Middle East and South Asia, nearly two-thirds of the population is younger than 30 and increasing rapidly.

While the vast majority of Muslim youth are peaceful and hopeful, tectonic cultural, political, and social changes—brought on by September 11 and its aftermath, globalization, the erosion of traditional societies and influencers, the rapid evolution of technology, widespread displacement, and urban migration—have created an opening for violent extremists to shape their world view. These dynamics are expected to transform the trajectory of Muslim-majority and non-Muslim majority countries over the next few decades.<sup>21</sup> If we fail to act, we could lose an entire generation and see communities and countries ripped apart. However, with concerted action and resources behind the strategy proposed in this report, we can dramatically reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies and enable youth to harness their immense potential, advancing prosperity, innovation, and peace within their societies.

This section addresses three questions:

1. *Why do some young people find extremist ideologies appealing?*
2. *What kinds of factors have facilitated the spread of violent extremism?*
3. *What shortcomings inhibit our ability to effectively confront violent extremism, and replicate, scale, and sustain successful interventions?*

## Motivations and Drivers

Violent extremism is not caused by any single factor or grievance. It grows out of an intolerant world view in which violence is the primary medium of exchange and society is a means to an end. That said, nearly 15 years of global research has shed light on why some people are attracted to violent extremism while others are not. Experts have identified intersecting “push” and “pull” factors often operating within fragile, oppressive, or conflicted-affected environments that help to explain this phenomenon. Structural conditions, including real and perceived marginalization, grievances, and experiences of injustice or corruption, may push individuals into joining a violent extremist organization, while radical recruitment narratives, propaganda, and social ties to extremist networks work to pull them in. Psychological factors, such as impulsive, thrill-seeking behavior or a desire to exact revenge or right perceived wrongs, are also thought to play a role in the radicalization process.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Pew Research Center, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050: Muslims,” April 2, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/>.

<sup>21</sup> Kristin Lord, “Here Come the Young,” *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/12/here-comes-the-young-youth-bulge-demographics/>.

<sup>22</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, “The Root Causes of Violent Extremism,” RAN Centre of Excellence, January 4, 2016, 3, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-papers/docs/issue\\_paper\\_root-causes\\_jan2016\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf).

Unfortunately, radicalization models cannot predict who will become a terrorist. There is no single pathway into terrorism and no archetypal violent extremist. Violent extremists are not simply marginalized misfits. They are no more likely to suffer from mental illness than the average person. Many are married and have children. Contrary to popular perceptions, violent extremists are often well-off, employed, and educated.<sup>23</sup> Nor is violent extremism simply rooted in religious devotion.<sup>24</sup> Religious fluency, in fact, can help individuals challenge extremist ideas and narratives.

In spite of the diversity of paths that may lead a person to take up the banner of violent extremism, there does appear to be a common thread. Throughout the world, many Muslim millennials suffer from a profound identity crisis. From Boston to Paris, Nairobi to Dhaka, young Muslims are struggling to find purpose and belonging and overcome an unshakable sense of emptiness or “otherness.”<sup>25</sup> Reflecting on conversations with young Muslims in over 80 countries, senior adviser to the CVE Commission and commissioner, Farah Pandith explained, “they are questioning what it means to be modern and Muslim in a globalized and interconnected world.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Eli Berman et al., “Do Working Men Rebel? Employment and Insurgency in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Philippines,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 55, No. 4 (2011): 496–528.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Christopher Paul, “How Do Terrorists Generate and Maintain Support?,” in *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*, ed. Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2009).



<sup>25</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, phone interview with Suhaib Webb, CSIS, August 31, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Farah Pandith, CSIS, July 22, 2016.

## PROJECTED MUSLIM POPULATION GROWTH FROM 2010 TO 2050

2010   POPULATION EST.  
**1,599,700,000**

23.2%

2020   POPULATION EST.  
**1,907,110,000**

24.9%

2030   POPULATION EST.  
**2,209,270,000**

26.5%

2040   POPULATION EST.  
**2,497,830,000**

28.1%

2050   POPULATION EST.  
**2,761,480,000**

29.7%



FARAH PANDITH, SENIOR ADVISER AND COMMISSIONER

Violent extremists provide seemingly authentic answers to these questions, offering a way to reconcile religious identity and modernity and to find glory, redemption, or simply a way out of their current situation. Joining a violent extremist movement is, for many, an aspirational social act—an opportunity to gain power, prestige, and status; to address the abuses suffered by their coreligionists; or to participate in a utopian effort to remake the world.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, violent extremists offer something universally appealing: a chance to participate in an enterprise larger than one's self.

This search for identity plays out differently depending on one's circumstances. In some countries where Muslims are in the minori-

ty, they face systematic disenfranchisement and injustice. Muslims are often passed over for jobs simply because of their last name or address.<sup>28</sup> For example, a 2010 study indicated that French Muslims of Middle Eastern or North African descent were 2.5 times less likely to receive a call back from an interview than their Christian counterparts.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Muslims are often physically separated from society, as seen in the *banlieues*, a pejorative term for the impoverished and neglected neighborhoods on the outskirts of Paris.

The failure to integrate generations of Muslim immigrants, particularly in Western countries, sends the message that they will never be truly accepted as equal and valued members of society. Immigrants

in Germany, for example, encounter an education system that forces young people to choose their course of study in their early teens, disadvantaging those who are non-native German speakers.<sup>30</sup> In the Netherlands, the Dutch word used for individuals born outside the country or with at least one parent born outside the country, *allochtoon*, is often applied more broadly to those who are nonwhite and not "indigenous" to the soil. This usage creates a second class of citizens, including Muslims, who are labeled as outsiders even if they were born and have lived their entire lives in the Netherlands.<sup>31</sup> The response from some Muslims in the West has been to reject assimilation and adopt an inflexible, unfavorable view of Western culture and ideals.<sup>32</sup> According to an individual incarcerated in the United States for linkages to terrorism, "I was so bitter. I felt discriminated against as an African American man in America, but also as a Muslim. I felt like Muslims in America were being targeted as the enemies, and this exclusionary treatment led me to seek answers from the wrong people. I went down the wrong path."<sup>33</sup>

This dynamic may be exacerbated in countries where the government attempts to impose secularism on its citizens, demanding that national identity take precedence over religious or cultural identity.<sup>34</sup> These efforts can backfire. Banning religious dress or

<sup>27</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Scott Atran, CSIS, May 13, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Peter Neumann, CSIS, July 22, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Claire L. Adida, David D. Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort, "Identifying Barriers to Muslim Integration in France," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States of America* 107, no. 52 (December 2010): 22384–22390, <http://www.pnas.org/content/107/52.toc>.

<sup>30</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Farah Pandith, CSIS, July 22, 2016; and Katrine Thomassen, "A Hard Look at Discrimination in Education in Germany," Open Society Foundations, October 17, 2012, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/hard-look-discrimination-education-germany>.

<sup>31</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Farah Pandith, CSIS, July 22, 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Skerry, "Problems of the Second Generation: To Be Young, Muslim, and American," Brookings Institution, June 28, 2013, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/problems-of-the-second-generation-to-be-young-muslim-and-american/>.

<sup>33</sup> Courtney La Bau, interview with an individual whose name and location have been withheld, June 16, 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "France's Burkini Debate Reverberates Around the World," *New York Times*, August 31, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/01/world/europe/burkini-france-us-germany-africa.html>.

**“Joining a violent extremist movement is, for many, an aspirational social act—an opportunity to gain power, prestige, and status; to address the abuses suffered by their coreligionists; or to participate in a utopian effort to remake the world.”**

symbols, in a bid to preserve the dominant cultural identity, contributes to “us vs. them” narratives manipulated by violent extremists. Researchers have found that Francophone countries, which have taken a particularly hard line on questions of secularism and identity, have proven to be fruitful recruiting grounds for ISIS.<sup>35</sup> Of course, Muslim-minority countries do not have a monopoly on the ill treatment of Muslims. In many Muslim-majority countries, minority sects experience unrelenting persecution, from the Ahmadiyya of Pakistan to Iran’s Sufis to the Shi’a in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

In countries in which opportunity is lacking and injustice is prevalent, terrorist recruiters offer a way out. Studies have found that a profound sense of injustice and alienation from formal state structures can motivate young people to join terrorist groups.<sup>36</sup> There is also a significant correlation between gross human rights abuses—such as extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, and policies undermining religious freedom—and a high incidence of terror attacks. In fact, 92 percent of all terrorist attacks over the past 25 years occurred in countries where state-sponsored political violence was widespread.<sup>37</sup> As one former extremist in London explained, “if you are living under a dictatorship, people will look for an outlet because they are already facing injustice and inequality.”<sup>38</sup>

These environments are often also characterized by poverty, un- and underemployment, and widespread corruption. Former Canadian extremist Mubin Sheikh noted that “young men and women [in Africa] are getting compensated to join groups like Boko Haram... these people are getting jobs that they otherwise wouldn’t have access to in such impoverished and corrupt regions. Boko Haram has oil money, and they are using that money to lure people in.”<sup>39</sup> Frustrated expectations, combined with an unrealistic assessment of risk—common among youth—can create a dangerous cocktail when youth do not have the means to shape their own future.

<sup>35</sup> Gilles Kepel, “French Lessons in Londonistan,” *National Interest*, no. 106 (March 2010): 42–52; William McCants and Christopher Meserole, “The French Connection: Explaining Sunni Militancy Around the World,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 24, 2016; Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann, eds., “The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies,” ICCT Research Paper (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, April 2016), [https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Keith Proctor, *Youth & Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence* (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps, 2015), [https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps\\_YouthConsequences-Report\\_2015.pdf](https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps_YouthConsequences-Report_2015.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), *Global Terrorism Index, 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* (New York: IEP, November 2015), <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Courtney La Bau, consultant, interview with an individual whose name has been withheld, London, July 11, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Courtney La Bau, consultant, interview with Mubin Sheikh, London, July 11, 2016.

## **SURVEY FINDINGS—**

# **GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

To better understand public perceptions of violent extremism, CSIS commissioned a global survey with 8,000 participants in eight countries: China, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Participants were asked 65 questions on the scope of violent extremism, motivations and drivers, responses to the threat, and effective strategies to combat it.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROBLEM**

Overall, respondents said terrorism is the number one challenge facing their country. Two in three respondents think violent extremism is a “major” problem in their country, led by Turkey, Indonesia, and France. Even where the proportion dips below half, violent extremism is still seen as being at least a “minor” problem. In everywhere except China, at least 75 percent of those surveyed expect a terrorist attack in the next year. Indeed, in France, 60 percent think this is “very likely,” a view shared by 45 to 50 percent in Turkey, Indonesia, and the United States. On a more alarming note, a majority in every country believes that it is likely that violent extremist groups will acquire and use weapons of mass destruction in their lifetime. Despite widespread anxiety about the terrorist threat, 73 percent of respondents believe that the challenge of violent extremism is solvable.

## **MOTIVATIONS AND DRIVERS**

Views on motivations for violent extremism are divided between Muslim-minority and Muslim-majority countries. In every country except for Turkey and Egypt, “religious fundamentalism” is identified as the primary root cause of violent extremism. In Turkey, military actions by foreign governments are perceived to be the main driver, while Egyptians

cite human rights abuses and poverty. At a secondary level, Western countries consider anti-Western sentiment to contribute to radicalization, with active recruitment mentioned in the United Kingdom and France. A lack of moderate religious guidance comes out as a secondary influence in Indonesia, Egypt, and India.

## **RESPONSES TO DATE**

Globally, half of those surveyed feel that their government’s response to containing and preventing violent extremism has been inadequate. The response from the broader international community is also seen as insufficient—by 64 percent of people polled. Military and economic actions were overwhelmingly chosen as the most effective tactics to counter violent extremism; however, most respondents also suggested that military efforts to date had not worked. With the exception of China and Indonesia, 70 percent of those surveyed think extremists are successfully promoting their ideologies and narratives using the internet (versus a minority who feel the internet is being adequately policed).

## **EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE**

Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of a wide range of interventions to counter violent extremism. Although military action and law enforcement strategies (e.g., ID cards and immigration controls) are at the top of the list, a significant majority of those surveyed support community-led efforts and targeted, prolonged information campaigns to undermine extremists’ narratives and ideologies. Seventy-five percent of survey participants think that social media platforms can be used effectively to amplify positive messages. Respondents were also open to cultural influencers, such as Hollywood, Bollywood, music and fashion icons, and sports figures, playing a greater role in contesting extremist propaganda. However, when asked who are the most credible messengers, respondents defaulted to religious leaders in all countries. Finally, while 64 percent of survey respondents believe that religious schools sometimes play a role in radicalization, 80 percent say that they are an important part of the solution. ■

## The Recruitment Process

Charismatic recruiters fuse local grievances, both real and perceived, with emotion to fill their ranks. Recruitment tends to proceed in two phases. First, they cast a wide net, using general grievance narratives to attract sympathizers and potential supporters. Then, local and online recruiters methodically monitor what potential sympathizers are saying in their social circles and online, evaluate their economic opportunities, and assess their mental state, looking for some weakness to exploit.

Former extremists interviewed by the Commission emphasized the importance of making a human connection when recruiting. Individuals rarely graduate from passively consuming propaganda to active support without direct engagement from a third party. Recruiters provide the personal touch, showering potential recruits with attention and supplying critical information about how to contribute to the extremist cause.<sup>40</sup>

Evidence suggests that recruiters are more successful when they have strong social, familial, or business ties with their target. al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and al

Shabaab have long relied on personal connections to facilitate recruitment.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, social ties and personal relationships may help explain why some extremists cross into violence while others do not. For instance, one study estimates that peer-to-peer recruiting accounts for more than 80 percent of ISIS recruits.<sup>42</sup>

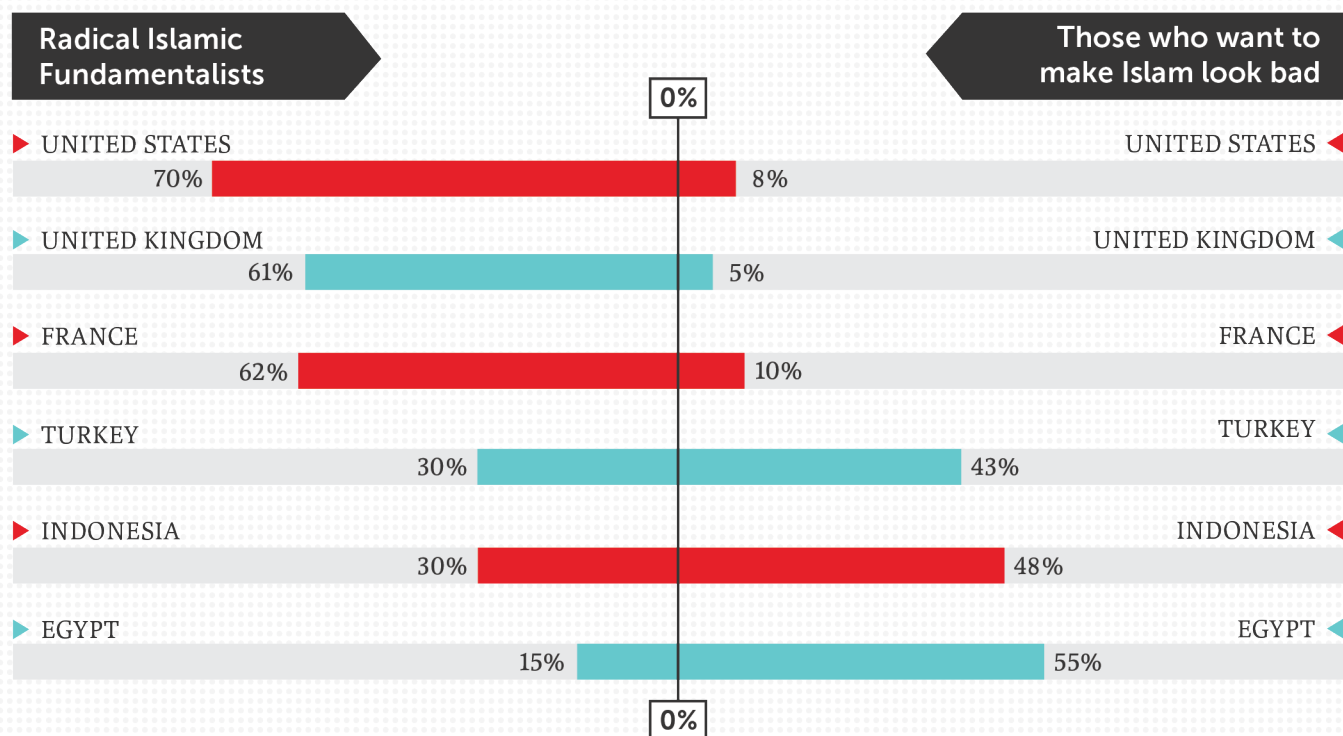
Social media is not the cause of violent extremism, then, but a powerful amplifier and accelerant. Digital platforms and increased access to smart phones and internet connectivity help facilitate radicalization and recruitment. According to CIA director John Brennan,

<sup>40</sup> Shannon N. Green, "Changing the Narrative: Countering Violent Extremist Propaganda," *CSIS Commentary*, September 25, 2015, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/changing-narrative-countering-violent-extremist-propaganda>.

<sup>41</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Scott Atran, "ISIS Is a Revolution: All World-Altering Revolutions Are Born in Danger and Death, Brotherhood and Joy. How Can This One Be Stopped?," *AEON*, December 15, 2015, <https://aeon.co/essays/why-isis-has-the-potential-to-be-a-world-altering-revolution>.

## DIVERGENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM



# THE FUTURE OF THE THREAT

In developing its recommendations, the Commission considered how extremist ideologies are manifesting today and what the landscape may look like for the next 10 years. The strategy in this report is forward-looking and meant to guide CVE efforts over the next decade. This forecasting is based on interviews with former extremists, researchers, youth, policymakers, and CVE practitioners across the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, and expertise drawn from commissioners themselves.

## THE FUTURE

The Commission posits that the future of terrorism is likely to be marked by growing competition among terrorist networks; more frequent but less complex attacks; and a wider array of recruits. The terrorist threat is likely to morph in ways yet unimagined. CVE efforts must therefore anticipate a future that features new technologies, infrastructure, and innovation used by us as well as by violent extremists.

## RESURGENCE OF AL QAEDA

The majority of those interviewed expect a resurgence of al Qaeda and its affiliates. Experts point out that once ISIS is defeated militarily, those drawn to its ideology will seek a new home, which will likely be al Qaeda. As one interviewee stated, “al Qaeda is playing the long game. ISIS has only released seven videos during this past Ramadan, where al Qaeda has released 300 videos.” Several people noted that al Nusra Front (which recently changed its name to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham) stands to gain significantly as ISIS is degraded. According to interviewees, al Nusra Front has been steadily planting roots and gaining support throughout Syria, offering a more moderate form of governance than ISIS.

## TACTICS

Interviewees predicted that the military campaign against ISIS in Syria and Iraq and improved law enforcement and intelligence efforts aimed at foreign fighters will cause them to increasingly focus on domestic attacks. As such, homegrown extremists will become a bigger threat. Terrorist groups are also likely to continue the evolution toward attacks plotted and executed by small groups or individuals, against soft targets, using less sophisticated and easy-to-acquire weapons. Such attacks do not require extensive training, planning, or coordination, making them harder to detect, but no less lethal.

## SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Violent extremists’ use of social media is also predicted to evolve. According to interviewees, to escape surveillance and account suspensions, terrorists are moving onto private, encrypted platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram and have experimented with smaller social media platforms including Friendica, Diaspora, KIK, WICKR, and the Russian version of Facebook, VKontakte. However, industry experts expect that Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube will remain important because they offer unrivaled outreach opportunities.

## PROFILE OF RECRUITS

Experts suggest that violent extremist groups will likely diversify their recruitment pool, reaching out increasingly to women and older and younger generations. According to a Nigerian CVE practitioner, “they will try to recruit women and older men, because security agencies are currently focusing much more attention on young people.” Terrorists have already started recruiting children in their pre-teens—a trend that is likely to accelerate. Experts also predict that the presence of women in high-profile roles as supporters, mobilizers, and members of terrorist groups will continue to be a key feature of the future landscape. Finally, interviewees emphasized that converts are highly susceptible to radicalization, as the conversion process dramatically changes one’s life and dismantles existing social networks and relationships, allowing violent extremists to manipulate them into believing warped interpretations of Islam. ■

the internet provides violent extremist groups with tools to “co-ordinate operations, attract new recruits, disseminate propaganda and inspire sympathizers across the globe.”<sup>43</sup> Violent extremists’ exploitation of digital platforms allows would-be terrorists to seek inspiration and information online—and rally around a terrorist group as a brand, an idea, or a methodology—without ever leaving their homes.<sup>44</sup> The widespread use of social media has also made violent extremists’ plans more difficult to disrupt. Security agencies have to track a much larger number of potential plotters, giving terrorists more space to plan large, complex operations against a higher background level of activity.<sup>45</sup>

## Enabling Environments

Socioeconomic, cultural, and technological shifts have contributed to increasingly complex and contested environments, creating openings for extremist ideologies to take root. The dimensions of this challenge should be addressed in turn:

*Widespread violence—whether perpetrated by the state or the result of civil conflicts—creates environments conducive to radicalization.* The 2015 Global Terrorism Index identified two factors closely associated with terrorist activity: political violence committed by the state and the existence of a broader armed conflict. Eighty-eight percent of terrorist attacks in 2015 occurred in countries embroiled in conflict.<sup>46</sup> In such environments, terrorist groups are able to take advantage of the chaos and vacuum created by state

collapse. It seems, then, that violent extremism arises out of conflict and disorder as much as it contributes to these conditions.<sup>47</sup>

*For many youth in the Middle East and North Africa, marginalization and powerlessness were dramatically accelerated by the disappointments of the Arab Spring.* Throughout this region, the Arab Spring saw a generation find its political voice only to be silenced. More than five years later, the promise of liberal democracy has faded, while the appeal of other ideologies, such as Arab nationalism and political Islam, has diminished. These factors have ceded the ideological space to more intolerant and violent currents.<sup>48</sup>

*Geopolitical conditions create narratives that violent extremists are able to manipulate to win popular sympathy.* The generations-long conflict in Israel and Palestine provides a ready flashpoint for terrorist propagandists who use it to

feed their “us versus them” narrative. Similarly, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have manufactured the grist for extremist propaganda about the “crusading West.” This plays along sectarian lines as well. The Iranian nuclear deal animates conspiracy theories about a U.S. agenda to keep Sunni Arabs fractured and weak. For some, the United States’ refusal to engage militarily in Syria against the Assad regime proves Washington’s callousness to the mass suffering of Sunnis. Terrorist recruiters hold up these examples as evidence that the West is at war with Islam and that Muslims will never truly be valued by Western countries.

## Assessing Efforts to Date

The multifaceted nature and scope of violent extremism today presents a profound challenge to current strategies. Extremist ideas threaten to draw in an entire generation that is exasperated with the status quo and seeks to change



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<sup>43</sup> “CIA Director Brennan: Social Media Makes It Harder to Fight Terror,” NBC News, March 13, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/cia-director-brennan-social-media-makes-it-harder-fight-terror-n323151>.

<sup>44</sup> Kilcullen, *Blood Year*, 120–123.

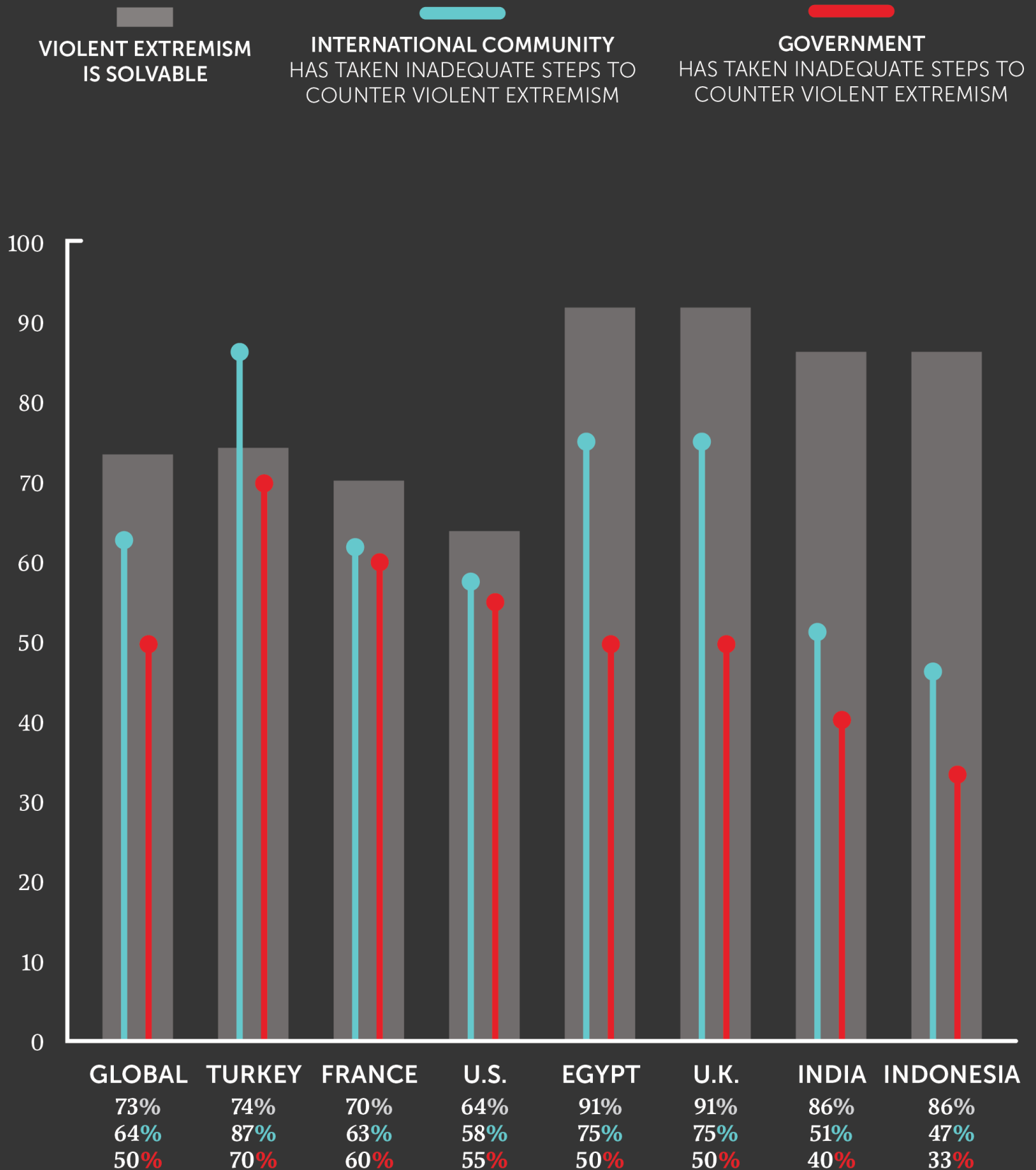
<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> IEP, *Global Terrorism Index*, 2015, 4.

<sup>47</sup> International Crisis Group, *Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, March 2016), <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-the-islamic-state.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

# VIOLENT EXTREMISM DESERVES GREATER ATTENTION



it—through revolutionary or violent means if necessary. Developing an effective response requires that we first appreciate the conceptual, organizational, and resource shortcomings that have hindered CVE endeavors to date.

### Conceptual Challenges

Successive U.S. administrations, foreign governments, and other actors have devoted considerable resources trying to understand and respond to violent extremism. From the beginning, these efforts have been stymied by a host of conceptual challenges:

- U.S. policymakers have severely underestimated the allure of violent extremism, which has constrained the allocation of funding and manpower to deal with it.
- Successive U.S. administrations have failed to provide leadership and vision for addressing the ideological dimension of the threat.
- The U.S. government has struggled with how to tackle an ideology that “hides” within Islam without getting entangled in issues of religious interpretation or alienating Muslims.
- U.S. policymakers have viewed violent extremism as either a phenomenon contained to the Middle East or to a specific group, rather than the global, generational struggle that it is today.
- Government actors have tended to separate domestic and international CVE efforts, although in the era of social media, ideology clearly does not recognize borders.
- Proponents and practitioners of CVE are not unified in their efforts. There is no consensus on the basic parameters or goals for the field—how to define CVE, or violent extremism for that matter; how to target, sequence, and calibrate efforts; whether and how to synchronize CVE initiatives with intelligence, military, and law enforcement efforts; and how to measure success.
- Researchers are still seeking definitive answers regarding the radicalization process, the most salient drivers and how those drivers interact with each other and the environment in which radicalization occurs, and the most effective strategies for breaking the cycle of radicalization and recruitment.
- Civil society actors are unclear about whether violent extremism is primarily a military and law enforcement challenge—to which they have little to contribute—or a social, political, and economic problem.

Persistent controversy has hindered CVE efforts, particularly in the United States, obscuring the original purpose of moving away from a purely securitized

approach and focusing on prevention. In large part because law enforcement agencies have led domestic CVE efforts, many Muslim activists in the United States perceive CVE as a cover for counterterrorism operations. They argue that it has resulted in securitizing their relationship with the government, stigmatizing entire communities, and coaxing youth into committing criminal acts that they would not have without external influence.

Globally, there is momentum behind a broad, developmental approach to prevent violent extremism. The UN Secretary General’s Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism epitomizes this thinking, offering a comprehensive approach for addressing the underlying conditions that make individuals vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment. Yet, it too has its critics. Human rights groups have expressed concern that it risks securitizing and contaminating development and peacebuilding efforts and suggests that governments’ human rights obligations are subordinate to CVE. Academics and practitioners have argued that taking such an expansive approach will not result in a decline in support for violent extremist groups, as it conflates many different types of threats and responses. Some foreign governments, particularly those in the Middle East, have complained that CVE efforts ignore the impact of U.S. and Western foreign policy and military action on support for violent extremism. Finally, civil society actors have criticized the U.S. government’s inconsistency in speaking out about the backsliding, hypocrisy, and abuses of corrupt regimes, who are often counterterrorism partners.

As a result of this polarization, many key actors, including the private sector, philanthropic community, nongovernmental organizations, religious leaders, pop culture icons, and others have failed to mobilize around CVE the way they have to address other major global crises like climate change, HIV/AIDS, or trafficking in persons.

### Organizational and Funding Challenges

Political leaders often speak of their commitment to “win the battle of ideas,” particularly after high-profile attacks, but no consensus has emerged on the strategies, resources, tools, and partnerships needed to effectively counter extremist ideologies and narratives. The following organizational, operational, and funding challenges have hindered a coherent response:

- **Coordination within government.** To date, U.S. government efforts to deal with violent extremism have been fragmented. There has been insufficient coordination across government silos—international and domestic, civilian and military,

law enforcement and social service delivery. As a result, efforts to respond to the array of challenges facing Muslim communities in the United States or align diplomatic, development, and strategic communications initiatives overseas have suffered. The creation of the inter-agency CVE Task Force—hosted by DHS with overall leadership provided by DHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ)—and the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism at the Department of State to coordinate CVE efforts domestically and internationally, respectively, are steps in the right direction. However, public diplomacy and messaging efforts led by the Global Engagement Center fall outside both of these structures. Even more problematically, responsibility at the National Security Council (NSC) is diffuse and unclear. There are currently three separate directorates at the NSC, in addition to other regional and functional directorates, that are responsible for some aspect of CVE, and they report to different deputy national security advisers. Unified leadership and commitment starting at the White House is needed to leverage all relevant assets and enhance accountability for results.

- **International cooperation with other governments.** Many of our partners and allies have pioneered promising CVE efforts in their own countries, including on the emerging challenge of deradicalizing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating fighters that are returning from conflict zones or those whose prison sentences for terrorism-related crimes are coming to an end. While we are still seeking to evaluate the impact of these programs, the U.S. government can and should benefit from their experiences.

There are several forums for information sharing, notably the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), which brings together experts and practitioners from around the world to share expertise and develop tools and strategies on combatting terrorism. Through its CVE Working Group, GCTF is also supporting the development of national CVE action plans. However, the exchange of best practices has been sporadic and is often at too senior of a level to sustain and benefit those actually responsible for implementing CVE policies or programs. In addition, these forums do not typically focus on stemming the spread of extremist ideologies and narratives. The United States needs to strengthen mechanisms for collaboration, at multiple levels, with key allies throughout the world, specifically geared toward reducing the appeal of violent extremism.

- **Collaboration with nongovernmental partners.** There is incredible room for innovative partnerships to counter violent extremism and its manifestations; this is because CVE requires engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. However, to date, public-private partnerships and private-private partnerships have been characterized by ad hoc or hastily assembled coalitions. Technology sector representatives, entertainment industry executives, and civil society leaders complain of erratic outreach, broad statements of interest in collaboration with few concrete asks, and little follow-through from U.S. government officials. Developing meaningful, sustainable, long-term partnerships will require rebuilding trust between the government and partner communities and better defining the scope of collaboration.
- **Measurement.** Political leaders and Congressional appropriators have largely focused on the issues that can be measured. The number of terrorists killed or the number of troops deployed fit into metrics that more easily satisfy government oversight bodies. Accountability and results are important. However, the old dictum of “what gets measured gets done” can unfortunately distort the kinds of interventions implemented. Long-term efforts to stop cycles of radicalization and recruitment resist quantification, requiring greater patience and more creative ways of assessing attitude and behavioral changes over time.
- **Funding.** Despite the rhetorical commitment to preventing and countering violent extremism over the past decade, programmatic resources for the effort have failed to materialize. Within the U.S. government, the Office of Community Partnerships at DHS, charged with liaising with and supporting the work of local partners, has a mere \$10 million in FY 2016 for grant programs and roughly

\$3 million for staffing and other operational expenses. This in comparison to the \$2 billion that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) spent in FY 2016 on counterterrorism investigations alone or the \$7.3 billion at the TSA's disposal in FY 2016.

The resources available for international efforts are similarly lacking. Although precise figures are hard to come by given the definitional challenges mentioned earlier, State and USAID had roughly \$100 million to \$150 million in FY 2016 for CVE programming and staffing. The administration requested \$187 million for international CVE efforts in its FY 2017 budget (nearly double the FY 2015 request), although convincing Congress of the merits of investing in preventative efforts remains an uphill battle.<sup>49</sup> Even marshaling the resources to fully respond to the humanitarian fallout from Syria has been difficult. The United States has contributed \$5.9 billion to support Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons since 2011—and that barely scratches the surface of the need.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, the United States spends over \$50 billion annually on intelligence efforts and nearly \$60 billion a year for defense activities related to combatting terrorism.<sup>51</sup>

***All told, U.S. expenditures for “soft power” initiatives to confront extremist ideologies, domestically and abroad, total roughly 1/10th of 1 percent of the resources dedicated to military, law enforcement, and intelligence efforts to combat terrorism.***

Outside of the U.S. government, the picture is equally bleak. Attempts to get the private sector and foundations to fund CVE have been very disappointing, largely because of concerns about working on issues linked to counterterrorism and being perceived as agents of the U.S. government. Some companies and foundations are stepping up to support local efforts, and the technology sector has piloted several promising initiatives to combat hate speech with positive speech.<sup>52, 53</sup> Yet, significant funding shortfalls severely restrict the ability of credible community and civil society actors to mobilize against violent extremists and confront them with the flexibility, consistency, and strength required.

<sup>49</sup> Susan B. Epstein, Marian L. Lawson, and Alex Tiersky, “FY2017 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Budget Request: In Brief,” Congressional Research Service, February 19, 2016, [http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc824741/m2/1/high\\_res\\_d/R44391\\_2016Feb19.pdf](http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc824741/m2/1/high_res_d/R44391_2016Feb19.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Syrian Refugee Response,” <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/policyissues/issues/refugeerresponse/>.

<sup>51</sup> Susan B. Epstein and Lynn M. Williams, “Overseas Contingency Operations Funding: Background and Status,” Congressional Research Service, June 13, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/spp/crs/natsec/R44519.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Matt Weinberger, “This CEO Barely Survived the 2008 Market Crash—Now His Startup Has 400 Million Users, and It’s Going Head-to-Head with Facebook,” *Business Insider*, March 20, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/anchorfree-ceo-david-gorodiansky-interview-2016-3>; Andy Greenberg, “Google’s Clever Plan to Stop Aspiring ISIS Recruits,” *Wired*, September 7, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/09/googles-clever-plan-stop-aspiring-isis-recruits/>.

<sup>53</sup> For example, in Minneapolis, local companies have committed \$2 million to support CVE efforts. These resources came about largely because of the persistent efforts of the U.S. attorney and the severity of the challenge in that city.



A NEW  
COMPREHENSIVE  
STRATEGY  
TO COUNTER  
VIOLENT  
EXTREMISM

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**T**he United States and its allies need a new, comprehensive strategy to counter violent extremism. A reliance on fighting terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them on our soil may be effective in the short term but will fail in the long term if we do not significantly weaken the appeal of extremist ideologies and narratives.

A new strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism must:

**1) Strengthen resistance to extremist ideologies:** Forging a new global partnership around education reform and expanding efforts to enhance respect for religious diversity, stem the spread of intolerance, and reinforce community resilience to extremist narratives.

**2) Invest in community-led prevention:** Enabling civil society efforts to detect and disrupt radicalization and recruitment, and rehabilitate and reintegrate those who have succumbed to extremist ideologies and narratives.

**3) Saturate the global marketplace of ideas:** Mobilizing technology companies, the entertainment industry, community leaders, religious voices, and others to compete with and overtake violent extremists' narratives in virtual and real spaces.

**4) Align policies and values:** Putting human rights at the center of CVE and ensuring that U.S. engagement with foreign partners advances the rule of law, dignity, and justice.

**5) Deploy military and law enforcement tools:** Building a new force capability and coalition to quickly dislodge terrorist groups that control territory, avert and respond to immediate threats, weaken violent extremists' pro-

jection of strength, and protect our security and the security of our allies and partners.

These five strategic elements encompass activities that are CVE-specific and those that are CVE-relevant. CVE-specific refers to measures designed to prevent violent extremism in a direct, targeted fashion, such as intervening with someone drawn to extremist ideologies. By contrast, CVE-relevant measures are more general, intending to reduce vulnerability to extremism in an indirect way.<sup>54</sup> CVE-relevant efforts are primarily advanced through education, development, human rights and governance programs, and youth initiatives.

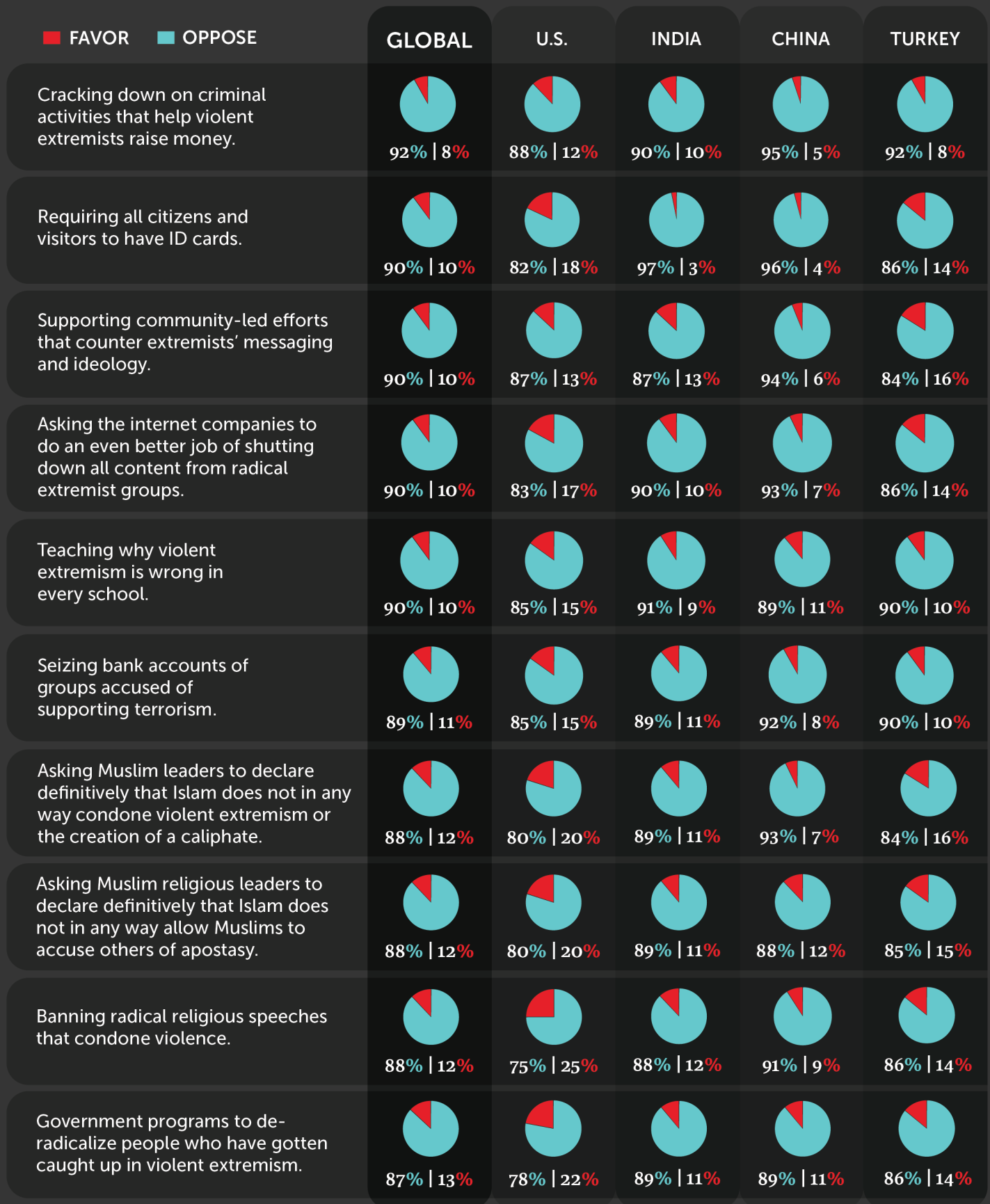
This strategy seeks to plug the gaping holes in the United States' current efforts and amplify what is working. It is focused on actions that the U.S. government should take, in partnership with key stakeholders, in the United States and abroad. Implemented together, at scale and with the right partners, these elements will have a significant impact on reducing the reach and regeneration of violent extremist groups.

## 1. STRENGTHENING RESISTANCE TO EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES

Violent extremists seek to impose their vision of religion and governance on society, by force if necessary. For over a generation, private donors in the Gulf and elsewhere have contributed to the spread of extremist ideologies by funding mosques, schools, and various types of media that reject local religious, cultural, social, or political customs or understand-

<sup>54</sup> Peter Romaniuk, *Does CVE Work?: Lessons Learned from the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2015), [http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Does-CVE-Work\\_2015.pdf](http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Does-CVE-Work_2015.pdf).

# ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM REQUIRES A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH



ings that contradict their own. In addition to fueling sectarianism and violence in the Middle East and North Africa, we see the influence of these ideologies in settings as diverse as North America, South and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Europe, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel.

To strengthen societal and individual resistance to extremist ideologies, the United States and its allies should:

- *Stem the export of extremist ideologies.* Financial support for extremist ideologues and groups must be curtailed, without jeopardizing funds to legitimate, peaceful civil society organizations.
- *Inculcate respect for diversity and tolerance.* The United States and its allies must work together to ensure that education systems and materials do not contribute to the intolerant attitudes, “us versus them” narratives, and prejudices that fuel violent extremism.
- *Reinforce local resilience.* Communities and individuals that are able to resolve conflicts peacefully, have a strong group identity or sense of self, and have opportunities to interact with each other positively are better able to resist extremist entreaties. These protective factors should be reinforced.

### Stemming the export of extremist ideologies

Much of the ideology that animates violent extremist movements has been resourced and inspired by individuals and organizations based within allied countries. A generation of funding, flowing from Saudis, Qataris, Kuwaitis, and others, has helped foster a world view hostile to religious, cultural, social, and political diversity, creating fertile ground for violence. Partner governments must deter, disrupt, and

dismantle funding to groups that spread extremist ideologies and narratives without undermining support for legitimate, peaceful civil society and charitable actors who are instrumental for CVE efforts.

A starting point is for partner nations to identify and openly discuss the most pernicious forms of incitement to violence, which are often combined with recruitment and material support for terrorism. In UN Security Council Resolution 1624, the international community affirmed that every country has an obligation to curb incitement to terrorist violence. This resolution also provides a framework for reconciling that duty with international law, particularly international human rights law, refugee law, and humanitarian law.

Governments bear the primary responsibility for taking action against offending individuals, organizations, or institutions within their borders. To support these efforts, the United States and its allies should provide technical assistance to ensure that responses address the source of the problem without negatively affecting individuals and civil society organizations operating legally and peacefully. If the host country does not take concrete steps to rein in nefarious actors, the international community should consider punitive measures such as freezing of assets, visa and travel bans, and criminal actions for material support to terrorist activity.

The international community must also help remediate the impact of decades of proselytization on affected countries. Such cooperation could involve reinforcement of local cultures and traditions that run counter to more extreme or foreign belief systems, exchange of best practices in mitigating the negative impact of extremist ideologies and narratives, and the development of programs

**“A reliance on fighting terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them on our soil may be effective in the short term but will fail in the long term if we do not significantly weaken the appeal of extremist ideologies and narratives.”**

designed to curb intolerance, sectarian tensions, and other related problems stemming from extremism. Governments should also initiate dialogue with grass-roots actors to better understand the circumstances and challenges local communities and institutions are facing.

Of course, CVE cannot be an excuse for cracking down on religious expression, political opposition, or civil society. Consistent with international principles, governments should take focused and proportionate action against only those organizations identified to be at risk. Moreover, steps taken to shut down charitable organizations or financial institutions for funding terrorism should be complemented by organized charitable backfill—by governments and the non-profit community—and financial access—provided by the international and regional financial communities—to replace any lost services and fulfill humanitarian needs, especially in crisis zones and with at-risk populations. A charitable backfill program and steps to ensure financial inclusion could help protect against unnecessary resentment and radicalization in the wake of services being shut down.

### Inculcating respect for diversity and tolerance

Knowledge and critical thinking skills are indispensable for preventing violent extremism. Edu-

cation is central to shaping world views, promoting citizenship, and bridging ethnic or sectarian divides. Conversely, a paucity of knowledge and understanding about other faiths and cultures can make individuals more susceptible to extremist narratives.<sup>55</sup> For example, in some Muslim-majority countries and communities, religious education promotes the idea that all nonbelievers are infidels. This viewpoint legitimizes violence against non-Muslims or Muslims from different sects. Equally, many non-Muslims, as well as Muslims themselves, know very little about Islam or the diversity of Islamic history and cultures.<sup>56</sup> This ignorance may lead to profiling, bullying, hate speech, physical attacks, and other adverse treatment of Muslims, including those fleeing the brutality of ISIS or other terrorist groups.

Therefore, a comprehensive CVE strategy must include programs that enhance understanding of different religions and cultures and defend the human rights and dignity of all persons. These values should be taught and reinforced for people at all ages—from pre-kindergarten through college and adulthood—and from all walks of life. Building on commitments made at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September 2016, these education efforts should be extended to refugees and internally displaced persons to help inoculate them against radicalization and recruitment. Programs should be designed with lay and religious educators, mental health professionals, and community leaders.<sup>57</sup>

Some models are available. In Modesto, California, religious ed-



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<sup>55</sup> United Nations, "High Level General Assembly Thematic Debate, Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation: Fostering Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism: 21–22 April 2015, United Nations Headquarters, New York," June 17, 2015, [http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/06/170615\\_HLTD-Promoting-Tolerance-Reconciliation-Summary.pdf](http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/06/170615_HLTD-Promoting-Tolerance-Reconciliation-Summary.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Pew Research Center, "Public Remains Conflicted over Islam," August 24, 2010, <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/08/24/public-remains-conflicted-over-islam/>; Shibley Telhami, "What Americans Really Think about Muslims and Islam," Brookings Institution, December 9, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/2015/12/09/what-americans-really-think-about-muslims-and-islam/>.

<sup>57</sup> Stevan Weine et al., *Lessons Learned from Mental Health and Education: Identifying Best Practices for Addressing Violent Extremism*, Final Report to the Office of University Programs, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (College Park, MD: START, October 2015), [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_LessonsLearnedfromMentalHealthAndEducation\\_FullReport\\_Oct2015.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_LessonsLearnedfromMentalHealthAndEducation_FullReport_Oct2015.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Emile Lester and Patrick S. Roberts, *Learning about World Religions in Public Schools: The Impact on Student Attitudes and Community in Modesto, California* (Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center, 2006), [http://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/FirstForum\\_ModestoWorldReligions.pdf](http://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/FirstForum_ModestoWorldReligions.pdf).

ucation is used to bring together diverse groups, from evangelical Christians to Sikhs, to teach understanding, build bridges, and promote respect for the First Amendment.<sup>58</sup> Similar efforts include the Faith Community Working Group in Montgomery County, Maryland, which aims to increase respect for religious traditions, and the Anti-Defamation League's antibias educational programs.<sup>59,60</sup> With over 16 million participants, the Anti-Defamation League's Classroom of Difference offers knowledge and resources that promote respect and inclusion in schools.<sup>61</sup> Nongovernmental organizations are also experimenting with virtual exchanges to build intercultural understanding and respect between the United States and Middle East, impart critical thinking skills, and improve communication and collaboration.<sup>62</sup>

Such initiatives have successfully combated discrimination and bullying and can be models for promoting social cohesion in diverse communities.

### Reinforcing Local Resilience to Extremist Ideologies and Narratives

Violent extremist movements thrive where they can co-opt local grievances and conflicts, where they have ready access to a "supply" of recruits, and where voices opposed to extremism are silenced. Consequently, shoring up community and individual re-

### **"Shoring up community and individual resilience is vital to delegitimizing extremist narratives and enabling peaceful alternatives to gain hold."**

silience is vital to delegitimizing extremist narratives and enabling peaceful alternatives to gain hold.

*Invest in social cohesion, peace-building and conflict mitigation.* Violent extremists capitalize on conflict and political, ethnic, or economic division. Indeed, conflict within a community is a leading indicator of whether violent extremists will be able to find traction.<sup>63</sup> By contrast, when communities are well-integrated and individuals of different ethnicities and religions peacefully coexist, extremist organizations are less able to manipulate local tensions. Empowering local voices for peace is important to reducing the personal experiences of violence and marginalization that facilitate violent extremism.

*Create safe spaces for communities and youth to interact positively.* In many cases, the key factor determining whether a young person will support or participate in violent extremist activity is not simply sympathy for their ideology, or the existence of grievances; it is having the means and opportunities to engage with individu-

als who represent these groups. Where youth do not have safe spaces and opportunities to pursue their interests, explore their identities, and contribute to their communities, it creates an opening for violent extremists. For example, research on the Somali-American community in Minneapolis identified three risk factors: (a) the perceived social legitimacy of violent extremism, (b) youths' unaccounted-for time in unobserved spaces, and (c) contact with recruiters or associates of violent extremist movements.<sup>64</sup> In the case of Minneapolis, these findings informed a model called Building Community Resilience, which involves active partnerships between families, civic groups, religious leaders, law enforcement, and local government officials to raise awareness of risk factors, improve communication with youth to get a better sense of how they are spending their time and what they are encountering in those spaces, and empower community leaders and parents to intervene with at-risk individuals. Raising awareness of the threats—but also giving communities the tools to address them—is vital to strengthening local resilience to violent extremism.

*Foster meaningful civic engagement opportunities for youth.* Youth seek meaning, connection, and opportunities to shape the world around them. Too often, however, young people are shunted aside, contributing to widespread feel-

<sup>59</sup> International Cultural Center, "Families, Faith and Your School," May 2016, <http://www.theicc.net/ourcauses/families-faith-and-your-school>.

<sup>60</sup> Anti-Defamation League, "Anti-Defamation League, Education and Outreach, Anti-Bias Education," <http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/>.

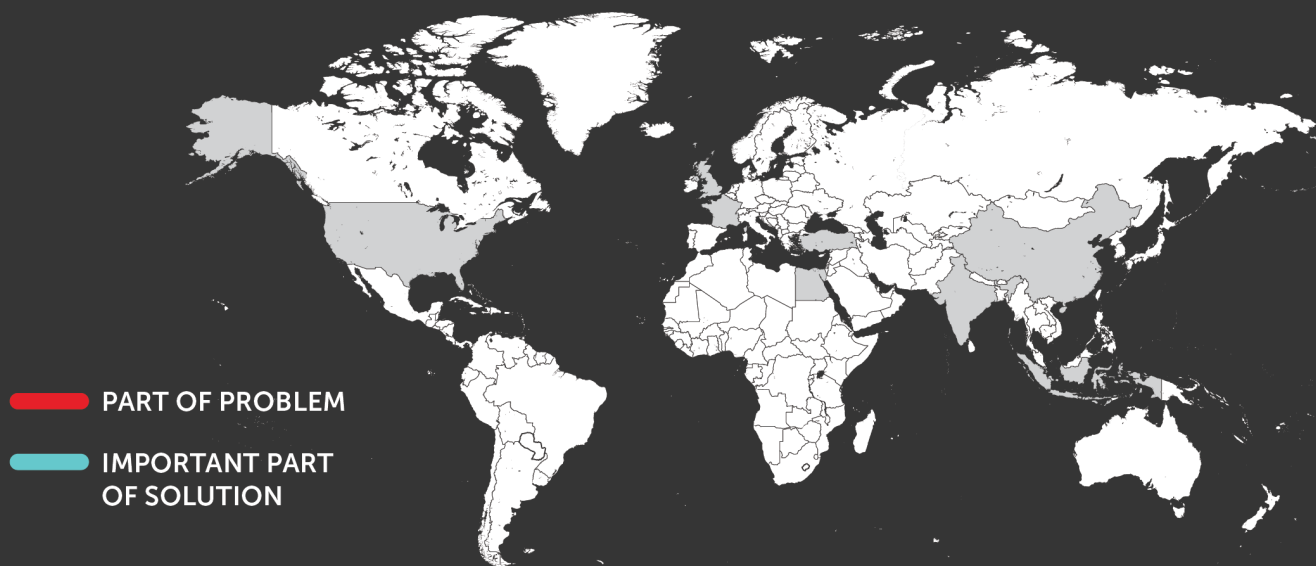
<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Aspen Institute, "Stevens Initiative," <http://stevensinitiative.org/>.

<sup>63</sup> USAID, "Mali Transition Initiative (MTI): Evaluation of the Impact of Social Networks in Gounzourey Commune, Gao Cercle, Mali," Washington, DC: USAID, 2016; Nils N. Weidmann and Patrick M. Kuhn, "Unequal We Fight: Between- and Within-Group Inequality and Ethnic Civil War," *Political Science and Research Methods* 3, no. 3, (2015): 543–68.

<sup>64</sup> Stevan M. Weine and John G. Horgan, "Building Resilience to Violent Extremism: One Community's Perspective," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, April 2014, <https://leb.fbi.gov/2014/april/building-resilience-to-violent-extremism-one-communitys-perspective>.

# RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS: PART OF THE PROBLEM, PART OF THE SOLUTION



## GLOBAL



### INDONESIA



### INDIA



### EGYPT



### TURKEY



### CHINA



### UNITED KINGDOM



### FRANCE



### UNITED STATES



ings of frustration. It is imperative to create mechanisms, both formal and informal, for young people to find their voices and articulate their goals in public spaces. Political, community, and religious leaders must offer young people meaningful opportunities for representation.

### Signature Recommendation

***The United States should lead an effort to establish international principles to stem the spread of extremist ideologies and intolerance in education systems, with stringent mechanisms for oversight and enforcement.*** The tensions, prejudices, and stereotypes that facilitate exclusion—and by extension, violent extremism—are often embedded in textbooks and curricula.<sup>65</sup> The United States should work with likeminded countries and the United Nations to advance initiatives, like Global Citizenship Education, that encourage governments to revise curricula, textbooks, and other instructional materials to reflect the diverse experiences, backgrounds, and composition of society itself.<sup>66</sup> These commitments would also prohibit the teaching of intolerance in education systems and reaffirm the responsibility of governments to ensure that textbooks, teachers, and educational materials do not justify the use of violence to advance political, religious, or social change; vilify other countries; or defame certain religious or ethnic groups.<sup>67</sup>

For this initiative to be effective, robust monitoring and response mechanisms must be put in place. A few models exist, with varying degrees of international ownership and accountability:

- **Open Government Partnership.**

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) provides an international platform for reformers to make their governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens.<sup>68</sup> Participation in the initiative is voluntary and requires governments to meet certain eligibility criteria, commit to the principles of open government, and deliver a country action plan developed with broad public consultation. OGP monitors progress through the Independent Reporting Mechanism, which issues an annual report assessing each participating government on the quality and implementation of their reform plans. Based on concerns about civic space, OGP instituted a response policy that offers remediation to participating countries, and eventually designates countries as “inactive” if they do not improve the enabling environment for civil society.

- **Universal Periodic Review.** The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process in which all 193 UN member states submit to a public review of their human rights records.<sup>69</sup> The review is based on three types of inputs: 1) an assessment provided by the

<sup>65</sup> Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now* (New York: United Nations, 2003), <http://www.un.org/humansecurity/content/human-security-now>.

<sup>66</sup> UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “Global Citizenship Education,” <http://en.unesco.org/gced>.

<sup>67</sup> “Homeland Security Advisory Council: Subcommittee on Countering Violent Extremism: Interim Report and Recommendations: June 2016,” 23, <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/HSAC/HSAC%20CVE%20Final%20Interim%20Report%20June%209%202016%20508%20compliant.pdf>.

<sup>68</sup> Open Government Partnership (OGP), “About,” <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about>.

<sup>69</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Basic Facts about the Universal Periodic Review,” <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Basic-Facts.aspx>.

state under review; 2) reports of independent human rights experts and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities; and 3) information from other stakeholders including national human rights institutions and nongovernmental organizations. Following an interactive discussion, the review committee drafts a report, involving the country under review, summarizing its findings and recommendations. In future UPRs, the state is expected to provide information on what concrete steps it has taken to implement the recommendations in the previous report.

- **Annual Trafficking in Persons Report.** Established in several successive pieces of legislation, the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report functions as the principal diplomatic tool to engage foreign governments on human trafficking. Using the TIP Report, the U.S. government assigns countries to one of four tiers based on minimum standards (set out in legislation) for the elimination of trafficking. Countries falling in the bottom tier for failing to meet the minimum standards and to make serious and sustained antitrafficking efforts face serious repercussions unless the president issues a waiver. Consequences may include restrictions on nonhumanitarian, non-trade-related foreign assistance; participation in cultural and educational exchanges; and U.S. support for loans from multilateral institutions.<sup>70</sup>

Any of these templates could be adopted alone or in combination, to create, monitor, and enforce international principles on education reform. Getting Congressio-

nal buy-in is essential, particularly if the U.S. government wants noncompliance with the principles to carry real consequences.

## 2. INVESTING IN COMMUNITY-LED PREVENTION

Historically, efforts to counter extremist ideologies and narratives have been reactive. Rather than anticipating emerging threats, appropriate resources and expertise are often deployed after the fact. The public health field offers some important lessons for breaking this reactive cycle. A public health-based approach to CVE would entail detecting and interrupting a behavior before it becomes dangerous and spreads, changing the thinking of those most at risk, and, in time, reshaping the social norms that exacerbate those risks.<sup>71</sup>

To invest in community-led prevention, the United States and its allies must:

- *Build trust among key communities and potential partners.* The United States and its allies need to build bridges with a wide range of grassroots actors and invest in relationship-building and ongoing communication.
- *Improve detection and referral.* Systematizing the identification of local warning signs, raising awareness, and intervening before extremist ideologies spread is vital to a more effective strategy.
- *Raise awareness about radicalization and recruitment.* Within the United States, the government should work with civil society and the private sector to expand community awareness programs and organize safe spaces for parents, students, and teachers to learn about how terrorists radicalize and recruit youth, on- and offline.
- *Increase investment in intervention, rehabilitation, and reintegration efforts in frontline communities.* Long-term, flexible investments in community-level responses are essential to preventing radicalization and recruitment and reintegrating those who succumb to extremist narratives.

### Building trust among key communities and potential partners

To succeed in the struggle against violent extremism, the United States and its allies must create authentic, collaborative, and sustained relationships with ac-

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report: June 2016," June 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258876.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> Cure Violence, "The Model," <http://cureviolence.org/the-model/the-model/>.

tors on the frontlines—including concerned citizens, religious leaders, public health and social workers, teachers, and private-sector representatives. Credible local actors are best placed to counter the recruiting narratives and tactics of violent extremists and provide compelling alternatives. These community leaders are also in the strongest position to address the underlying grievances making their loved ones vulnerable to extremist ideologies.

Unfortunately, these opportunities have not been fully realized due to a profound trust deficit between governments, nongovernmental partners, and local actors. In many communities, families live in fear of law enforcement or are alienated from formal government, civic, and religious structures. Particularly in dictatorships, the opportunities for partnership are extremely limited. Peer-to-peer exchanges, cultural activity, and social media platforms are controlled. Official imams are often discredited, as they are perceived as being co-opted by the government. Furthermore, when governments only reach out to their preferred interlocutor, it creates a disingenuous relationship with communities. Governments need to “go wide and go deep to bring in as many diverse voices within a community as possible.”<sup>72</sup>

This trust gap has real security implications. Mothers and fathers are less likely to report concerns or seek help when their child is falling under the sway of recruiters if they do not trust authorities or believe their child will be treated fairly. Women’s groups may be wary of engaging in CVE-related efforts if their security or credibility is compromised, or if their operations have been negatively impacted by other counterterrorism measures. And young people are unlikely to consult a local imam whom they see as part of a corrupt and oppressive system.

Rebuilding trust will not happen overnight. It will require extensive engagement and respect for the priorities and values of the communities concerned. Clumsy government outreach can be profoundly risky, endangering local participants and diminishing their credibility. Similarly, private-sector actors need to be able to partner with the government without being perceived as acting on its behalf.

The town of Slough, England, provides one example of partnership, which benefits a broad range of lo-

cal actors and furthers CVE efforts. There, police officers partnered with local businesses to fund and organize programs to empower women in the local community.<sup>73</sup> Programming sought to address the needs of women from minority communities by providing access to career guidance sessions, mentorship from local business leaders, English language workshops, and related vocational training. These programs have not only strengthened social services available to disadvantaged populations, but also have improved relations between community members and law enforcement. As a result, they collaborate more readily with local police on CVE, including communicating their concerns about individuals being radicalized or recruited.<sup>74</sup> As this example demonstrates, governments interested in CVE must evidence that they are committed to helping locals address their concerns and priorities. Such an approach creates opportunities to engage on more sensitive issues like CVE once trust is established.

Finally, building trust with local actors requires creating new influencer networks that can do things that governments cannot. This is a vital partnership tool that should be recognized more broadly. For example, in 2008, the U.S. government provided a small seed grant to the Vienna-based organization Women Without Borders to create a network of women who could push back against violent extremism. With a light U.S. footprint but transparent actions, this organization was able to launch Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE)—first in Europe and then globally.

<sup>72</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Farah Pandith, CSIS, July 22, 2016.

<sup>73</sup> UK Department for Communities and Local Government, *Empowering Muslim Women: Case Studies* (London: UK Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008), 10, [http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7422/7/669801\\_Redacted.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7422/7/669801_Redacted.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, phone interview with Talene Bilazarian, CSIS, August 17, 2016.

In the years since, SAVE has grown exponentially and seeded dozens of grassroots CVE programs as well as designing new models for schools, mothers, and the next generation. The U.S. government should build on these investments, expanding and sustaining networks of credible local actors to confront extremist ideologies and narratives.

## Improving detection and referral

### Identifying early-warning signs

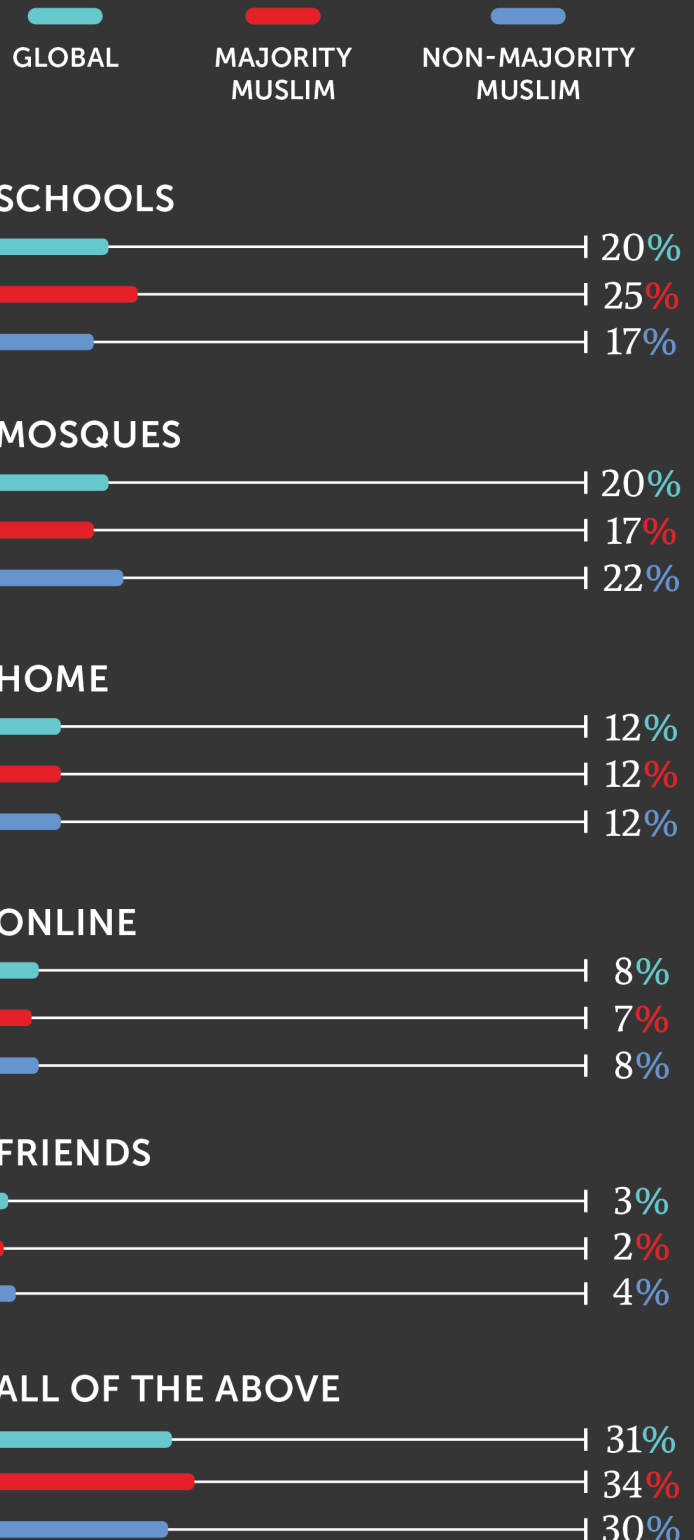
Adopting a proactive approach to CVE requires engaging at the earliest sign that extremist ideologies are taking hold. At the community-level, such warning signs include:

#### **Threats to civil society, human rights defenders, and journalists.**

In many environments, courageous civil society actors who speak out against violent extremism come under attack. For example, in Bangladesh, violent extremists have conducted a spate of attacks against vocal critics and bloggers. Asif Mohiuddin, a self-described “militant atheist” blogger, was stabbed near his office in Dhaka because of his public opposition to religious extremism.<sup>75</sup> Pakistan has experienced similar tragedies. In April 2015, unidentified gunmen shot human rights advocate Sabeen Mahmud, who had just hosted an event on Balochistan’s disappeared people in her bookshop café in Karachi—a rare space for discussion of social and political issues. In addition to the human cost, threats to freedoms of association, expression, and assembly are clear indicators that violent extremists are seeking to intimidate and establish control over local citizens.

<sup>75</sup> Shannon N. Green, “Violent Groups Aggravate Government Crackdowns on Civil Society,” OpenDemocracy, April 25, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/shannon-n-green/violent-groups-aggravate-government-crackdowns-on-civil-society>.

# BEST PLACES TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM



Source: Views from Around the World: Countering Violent Extremism  
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/survey-findings-global-perceptions-violent-extremism>

**Attacks on historical and cultural sites.** Extremist groups routinely target cultural and historical sites as part of a strategy to undermine community cohesion and resistance. The Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2001 is an emblematic example. As is Saudi Arabia's destruction of ancient, pluralistic Mecca and the subsequent construction of a modern city where, as Ziauddin Sardar has written, "only one, ahistoric, literal interpretation of Islam is permitted, and where all other sects, outside of the Salafist brand of Saudi Islam, are regarded as false."<sup>76</sup> The destruction of historic places gives violent extremist groups the ability to rewrite the past and impose a particular ideological vision on the present. Such attacks—sometimes justified as a war on idolatry—often serve a military purpose as well, shocking locals into submission. Throughout Syria, Iraq, and Libya, ISIS has deliberately focused on libraries, museums, and other sites of great cultural and historical significance along its path of devastation; it also gains funds through the illegal sale of antiquities on the black market. If violent extremists succeed in their war on culture, the world will lose proof of the diversity of religious belief, including within Islam, and the heritage of ancient civilizations.<sup>77</sup>

Helping these societies protect valued sites and artifacts is essen-

tial to upholding their dignity and historical memory, and thus, is an important element of prevention. Existing international resources are woefully inadequate to this task. Protecting cultural heritage and diversity from the "scorched earth" tactics of violent extremists requires providing technical, financial, and potentially security assistance to academics and conservationists, regional governments, law enforcement agencies, and tribal and religious leaders in areas rich with sacred sites. Quickly rebuilding destroyed sites is also critical to undermining the effects—and utility—of such acts of destruction.<sup>78</sup>

**Threats to religious diversity and practice.** One of the most visible early manifestations of violent extremism is these groups' hostility toward religious diversity. Their insistence on ideological purity means that those who differ in their beliefs or practices are subject to enslavement, torture, or death. As a result, religious minorities have been slaughtered by the thousands, their very existence considered a threat to extremist narratives. For example, Christians, Yazidis, Shi'a, and countless other minorities have been killed, enslaved, raped, and tortured by ISIS.<sup>79</sup> In Pakistan, as in some other parts of South Asia, the Ahmadis have faced discrimination and violence for generations, suffering their most recent publicized massacre in Lahore in 2010.<sup>80</sup>

The international community must track threats to religious diversity and develop new tools, including in the atrocity prevention space, to preserve religious freedom and protect at-risk religious and ethnic minorities.

## Raising Awareness

Even where local actors already oppose violent extremism, they may not have the tools or information to sufficiently respond. There is a need to rapidly expand awareness-raising efforts about the dangers of radicalization and recruitment to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies through communities, families, and extended social networks.<sup>81</sup> In the same way that parents, community leaders, physicians, teachers, coaches, and religious leaders are taught to spot signs of drug use, depression, sexual abuse, and criminal behavior, they should be made aware of the indicators of disaffection or grievance that can facilitate radicalization.

Community leaders, families, educators, and civil society organizations should be given insights into behaviors or actions that may indicate growing interest in or support for violent extremist groups. While there is no agreed-upon set of warning signs, law enforcement officials, former extremists, and technology companies could increase briefings

<sup>76</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, "The Destruction of Mecca," *New York Times*, September 30, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/01/opinion/the-destruction-of-mecca.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/01/opinion/the-destruction-of-mecca.html?_r=0).

<sup>77</sup> Pandith and Zarate, "Winning the War of Ideas."

<sup>78</sup> Bruno S. Frey and Dominic Rohner, "Protecting Cultural Monuments against Terrorism," *Defence and Peace Economics* 18, no. 3 (2007): 245–52.

<sup>79</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: ISIS Kidnaps Shia Turkmen, Destroys Shrines: Pillaging, Threats in Capture of Villages near Mosul," June 27, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/27/iraq-isis-kidnaps-shia-turkmen-destroys-shrines>.

<sup>80</sup> Rizwan Mohammed and Karin Brulliard, "Militants Attack Two Ahmadi Mosques in Pakistan; 80 Killed," *Washington Post*, May 28, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/28/AR2010052800686.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Lynn Davies, Zubeda Limbada, Laura Zahra McDonald, Basia Spalek, and Doug Weeks, "Formers & Families: Transition Journeys in and out of violent extremism in the UK," ConnectJustice, 2015; Hedayah and the Global Center on Cooperative Security, "The Roles of Families and Communities in Strengthening Community Resilience Against Violent Extremism," Meeting Note, May, 2014.

<sup>82</sup> Tower Hamlets Partnership, *Tower Hamlets Prevention Action Plan: April 2008 to March 2011* (London: Tower Hamlets Partnership, June 2010), <http://www.towerhamletsfoi.org.uk/documents/3034/LBTH%20%20Prevent%20Action%20Plan%20June2010.pdf>.

to community members on the recruitment tactics that violent extremist groups use, on- and offline, provide a menu of factors often present during pre-radicalization, and raise awareness of behavior changes or activity associated with radicalization. Awareness-raising should be incorporated into ongoing public safety or public health programs to mainstream the effort and avoid the tendency to see violent extremism as something entirely distinct from other dangers affecting communities.

Forexample, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, law enforcement combined early-intervention programs with a reporting mechanism to log hate crimes against Muslims.<sup>82</sup> This initiative integrated the threat of radicalization into a broader approach of safeguarding the entire community, putting community-identified needs first, improving community cohesion, and closing the trust gap. As a result, over a two-year period, community referrals about potential terrorist threats increased by 800 percent.

## Increasing investment in intervention and rehabilitation

### *Creating the community infrastructure for early intervention*

Addressing the threat of violent extremism requires building up a cadre of skilled, credible community-level actors to engage in outreach efforts, offer counseling and conflict-mitigation techniques to those susceptible to violence, and develop alternatives for at-risk individuals. Given the

unique ideological factors that draw people to violent extremism, not just anyone is qualified to intervene, regardless of their professional or religious background.<sup>83</sup> Those involved in this sensitive work must be highly trained to deal with the specific drivers and motivations involved.

The goal of early intervention efforts is to enhance a community's ability to act when it perceives a vulnerability. There are many successes using this approach to tamp down on gang violence in the United States and prevent radicalization abroad. For instance, since 2000, Cure Violence has applied public health techniques to disrupt violence in communities throughout the United States. Using a mix of interventions, including providing safe spaces for youth, getting out in communities to detect potential flare-ups of violence, and training local actors on conflict prevention, Cure Violence reduced shootings in Chicago's most dangerous neighborhood by 67 percent and in Baltimore by 56 percent.<sup>84</sup> These gains have proven fragile, once again underscoring the need for a steady and sustained presence and strategy for violence prevention.

Internationally, women have been at the forefront of such efforts. The PAIMAN Trust, led by Mossarat Qadeem, trains youth and women across the most conflict-afflicted regions of Pakistan to address the specific drivers of radicalization. PAIMAN has established male and female peace groups throughout the Federally Administered Tribal Areas to educate their respective communities on the signs of radicalization and build their capacity to mediate conflicts.<sup>85</sup> These

groups have prevented approximately 1,500 boys and young men from being recruited by violent extremists. Similarly, Mothers' Schools, created by Women without Borders, connect mothers within their communities and across the globe to confidentially discuss warning signs and intervene with their children before they get too far down the path of radicalization.<sup>86</sup> In addition, women's groups, either individually or through networks, have continued to advance women's empowerment, challenge oppressive norms and legislation, and support women's inclusion in peace and security processes. These are all critical measures for challenging violent extremists' assault on women's rights and security.

Training and empowering community members, particularly women, allows communities to take charge of radicalization at its earliest stages.

### *Developing off-ramps*

A key gap in CVE efforts is the lack of "off-ramps"—programs that provide support for individuals who are being radicalized, but have yet to become violent or commit a criminal act. Developing off-ramps is essential because law enforcement's tools are circumscribed and because community members are less likely to come forward if the only potential outcome is criminal prosecution. When investigating someone, law enforcement agencies can bring criminal charges, continue the investigation if it meets a certain threshold, or close the case and move on. Without viable off-ramps, law enforcement officials have nowhere to turn to get

<sup>83</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview and podcast with Jesse Morton, CSIS, June 23, 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, phone interview and podcast with Gary Slutkin, CSIS, July 21, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview and podcast with Mossarat Qadeem, CSIS, June 22, 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview and podcast with Edit Schlaffer, CSIS, August 4, 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 53 others at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

help for people like Omar Mateen, who, though disturbed and sympathetic to extremist causes, had not yet committed a criminal offense.<sup>87</sup> Such off-ramps could be used to address violent extremism of all stripes, preventing the retaliatory escalation of violence that we are seeing in the United States and elsewhere. For example, Dylan Roof, the 21-year-old who gunned down nine black churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina, told friends he intended to murder in order to catalyze “a race war.”

Throughout the United States, there are emerging programs in which community groups are working closely with law enforcement, local officials, counselors, families, and public health professionals to identify disillusioned young people and steer them away from violence before it is too late. For example, in Montgomery County, Maryland, WORDE (World Organization for Resource Development and Education) has been a pioneer in community-led intervention. Begun in late 2013, WORDE works closely with the Montgomery County Police Department, local government officials, trauma counselors, youth activists, faith leaders, and violence-prevention experts to assess each program participant’s unique grievances and motivations, and intervene to reduce these risk factors. This model functions on the trust fostered between the community and law enforcement officials to not only combat the allure of extremism but also coordinate and execute interventions based on referrals.<sup>88</sup>

### *Focusing on Rehabilitation and Reintegration*

Increasingly, justice sector officials are looking for alternatives or supplements to jail for extremists who have committed a criminal offense (e.g., providing material support to a terrorist group) but have not engaged in violence. Expanding alternative sentences to incarceration, particularly for young people who have fallen prey to extremist recruiters, is viewed as a moral imperative but is also strategic. In Minneapolis, where 10 Somali-Americans attempted to flee the United States to fight for ISIS, U.S. District Judge Michael Davis called on deradicalization expert Daniel Koehler to evaluate each defendant’s path to radicalization and propose a plan to turn him away from extremism.<sup>89</sup> This evaluation will inform Judge Davis’s decision about what sentencing and additional support is needed to rehabilitate these individuals.

A few countries have gone a step further, piloting deradicalization programs in prison. For example, Dr. Fatima Akilu, psychologist and initiator of Nigeria’s deradicalization program, focuses on loosening Boko Haram’s psychological and ideological grip on Nigerian prisoners. This program takes a comprehensive approach, incorporating religious education with local imams, psychological counseling, and basic life skills training to mold behaviors and ultimately produce a change in attitude.<sup>90</sup>

Given the nature of the radicalization process and the potential for further radicalization in prisons, the United States must contin-

<sup>88</sup> World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE), “The Montgomery County BRAVE Model,” <http://www.worde.org/programs/the-montgomery-county-model/>.

<sup>89</sup> Nicole Hong, “Judge Tries New Approach with Terror Defendants: Deradicalization,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/judge-tries-new-approach-with-terror-defendants-deradicalization-1462751841>.

<sup>90</sup> Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview and podcast with Fatima Akilu, CSIS, June 22, 2016.

ue to experiment with alternative sentencing practices and rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. These programs should be rigorously monitored and evaluated to draw conclusions about their efficacy and replicability.

### Signature Recommendation

***Support community-led prevention efforts, including awareness raising, intervention, and rehabilitation, by enlarging the space (i.e., legal and policy environment) for civil society to do this work.***

The U.S. government needs to create legal and policy frameworks, with clear boundaries, procedures, and principles, to govern community-led intervention and rehabilitation efforts within the United States. In particular, there need to be codified protocols for referrals—that is, when law enforcement agencies will refer cases to community groups, and when community groups will refer cases to law enforcement agencies. Guidelines must also be in place for how community-based organizations should follow up with program participants and what to do about those who drop out or are not compliant with the intervention regimen.

Moreover, the U.S. government should clarify the rules around material support and create exceptions for vetted civil society and community groups that are engaged in prevention, intervention, deradicalization, rehabilitation, or reintegration in the United States or overseas. Currently, civil society actors take great legal and reputational risks in engaging potential extremists or those who have already fallen under the sway of terrorist recruiters. Without greater written protections, a critical mass of organizations and community

leaders will never get involved in this indispensable work.

The U.S. government also needs to reach out to companies to increase their understanding and buy-in for intervention efforts. Currently, building managers, telecommunications firms, and other service providers do not want to rent office space or provide support to civil society actors doing this work. U.S. government officials can help by destigmatizing these efforts and encouraging these companies to support CVE in a variety of ways.

Finally, the United States and its allies need to enhance protections for the courageous individuals on the frontlines of combating extremists' ideologies and narratives. Numerous funds and programs exist to help scholars, civil society activists, and journalists threatened because of their human rights work. These efforts provide temporary relocation opportunities to extricate individuals

from dangerous situations and/or small grants that organizations can use for personal security, hardening their offices' physical defenses, legal costs, prison visits, trial monitoring, equipment replacement, etc.<sup>91</sup> In the face of increasing threats from violent extremist groups, such funds should be expanded to civil society organizations and community-based actors working on CVE.

### 3. SATURATING THE GLOBAL MARKET-PLACE OF IDEAS

Violent extremists have thrived by coopting local grievances and conflicts and grafting them onto a universal narrative of "us versus them." ISIS, for example, has succeeded at recruiting foreign fighters because it crafted tailored messages that resonated with its target audiences and provided a simple, affirmative solution for whatever ailed them—"join us and help build



SHERMAN JACKSON AND AHMED ABBADI, COMMISSIONERS

<sup>91</sup> Lifeline, "Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund," <https://www.csolifeline.org/>.

an ideal society where you will always belong.” Similarly, al Qaeda offered a narrative of empowerment, an opportunity to strike back at “foreign aggressors.” To protect youth from being radicalized, we must not only ensure they understand how and why violent extremists are targeting them, but also disrupt recruiters’ efforts to make these linkages. It is not enough to merely counter these messages. We have to put our own affirmative vision forward, amplifying many different kinds of ideas and voices.

To saturate the global marketplace of ideas, the United States and its allies must:

- *Reboot strategic communications efforts.* The United States and its allies need to fundamentally rethink the scale and delivery of “counternarratives” and “alternative narratives”, on- and offline. Strategic communications efforts will only be effective if they are organic, embedded in local peer networks, delivered by credible messengers, and articulate a positive vision for society.
- *Engage the private sector to produce and deliver compelling narratives across media platforms.* The storytelling and technical know-how of leading technology and digital media companies, when paired with local knowledge, perspectives, and communication specialists, can professionalize and amplify efforts to promote alternative and counternarratives.
- *Create alternative opportunities for young people to achieve meaning and status.* Helping youth channel their energy and passion in a positive direction is necessary for decreasing the potency of extremist ideologies and narratives.

## Rebooting strategic communications efforts

The vast majority of Muslims worldwide reject extremist ideologies and the groups that espouse them. A 2015 Pew survey found that most citizens in Muslim-majority countries detest ISIS. In Indonesia, only 4 percent of respondents had a favorable view of ISIS; in Pakistan it was 9 percent. In Turkey, 73 percent of respondents had an unfavorable view, compared to 8 percent favorable (and 19 percent who did not know). In the Palestinian territories, the unfavorables jump to 84 percent, while in Jordan 94 percent of those polled had a dismal view of the terrorist group. In Lebanon,

100 percent of respondents had a negative view of ISIS.<sup>92</sup> Not surprisingly, respondents from countries closer in proximity and more directly affected by ISIS’s rise, and the resulting refugee flows, had much more hostile views toward the terrorist group.

This rejection of violent extremism is not unique to ISIS. Extremist ideologies are often at odds with local beliefs and practices. Rigid interpretations of the Quran, promoted by violent extremist groups, often clash with grassroots traditions that are more pluralistic and tolerant. These differences may be magnified by their tactics—excessive violence, cruelty, and oppression of locals—which can further undermine public sympathies.<sup>93</sup> For example, following the 2002 terrorist bombings in Bali, citizens cooperated to build a “peace park” on the site of the attack to mobilize popular opinion against violent extremist groups.<sup>94</sup> Aversion to terrorist tactics can be a powerful tool in the struggle against violent extremism if the voices of the majority of Muslims are heard. Unfortunately, one-off statements, speeches, or sound-bites cannot substitute for a consistent and normalized view that this sentiment exists.

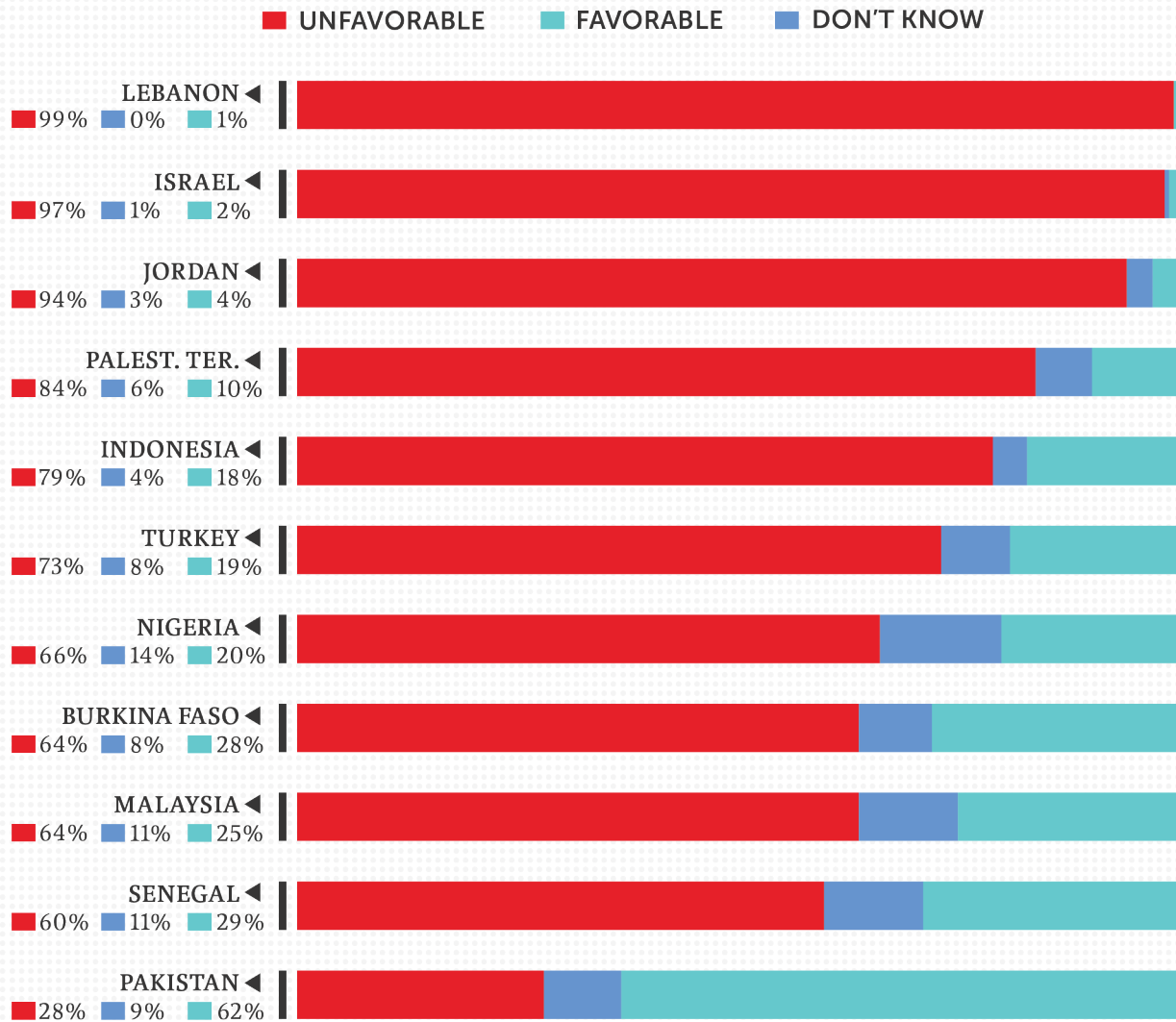
In spite of this deep-seated antipathy, the United States and its allies have not effectively competed with extremists’ narratives, on- or offline. Much of the attention to CVE in the last few years has been focused on “countermessaging.” Yet, these programs have had mixed success because of the absence of creativity, risk-taking, and nimbleness within government bureaucracies; lack of funding; and difficulty

<sup>92</sup> Jacob Poushter, “In Nations with Significant Muslim Populations, Much Disdain for ISIS,” Pew Research Center, November 17, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/>.

<sup>93</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

# VIEWS OF ISIS OVERWHELMINGLY NEGATIVE



Source: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/>, Chart titled "Views of ISIS Overwhelmingly Negative"

in scaling up what works. Messaging efforts are also bound to disappoint when they are designed from foreign capitals, detached from reality, reactive, or solely focused on what we are against. "Norms shaping"—the aim of strategic communications efforts—is not possible without credible messengers carrying a message that appeals to local communities and addresses the contextually specific push and pull factors driving support for extremist ideologies.

Narrative efforts must be anchored in the local social context, in the communities and networks in which violent extremism thrives. Technology-driven solutions, in and of themselves, cannot push young people in a positive direction. Alternative narratives must have roots on the ground to produce behavioral change. Moreover, messaging efforts will never have the intended impact if we are always on the defensive and countering the narratives set by the

enemy. We must be prepared to advance a positive vision for society: one based on fundamental values of diversity, equality, dignity, and justice.

Ultimately, civil society and Muslim leaders are in the best position to advance alternative narratives and interpretations. The job of governments is to make sure that they have the space and support to play this pivotal role.

## Engaging the private sector

The social media revolution and the rise in global connectivity have presented new opportunities for violent extremist groups to spread their propaganda and recruit a new generation of adherents. They are able to falsely inflate their image—and the perception of their successes—through their online network of committed supporters and validators. These online recruit-

**“It is not enough to merely counter these messages. We have to put our own affirmative vision forward, amplifying many different kinds of ideas and voices.”**

ment efforts are highly organized and hierarchical. The most effective method to turn the tide on extremists’ dominance over the narrative is to amplify the voices of the vast majority of people who are speaking out against extremist ideas.

Private-sector partnerships will be necessary to scale our efforts to

the immensity of the challenge. Extremists have proven far nimbler than governments in using digital tools and popular culture to drive radical narratives. To move away from a reactive posture, marketing and communications expertise from the private sector must be harnessed. The next administration needs to help facilitate collaboration between private companies, nonprofit actors, and government agencies. For example, the U.S. government could sponsor exchange programs between technology companies and local and national government officials to build knowledge, expand expertise, and establish relationships.<sup>95</sup>

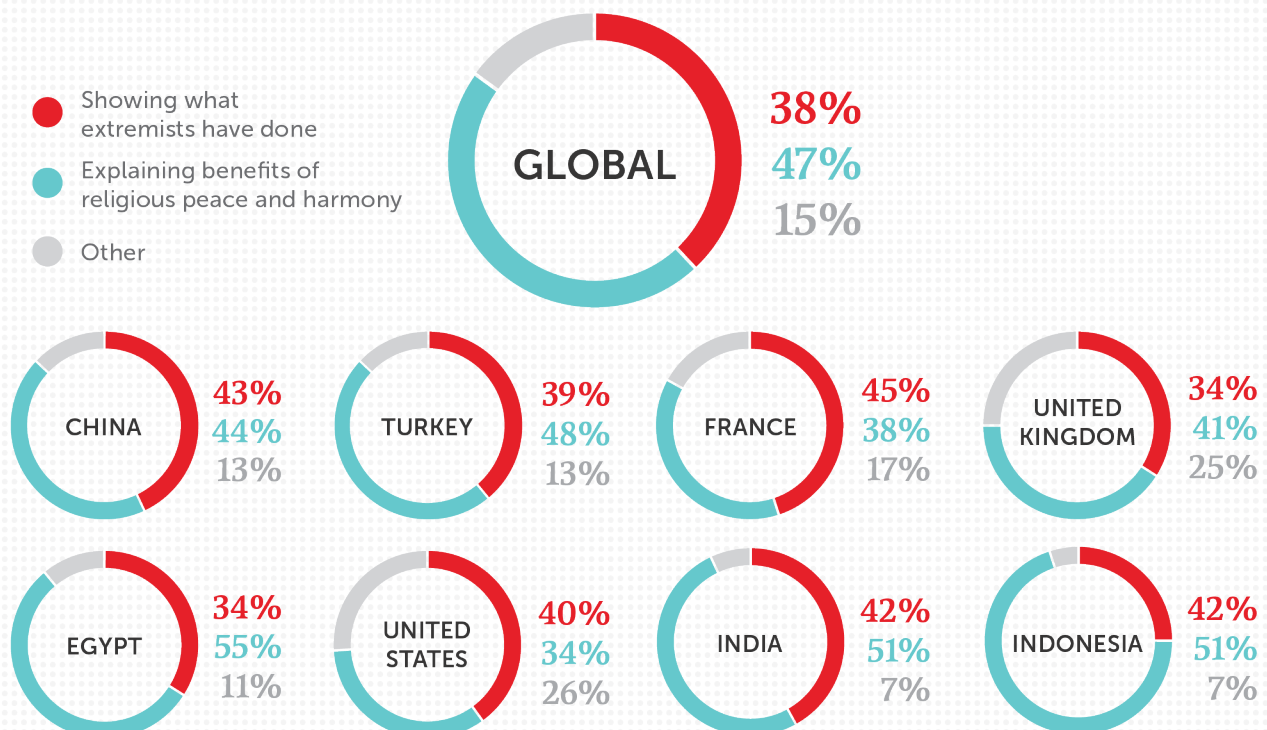
Social media and technology companies, as the hub of global communications, also offer important

opportunities to identify and evaluate the most effective messages, messengers, and platforms for disseminating proven messages and targeting narratives to particular online users. For example, they can determine how target audiences interacted with messages, whether they shared or amplified them, and what they did online after consuming the content. Our instincts on CVE are often misguided, so data collection and analysis are critical to the success of strategic communications efforts. Developing research and analytical partnerships with universities, think tanks, and the technology sector can produce the knowledge and data we need to craft more effective narratives. The government has an important but low-profile role to play in such

<sup>95</sup> “Homeland Security Advisory Council,” 23.

## POSITIVE MESSAGES ESSENTIAL FOR OVERCOMING EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

What imagery is more effective in countermessaging campaigns?



efforts, using its convening power to build research coalitions, providing long-term funding for analytical efforts, and sharing cutting-edge research on the drivers of violent extremism. Using data to guide messaging will help to create campaigns that have more credibility and successfully target the audiences that violent extremist groups are trying to reach.

Similarly, the creative community and entertainment industry offer critical insights and tools to promote alternative narratives. Research has found that narrative media, such as television shows and radio soap operas, can provide a space for audience members to explore their values and process difficult or emotionally fraught material in an unthreatening way. For instance, in Egypt, an immensely popular competition reality show subtly embedded messages of hope and tolerance for Egypt's struggling youth cohort. The contestants, 14 young Egyptians from a diverse range of cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, work closely with one another to become the next top entrepreneur and succeed because of, rather than in spite of, their differences.

Children's entertainment is also an important venue for engaging with communities and inculcating respect for civic values, because families tend to watch TV, listen to the radio, or read books together. For example, in Pakistan, artists and producers are taking on extremists' propaganda through cartoons, apps, and comic books that give youth positive role models and heroes to emulate.<sup>96</sup> Such efforts must be stepped up. Music, film, video games, and television shows offer profound, but largely untapped, opportunities to shape attitudes at an early age.

To work effectively toward shared ends, governments need to identify meaningful entry points for collaboration with the private sector. The tech community and entertainment industry are made up of problem solvers, engineers, and storytellers who can perform well when presented with a discrete, actionable challenge—and poorly when goals are not clear or realistic.

### Creating alternative opportunities for young people

Alternative narratives will prove empty if they promote paths that do not exist on the ground. It is vital that narratives are attached to meaningful opportunities for youth to prove themselves. Where youth are unable to marry, start families, or make a full transition into adulthood,

violent extremists give actionable answers. Providing peaceful opportunities for young people to pursue meaning, stature, and belonging will help defuse interest in extremist ideologies and narratives.

Successful examples abound. In eastern Afghanistan, the Natural Resources Counter-insurgency Cell (NRCC), in collaboration with local elders, developed a leadership development program for up-and-coming young men—precisely the kinds of individuals who would make ideal mid-level commanders for insurgent groups. The program found that these young men were primarily motivated by a desire to achieve status in their communities, so the NRCC developed a highly selective, merit-based training program—in other words, an alternative status marker for the community—and created small development projects that participants could design, lead, and implement. The program appeared to succeed in driving down local recruitment and attacks.<sup>97</sup>

In the United States, prominent imams are dealing with the challenge of violent extremism by getting young people involved in community service. For example, one imam orchestrates outings with local refugee families and service trips to refugee camps in Jordan. The goal is to get young people engaged and to demonstrate that they can make a difference by serving their community in positive ways.

To give narratives life and validity, we must help create opportunities for young people to funnel their energy and desire to make a difference into peaceful, productive, and sustainable outcomes.

<sup>96</sup> Lawrence Pintak, "Can Cartoons Save Pakistan's Children from Jihad?," *Foreign Policy*, August 19, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/19/can-cartoons-save-pakistans-children-from-jihad/>.

<sup>97</sup> Rachel Kleinfeld and Harry Bader, *Extreme Violence and the Rule of Law: Lessons from Eastern Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2014), [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/violence\\_rule\\_of\\_law.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/violence_rule_of_law.pdf).



MARTHA MINOW, COMMISSIONER

### Signature Recommendation

***Establish an independent presidential advisory council composed of technology and private-sector representatives to provide guidance and innovative ideas to the president on how best to compete and win the war of ideas.*** Modeled on the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, an independent element within the Executive Office of the President, the council would have four main functions: formulating various approaches to reducing the spread of hate speech and extremist propaganda online; ensuring that CVE efforts abide by the Constitution and all applicable laws; sharing information about how extremists are using digital platforms to inform messaging campaigns and community briefings; and forging new partnerships to contest extremist narratives and amplify alternatives. This body would be a critical ligament to the private sector and would provide a consistent platform for engagement and solidifying public-private partnerships—which is currently a major gap in CVE efforts.

## 4. ALIGNING POLICIES AND VALUES

The most compelling message violent extremists can deploy against the United States and its allies is the charge of hypocrisy. When the United States abandons bedrock principles, such as keeping suspected terrorists indefinitely detained at Guantanamo Bay or torturing prisoners at Abu Ghraib, we not only undermine our own credibility, but also supply violent extremists with fodder for their narratives. We must do better. The Commission acknowledges

that foreign policy is often driven by pragmatic requirements and that there are occasionally competing priorities that cannot be easily reconciled. Yet, that is no excuse for the United States not to press its allies and partners to take meaningful steps to improve respect for human rights.

To better align policies with values, the United States and its allies must:

- *Prioritize rule of law and human rights.* We must elevate strengthening the rule of law, stemming corruption, and addressing injustice as part of a long-term investment in undermining support for violent extremism.
- *Resolve tensions between counterterrorism objectives and human rights.* Too often, human rights concerns are subordinated to other foreign policy priorities, including the need for counterterrorism cooperation. These tradeoffs should be minimized to avoid charges of U.S. hypocrisy that feed extremists' propaganda.
- *Protect and enlarge civic space as a foreign policy priority.* Civil society—and citizens' voices—must be protected in order to

address the grievances and narratives that drive radicalization and recruitment.

### Prioritizing rule of law and human rights

Oppressive, abusive and corrupt states are the headwaters from which violent extremism often springs. Where governments are predatory and unaccountable, recruits are largely motivated by a desire for justice and dignity.<sup>98</sup> The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development's Joint CVE Strategy underscores these findings: "in today's terrorist landscape, terrorist groups often thrive in areas with limited or abusive governance, weak rule of law, high degrees of violence and corruption... and where civil society has limited agency or space to operate."<sup>99</sup> Rooting out violent extremism, therefore, will require that we employ our diplomatic and development tools to promote human rights; advance government policies that support good governance and inclusion; enhance just law enforcement and security approaches; and reconcile policy tensions that advance short-term security cooperation at the expense of longer-term stability.

Taking such an approach will require the U.S. government to reorient its priorities, and budget accordingly. The primary objective should be working with partner countries to improve security sector practices, including increased engagement with local populations, within a civilian-led framework. The Security Governance Initiative (SGI), a multi-year \$65 million effort with six African countries—Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia—provides

one template. The central aim of this initiative is to help partner countries develop policies, structures, and processes to deliver security and justice to their citizens.<sup>100</sup> SGI is not focused on tactical-level engagements but rather on improving the management, oversight, accountability, and sustainability of security-sector institutions. Such approaches need to be strengthened in close partnership with civil society and expanded to other regions where security and law enforcement practices do more to drive violent extremism than ameliorate it.

In countries where the government has long relied on repression, discrimination, or corruption to maintain its grip on power, the relationship between the state and society is typically in shambles. Rebuilding the social contract between citizens and all levels of government must be part of the solution to violent extremism. Donors and policymakers need to look for opportunities to rebuild trust and mutual confidence—for example, by creating forums for governments and civil society to work together on issues of common concern—without jeopardizing the independence or legitimacy of civil society organizations.

### Resolving tensions between counterterrorism objectives and human rights

Overall, security and human rights are mutually reinforcing. Corruption and rampant abuses perpetrated by security forces undermine the long-term stability and prosperity of a state, while the failure to address these abuses may result in the United States not having a viable partner over the long term.

<sup>98</sup> Proctor, *Youth & Consequences*.

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Department of State & USAID Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism," May 2016, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/257913.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Security Governance Initiative: 2015 Review," March 2, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/2016/253906.htm>.

However, security cooperation—such as train-and-equip programs with partner government militaries and law enforcement agencies—can backfire when their values and interests diverge from our own, particularly on issues of human rights, accountability, and civilian oversight.<sup>101</sup> For example, in Somalia, the heavy-handed conduct of AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) partners—particularly the allegations of widespread civilian abuses and casualties—has, in spite of some field successes, undermined the effort to quash al Shabaab. Indeed, such partnerships can fuel grievances that motivate violence, such as when partners use heavy-handed tactics and extra-legal measures to address terrorist threats.<sup>102</sup>

The U.S. government should ensure that its commitment to strong security relationships abroad is matched by a commitment to human rights and the rule of law. Providing partners with training, equipment, and other support to fight terrorism runs the risk of exacerbating sympathy for terrorists if this assistance is not coupled with a parallel effort to developing partners' capacity to pursue democratic and rights-based approaches.<sup>103</sup> This will require improving collaboration, planning, and decisionmaking within the U.S. government to ensure that security cooperation decisions take broader foreign policy considerations into account and help advance our short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. It will also require training partner security forces to

address the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism in just and sustainable ways.<sup>104</sup>

### Protecting and enlarging civic space

An empowered civil society is one of the best defenses against violent extremism, serving as a powerful bulwark against the pernicious influences and narratives of extremist groups. Yet, in spite—or perhaps because—of the key role played by civil society, civic space is increasingly under siege. In 2015 alone, there were serious threats to civic freedoms in over 100 countries, including restrictions on foreign funding, onerous registration requirements, intrusive government oversight, and politicized charges or legal proceedings against nongovernmental organizations.<sup>105</sup> Many countries with serious terrorist threats, like Egypt, India, and Russia, have enacted laws or regulations limiting foreign support for civil society organizations. Elsewhere, as in Kenya, the government has waged a sustained campaign to discredit civil society actors. These restrictions have had a devastating impact on human rights and other civil society groups who are critical for addressing the underlying conditions that violent extremists exploit.

Whether threats to civil society come from violent extremists or governments, we must act to preserve civic space. The United States and its allies should engage consistently with partner governments to open and protect the space for civil society actors who are at the

forefront of CVE. They cannot perform this critical function when they are squeezed between violent extremists on the one hand and their governments on the other.<sup>106</sup>

### Signature Recommendation

***Review and monitor all security assistance provided to foreign partners to ensure that it is being used effectively to address terrorist threats and is in alignment with U.S. values and interests in advancing rule of law, dignity, and justice.*** The next administration should conduct a thorough review of all weapons transfers, train-and-equip programs, and other security assistance provided to countries that restrict political rights or civil liberties or with a record of other serious human rights violations. Countries ranked as “not free” or “partially free” in Freedom House’s annual index of Freedom in the World should be subjected to this review. The administration can triage this information with the Department of State’s annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and other independent human rights reports. This assessment should consider whether the assistance, on balance, is contributing to security and counterterrorism objectives or exacerbating the conditions exploited by violent extremist groups. Assistance should be suspended or used as leverage, as appropriate, to incentivize political reforms or improvements in human rights.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Nancy Lindborg, “The Causes and Consequences of Violent Extremism and the Role of Foreign Assistance” (testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, April 12, 2016), <http://www.usip.org/publications/2016/04/12/the-causes-and-consequences-of-violent-extremism-and-the-role-of-foreign>.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Civicus, *State of Civil Society Report 2016: Executive Summary* (New York: Civicus, June 2016), [http://civicus.org/images/documents/SOCS2016/summaries/State-of-Civil-Society-Report-2016\\_Exec-Summary.pdf](http://civicus.org/images/documents/SOCS2016/summaries/State-of-Civil-Society-Report-2016_Exec-Summary.pdf).

<sup>106</sup> Green, “Violent Groups Aggravate.”

## 5. DEPLOYING MILITARY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TOOLS

Preventing the radicalization and recruitment of young people and dealing with the physical manifestations of extremist ideologies will require mobilizing all elements of national and international power, including military and law enforcement tools. While the Commission believes that CVE must be kept separate from counterterrorism in terms of the tactics, agencies, and actors involved, an effective strategy will require soft and hard power operating at scale and in tandem.<sup>107</sup>

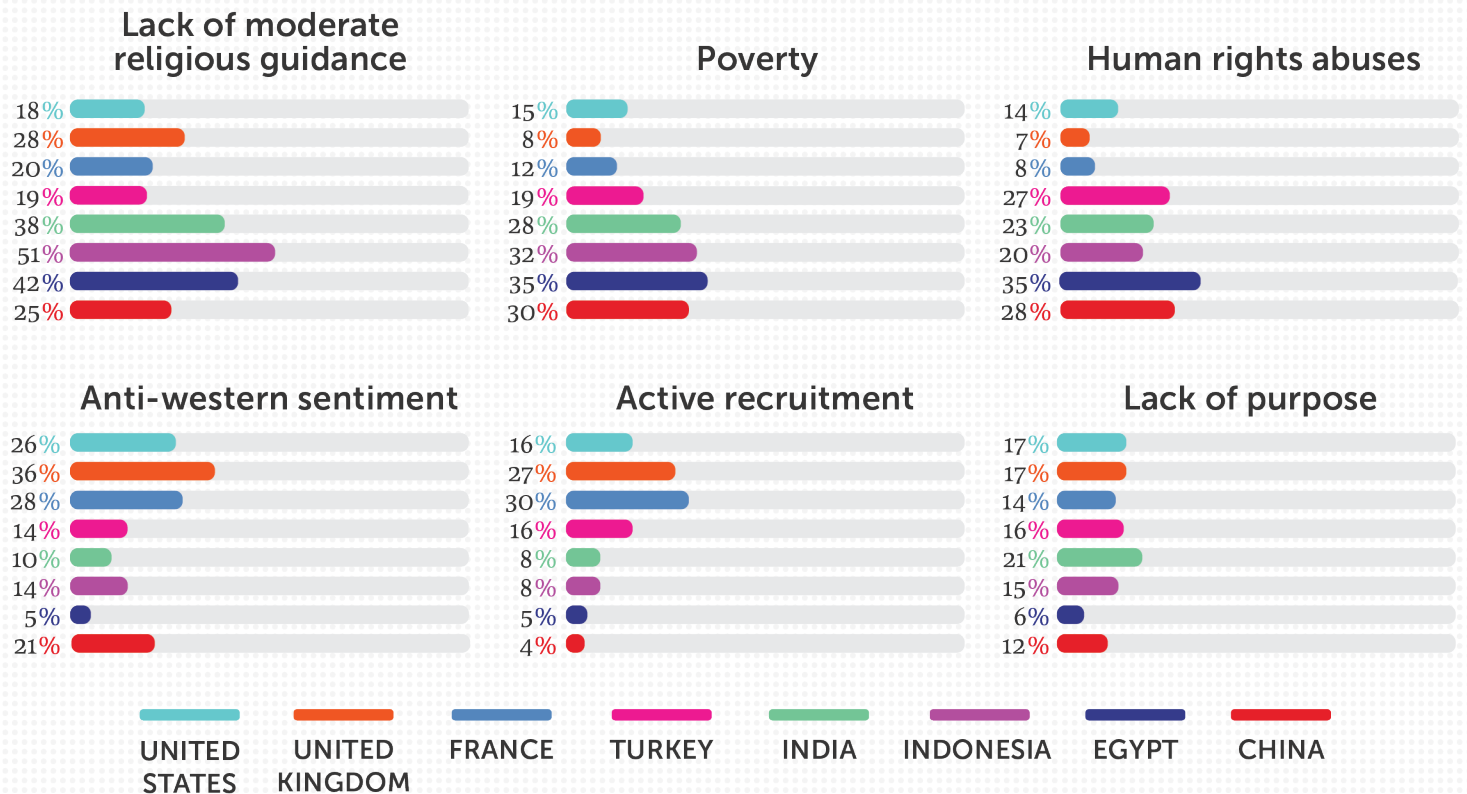
To effectively deploy military and law enforcement tools as part of a comprehensive strategy, the United States and its allies must:

- *Utilize counterterrorism tools as part of a broader political and diplomatic strategy.* The United States and its allies will need to continue to conduct military and law enforcement operations to avert and respond to immediate terrorist threats, dislodge extremist groups that control territory, assist and support other nations engaged in the fight against terrorism, and discredit terrorists' assertions of invincibility and momentum.

- *Strengthen counterterrorism capabilities.* The United States should deepen partnerships with frontline states and strengthen its own and its partners' operational capabilities to address today's global terrorist threats.
- *Build rapid response teams.* Militaries and law enforcement agencies should use their unique assets and training to protect civilian populations and important religious, cultural, and historical sites at risk from violent extremist groups.

<sup>107</sup> Some commissioners felt that discussions regarding military strategies were outside their areas of expertise, and accordingly did not participate in deliberations or recommendations on this topic.

## SECONDARY FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH VIOLENT EXTREMISM



## Utilizing counterterrorism tools as part of a broader strategy

Military force has been instrumental in reversing the territorial gains of violent extremists. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia, terrorist groups have been rolled back by military operations, curtailing safe havens and robbing them of access to funding sources (e.g., oil, artifacts and profits from extorting locals) that they could use to support their operations. United States-led military strikes have shrunk ISIS's operating space in Iraq and Syria and freed thousands from its brutality. The increase in information gathering on the battlefield in Afghanistan and elsewhere has led to more consequential counterterrorism operations against high-value targets. And high-profile military setbacks have helped puncture the propaganda and appeal of terrorist groups, such as al Shabaab.

Though the U.S. military, acting unilaterally or with partners, can effectively degrade a conventional terrorist group on foreign soil, military force is rarely the primary reason why terrorist organizations come to an end.<sup>108</sup> Where terrorists adopt the tactics of insurgents or guerillas and blend into the civilian population, police and intelligence agencies are often more important than military forces. They typically have a better understanding of the on-the-ground threat picture, can infiltrate the group in question, and are better placed to influence a political transition.

Military force and law enforcement approaches can play a vital role in slowing violent extremists' momentum and loosening their grip on territory, but extremist ideologies—and the long-term, generational threat they represent—will not be defeated on the battlefield. As former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen cautioned in 2008, "we can't kill our way to victory." Moreover, poorly executed kinetic responses that result in civilian casualties or undermine a government's authority are a propaganda boon for violent extremist groups and widen the chasm between American values and actions.

Military and law enforcement tools, then, are necessary but not sufficient for countering terrorism. These approaches need to be coordinated and embedded in a comprehensive strategy that also includes diplomacy, development, and cyber and information operations. Most importantly, soft and hard power must be better balanced to ensure that prevention is not always an after-thought.

**"An empowered civil society is one of the best defenses against violent extremism, serving as a powerful bulwark against the pernicious influences and narratives of extremist groups."**

<sup>108</sup> Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al-Qaida* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG741-1.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG741-1.sum.pdf).

## Strengthening counterterrorism capabilities

Resolve and clarity of purpose are critical for counterterrorism campaigns to be successful. The local population who might otherwise provide support to the terrorist organization must be convinced that external support will be provided for as long as is needed, even if the kind of support evolves as circumstances change.

The following components are also important, but should be calibrated to the particular region and dynamics in which the United States and its allies are operating:

- Invested partners on the ground, in the form of effective local government and security forces;
- Coalition partners, to increase legitimacy and augment constrained resources;
- Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, including unmanned aerial vehicles, strategic intelligence systems, and human intelligence resources;
- Special forces to help target terrorist leaders and communications infrastructure and train local security forces;
- Persistent close air support and tactical mobility to support local security forces; and
- Access arrangements to support efforts on the battlefield, especially in priority regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

Going forward, the United States should balance its conventional training focus with the development and retention of capabilities that will be effective in a long-term campaign against terrorist groups. This requires maintaining the ro-

bust Special Operations Forces and tactical military intelligence capabilities honed in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as investing in a broader set of tools needed for defeating terrorist groups. The U.S. military has largely reverted to its traditional training regimes to prepare soldiers for large-scale conventional conflicts. Policymakers need to strike a better balance training and equipping the U.S. armed forces for the spectrum of conflicts they are likely to face.

The United States should also demonstrate its sustained commitment to its partners, offering more systematic capacity-building assistance in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. For over 15 years, the U.S. military has relied upon ad hoc solutions to train partner militaries, using both a mix of general-purpose forces, special operations forces, and contractors. The results of these efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere have been disappointing. To address this issue, the United States should consider establishing a permanently staffed, specialized training component focused on providing instruction and guidance

to partner military forces. Currently under consideration by the U.S. Army, such a training component would encourage long-term relationships between the United States and partner security forces.<sup>109</sup> An institutionalized training component would also free up combat troops who previously would have been taken out of battle to train their counterparts. This training should include how to stabilize and establish governance in territory retaken from terrorists; how to engage effectively with communities, development agencies, and civil society organizations; and importantly, how to ensure respect for human rights and prevent civilian harm.

Finally, the U.S. government and its allies need to identify solutions for training foreign police forces. Long-term success in counterterrorism depends upon our partners developing effective police and intelligence services. Though international training for law enforcement exists, including through the International Law Enforcement Academies, the United States cannot train and maintain relationships with all police forces. To bridge this gap, especially in crisis zones, the



MARK J. PENN, COMMISSIONER

<sup>109</sup>Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Army Mulls Train & Advise Brigades: Gen. Milley," *Breaking Defense*, December 14, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/12/army-mulls-train-advise-brigades-gen-milley/>.

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**“Preventing the radicalization and recruitment of young people and dealing with the physical manifestations of extremist ideologies will require mobilizing all elements of national and international power, including military and law enforcement tools.”**

United States has pieced together support from the U.S. military, State Department, and private contractors. Rather than taking the lead on this element of the fight, at the risk of militarizing local police forces, the United States should leverage European and Asian allies that have comparable national police forces that can provide training.

**Building rapid response teams**

Military forces have unique assets and training that can be leveraged to protect civilian populations; important religious, cultural, and historical sites; and critical infrastructure or natural resources from terrorist groups. Strengthening these capabilities—including investing in the creation of specialized “jump teams” to protect civilians, sites, and infrastructure—is essential.

These teams should be led by skilled representatives of civilian, multilateral, or international organizations, and buttressed, as necessary, by military and police forces. Depending on the nature of the extremist threat, these teams would have two primary mandates: a) securing sacred religious, cultural, and historical sites and artifacts; and b) establishing humanitarian

corridors or protected zones for civilians. For example, the international community should build and institutionalize the capacity to conduct life-saving operations, such as the rescue mission on Mount Sinjar, which delivered food, water, and urgent supplies to Yazidis trapped by ISIS and lifted others to safety. In addition to being in line with U.S. values, helping preserve life and sacred sites would undermine terrorists’ assertions that the West is callous to others’ suffering.

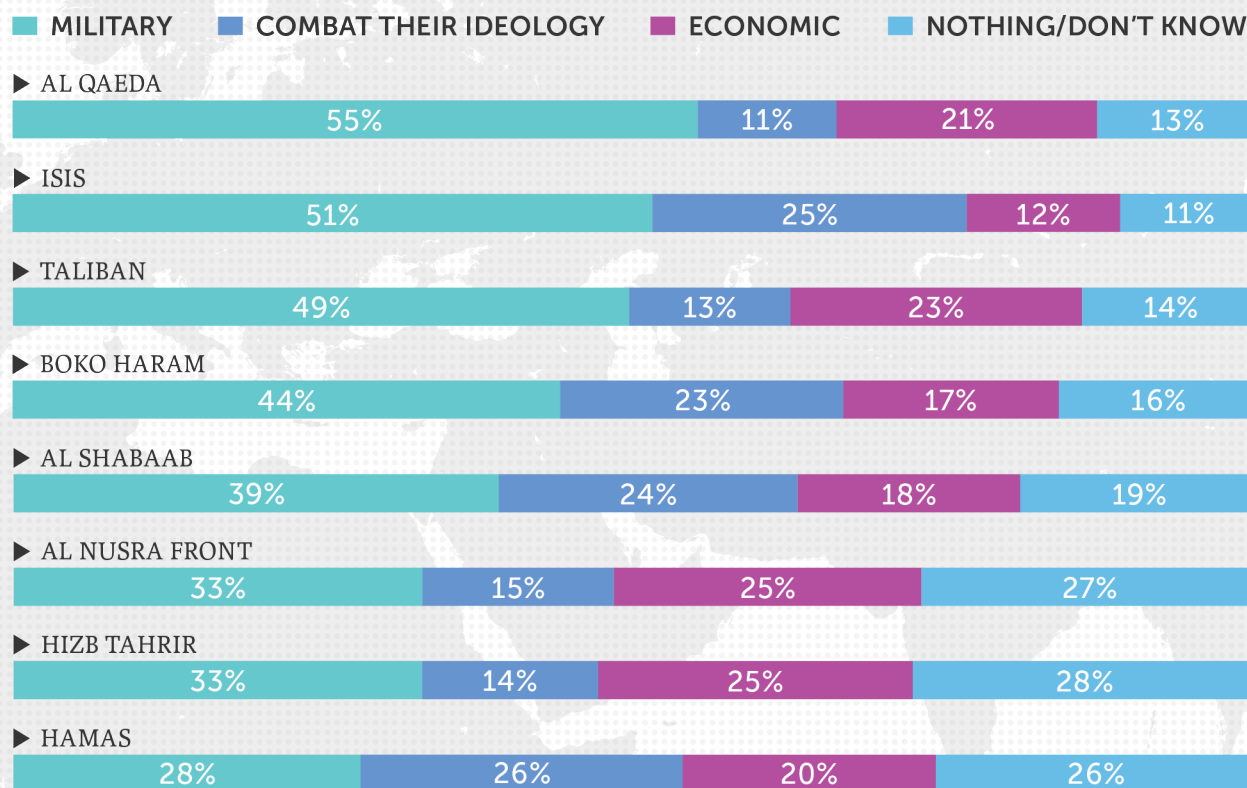
**Signature Recommendation**

***Build an enduring coalition to degrade and defeat terrorist organizations and dismantle their strategic communications infrastructure, while creating rapid response mechanisms to protect threatened civilian populations and cultural heritage sites.*** Considerable progress has been made in building the network of international cooperation needed to fight terrorism in the 15 years since September 11. Those existing arrangements provide a strong foundation. However, the next administration needs to develop deeper partnerships with frontline states in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

The United States must play a central role in persuading allies and partners, especially Muslim-majority countries, to contribute militarily to the struggle against violent extremism and to use all other tools to starve terrorist groups of the recruits, weapons, money, and legitimacy they need to survive and spread into new regions. This outreach should include pressing countries throughout the world to provide for the basic needs of their population so they do not search elsewhere for fulfillment.

To build a broad-based coalition, the next administration should start by reinvigorating its leadership role in the world, particularly in the

# WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR MILITARY ACTION ALONG WITH OTHER MEASURES



Source: Views from Around the World: Countering Violent Extremism  
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/survey-findings-global-perceptions-violent-extremism>

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Middle East. The relative absence of American leadership throughout a period of great turmoil has undermined our credibility within the region. Reestablishing our credibility will not be an easy task. Sunni powers are deeply suspicious of the United States' intentions and highly anxious about Iran's rise. To rebuild trust with these partners, the United States will need to make clear its commitment to peace and security in the Middle East, articulate its interests, and lay out a comprehensive strategy for addressing violent extremism. The next administration will also need to listen and seek to understand our partners' priorities, fears, and constraints. Without a common framework and shared goals, collaboration on CVE is bound to remain transactional and frustrate both the United States and our allies.

Partnership does not mean turning a blind eye to the shortcomings and human rights abuses that feed into the cycle of radicalization and recruitment that we are trying to stop. Rather, the United States should be clear about what it expects of its allies:

- adhering to their international human rights obligations;
- taking steps to address the drivers of violent extremism;
- preventing civilian harm in the conduct of military and police operations;
- curbing financial support from their citizens to extremist causes;
- bringing to justice those responsible for the worst forms of incitement to violence;

- ceasing to provide support to terrorist groups; and
- participating in a political and military campaign against violent extremism.

This coalition must go beyond defeating ISIS and reach beyond the Middle East. It should degrade and defeat terrorist groups wherever they emerge and pose a threat to civilians and to our collective security. In building such a global coalition, the United States should be upfront that defeating violent extremists and the ideologies and narratives that give them sustenance will require leadership, tenacity, and vision for a generation or more.



IMPLEMENTATION

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strategy—no matter how comprehensive—is destined to fail without the right implementation plan. Operationalizing this strategy will require: empowered and qualified leadership and personnel; devoted budgets; and much greater coordination within the U.S. government, among domestic and foreign affairs agencies, civilian and military authorities, and law enforcement and social service delivery officials. It will also hinge on the ability to massively increase flexible funding for civil society groups and community actors operating in the United States and abroad.

Debates over the right organizational structures have plagued CVE efforts since September 11, severely weakening our capacity to deal with this ideological threat. After equivocating over various organizational models for over a decade, the U.S. government cannot afford to sink more time into determining the best set-up. To implement this strategy, the Commission recommends the following organizational structures and funding mechanisms, inside and outside of the U.S. government, to significantly reduce the number of people in the United States and worldwide who are drawn to violent extremist groups.

### Organizing the U.S. Government to Be an Effective Leader on CVE

Responsibility for CVE is spread across dozens of government departments and agencies, as well as several different directorates at the NSC. Although the U.S. government has extremely talented individuals working on CVE, their efforts are undermined by turf battles over mandates and authorities, bureaucratic constraints on innovation and agility, and coordination challenges. This situation has improved significantly with the creation of the CVE Task Force, under the coleadership of DHS and DOJ,

and the Bureau of CT and CVE at the Department of State.

Yet, these structures are inadequate. Without a designated focal point at the NSC, there is nobody accountable for CVE results. Nobody has a bird's-eye view of all relevant efforts across CVE and counterterrorism and can therefore align policy and rationally allocate resources. No one with the president's ear wakes up every day with the sole responsibility of CVE.

This must change. The Commission recommends a new institutional structure for CVE, headed by an assistant to the president based in the NSC. S/he would be situated between and working closely with the assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism and the deputy national security adviser. This person would be responsible for synchronizing policies and programs across counterterrorism and CVE, domestically and internationally; mobilizing and coordinating resources for all government agencies with CVE-relevant mandates, including domestic agencies with a service provision focus (e.g., the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services); and building the public-private partnerships necessary to advance this strategy. S/he would also be the primary liaison to the independent presidential advisory council comprising technology and private-sector representatives described in the strategy. Most importantly, the assistant to the president would manage the execution of the comprehensive strategy for CVE and be held accountable for producing results.

Under this new position, the Commission recommends a tripartite leadership structure. The White House should rely on existing entities and capabilities, rather than creating a large footprint at the NSC. The CVE Task Force should

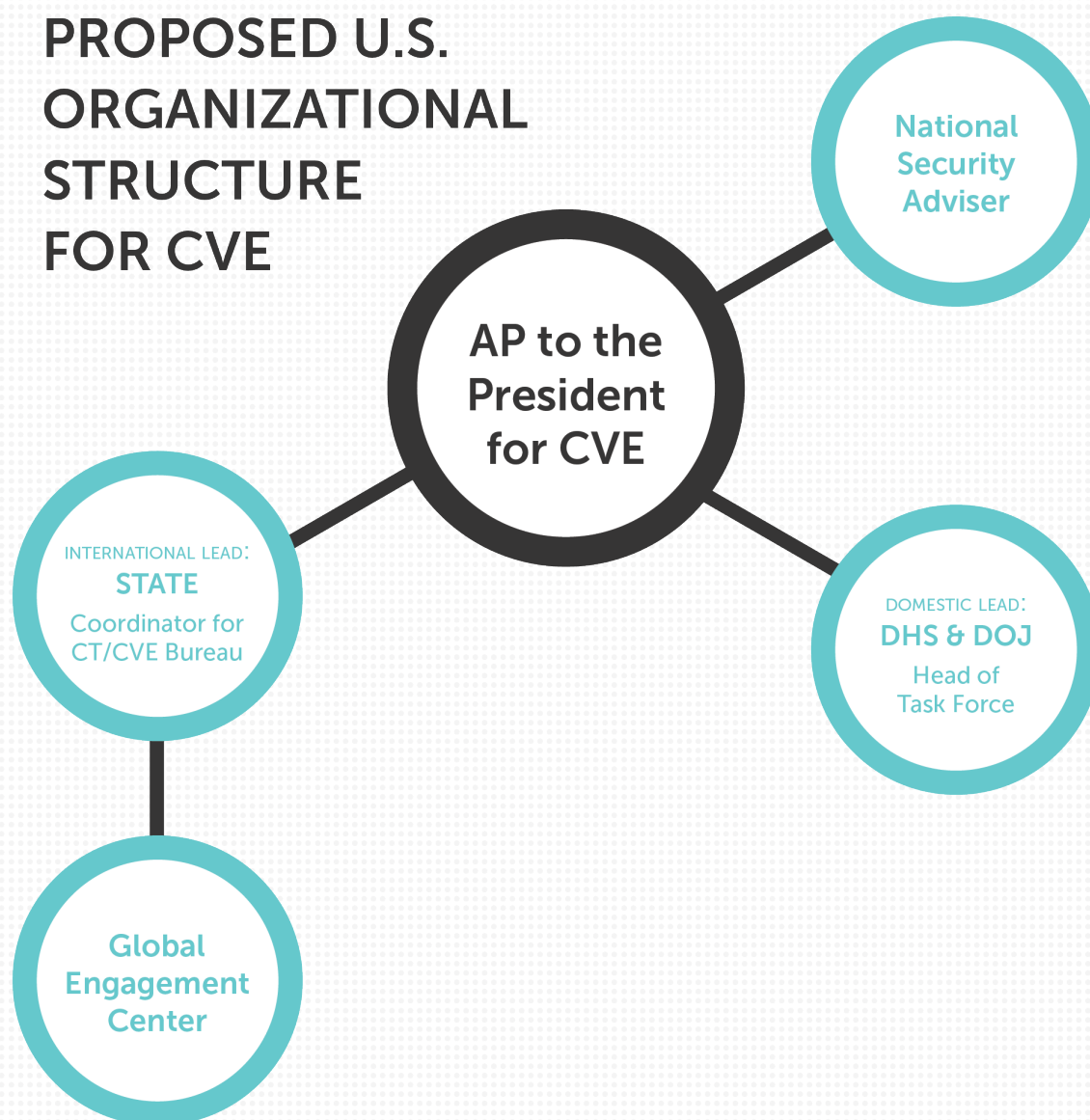
remain the domestic policy lead to leverage the coordination mechanisms it recently established. To make this arrangement sustainable, the Task Force should be given permanent office space, dedicated personnel, and a line-item budget to fund its operational costs. The Task Force also needs greater authority to enhance coordination among domestic agencies. Requiring all domestic departments and agencies to get the Task Force's clearance on new policies, programs, or outreach efforts would go a long way in synchronizing CVE efforts domestically.

The international policy lead should continue to be the State Department Bureau for CT and CVE, as it has the policy influence and relationships needed to drive CVE efforts overseas. Under the leadership of the deputy coordinator for CVE, the bureau has the critical mandate of coordinating within the State Department and with USAID, and serving as a bridge to the CVE Task Force. Currently there are four full-time staff in the bureau's CVE office, with three more positions being created. This pales in comparison to those focused on counterterrorism. The next administration should

double the number of CVE slots in the bureau to fulfill its coordination function and offer technical assistance to those in Washington and in embassies responsible for CVE.

Embassies and USAID missions also play an instrumental role in identifying, supporting, and connecting grassroots actors who can make a real difference in their communities. As such, each country team should have a full-time CVE officer, from the State Department or USAID, whose job is to provide a platform for promising influencers and entrepreneurs, build and ex-

## PROPOSED U.S. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR CVE



# **CVE RESOURCES PALE IN COMPARISON TO COUNTERTERRORISM**

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# **COUNTERTERRORISM BUDGET**



The CVE  
budget is  
 $\frac{1}{10}$   
of **1%** of the  
counterterrorism  
budget.

pand networks, and find ways to support cutting-edge CVE work. The Bureau for CT and CVE should ensure that all U.S. efforts incorporate monitoring and evaluation approaches that withstand Congressional scrutiny. It should also be responsible for providing training to all foreign service officers heading overseas and those designated as the CVE focal points.

### Expanding the Ecosystem for CVE

Governments cannot and should not be the main face of CVE efforts. The private sector and civil society have tremendous contributions to make, if given sufficient resources, guidance, and backing. For the past 15 years, the U.S. government has seeded a variety of networks and initiatives—from Generation Change, a global network of young leaders building community resilience and cohesiveness, to Peer-to-Peer: Challenging Violent Extremism, an effort to enlist technology-savvy university students in developing strategic messaging campaigns. It is time to build on these efforts and reinvest U.S. investment into existing programs and people. There is no need to reinvent the wheel—we must be aware of all of the tools at our disposal and use them to the best of our ability.

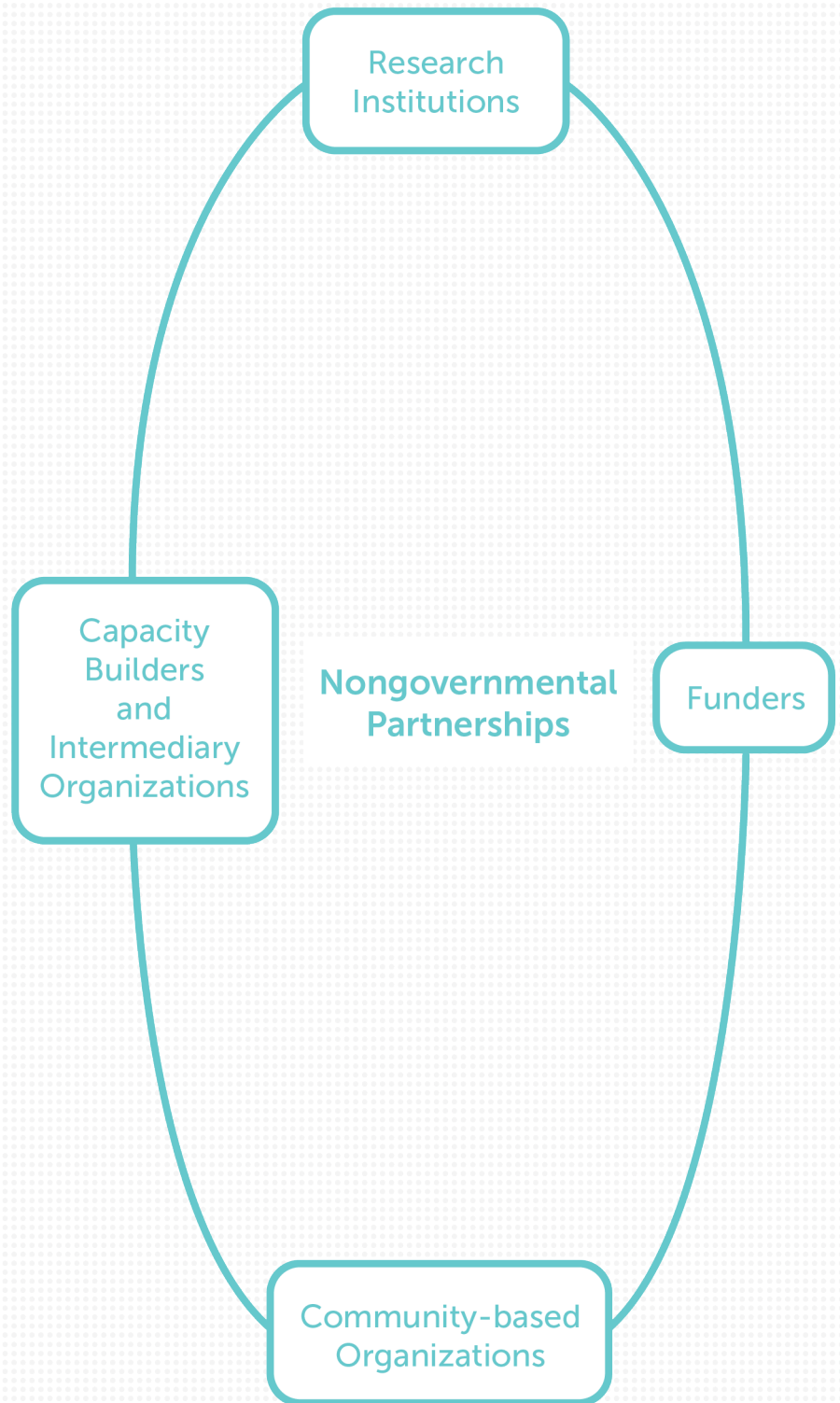
#### Funders

As discussed throughout this report, a dearth of resources has been a major barrier to galvanizing a CVE movement and scaling up promising initiatives. The Commission recommends three different funding mechanisms to infuse resources into the CVE space.

##### 1. Technology Innovation Fund.

To stimulate innovation in the online space, we need to tap into the creativity and technological prowess of the private sector. The U.S. government

## ECOSYSTEM FOR CVE



should partner with leading companies to seed a technology innovation fund, modeled on In-Q-Tel, for this purpose. In-Q-Tel is an independent, not-for-profit organization created to bridge the gap between the technology needs of the U.S. intelligence community and commercial ventures. It invests in startups developing technologies that provide “ready-soon” innovation (within 36 months) vital to the intelligence community. Similarly, a CVE innovation fund, initiated by the government with the support of Congress, would bring U.S. technological innovation to the fight against violent extremist propaganda and narratives.

**2. Private Philanthropy Consortium.** The next administration should facilitate funding from the private sector, foundations, and private philanthropists for community-based CVE efforts. In particular, “venture philanthropists,” which act more like venture capitalists than traditional foundations, should be a major target of outreach. Practitioners spend an enormous amount of time and effort raising small increments of funding from donors with different procedures, timelines, and requirements. This time would be better spent implementing programs and safeguarding community members from violent extremist groups. The White House could help community stakeholders tap into resources more efficiently by issuing a call to action—like My Brother’s Keeper, which raised \$1 billion from the private sector—to mobilize private-sector and philanthropic funding and in-kind support. The administration could also play a leadership role in pulling together a consortium of these private donors to streamline fundraising and match funders with organizations with a proven track record on CVE.<sup>110</sup> This model would help community-based organizations access resources without the stigma of government involvement and give private donors greater safety in numbers.<sup>111</sup>

**3. U.S. Government Grants.** Even with increased private-sector and philanthropic investment in CVE, there will always be a need for government funding. The Commission supports the U.S. government’s efforts to increase small grants for domestic and international efforts. In particular, we agree that the budget for the Office of Community Partnerships at DHS should be increased to \$100 million to cover grantmaking and related operational costs and endorse the \$17.4 mil-

**“It is time to build on these efforts and reinvigorate U.S. investment into existing programs and people. There is no need to reinvent the wheel—we must be aware of all of the tools at our disposal and use them to the best of our ability.”**

lion that the Department of Justice requested in the president’s FY 17 budget for CVE.<sup>112</sup> At the same time, the Commission strongly recommends that other domestic agencies like the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Housing and Urban Development—with stronger community linkages—assume a bigger role in CVE. Likewise, the Commission supports efforts within the Department of State—including the Bureau for CT and CVE, Global Engagement Center, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and Bureau for Educational and Cultural Exchanges—and USAID to accelerate grantmaking to grassroots organizations and networks on the cutting edge of CVE. However, in providing CVE resources, the U.S. government must keep a low profile and provide flexibility on branding requirements; embed rigorous evaluation mechanisms to measure programs’ impact and

<sup>110</sup> “Homeland Security Advisory Council,” 19.

<sup>111</sup> This consortium would complement the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), a public-private partnership aimed at strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas. However, unlike GCERF, governments would not be involved in the management, decisionmaking, or oversight of the consortium, beyond the initial facilitative role played by the U.S. government.

<sup>112</sup> “Homeland Security Advisory Council,” 19.

build the knowledge base; and offer long-term, core support to strengthen the capacity of its partners.

### Research Institutions

Research institutions, including think tanks and universities, have a significant role to play in creating the analytical and evidence base for more successful CVE initiatives. These institutions should increasingly be tapped to generate answers on motivations and drivers, the radicalization process, and effective interventions.

**1) Public-Private Research Coalition.** A major barrier to evidence-based programming has been the divide between governments and technology companies who have access to data and researchers who need the data to conduct rigorous experiments and research. For example, researchers could use data on how users behave online after being exposed to counter- or positive messages to draw conclusions about the impact of those efforts and make recommendations for improving them. However, that would require the government and technology companies to provide access to such information. Likewise, researchers should open their datasets to the government and other researchers to avoid recreating the wheel and allow for the replication of quantitative studies. Building on RESOLVE—a global network of researchers conducting locally informed analysis on the drivers and solutions to violent extremism—the U.S. government should forge research partnerships with universities, think tanks, and the technology sector.

**“Implementing this vision will require approximately \$1 billion on an annual basis. While that is a huge figure...it is orders of magnitude less than the trillions required in military and law enforcement spending and the billions needed for humanitarian aid if violent extremist groups are able to gain traction.”**

**2) Programmatic Database.** Donors and policymakers have been reluctant to invest in CVE over lingering doubts about whether competent organizations exist to do this work and whether programs make a tangible difference. CSIS could contribute to advancing the field by developing a database of all CVE-specific programs, with concrete measures of effectiveness that could be tracked over time. Using this data, CSIS could identify the characteristics of effective programs, sharing these best practices and recommendations for scaling up successful efforts. This database could serve as the “gold standard” for assessing the efficacy of CVE programs worldwide.

### Community-based Actors

Civil society and community-based organizations working on prevention, intervention, deradicalization, reintegration, and rehabilitation, as well as strategic communications, are in many ways the most import-

ant part of the CVE ecosystem. However, such groups are few and far between and need help with capacity building from their peers.

**1) Civil Society-Led Prevention Network.** The Commission endorses the idea, put forward by The Prevention Project, for a civil society-led network in the United States “to harness the efforts of the growing number of communities and professionals around the country interested in helping to prevent the violent radicalization of individuals in their communities.”<sup>113</sup> Such a network would help amplify community efforts to intervene with individuals at-risk or in the process of being radicalized. It would also provide emerging CVE professionals with a platform for sharing information, best practices, and lessons learned with each other and with more established practitioners and social service providers (e.g., those working in related fields like drug prevention and treatment, mental health provision, gang violence prevention and rehabilitation).

**2) Network of Young Leaders.** Through its education and cultural exchange programs, the U.S. government has identified and invested in young leaders from all over the world. These are individuals who were hand-picked because of their potential as role models and change-makers. The government should capitalize on these investments, creating a global network of young leaders who are interested in CVE, community resilience, or related areas. Through the network, thousands of grassroots actors could share information and best practices, raising the bar for a new generation of practitioners.

<sup>113</sup> Eric Rosand, “Communities First: A National Prevention Network to Defeat ISIS,” *The Hill*, August 2, 2016, <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/homeland-security/290046-communities-first-a-national-prevention-network-to>

## Capacity Building and Intermediary Organizations

For CVE efforts to ever reach scale, the United States and its allies need to invest in international and national nongovernmental organizations with a proven track record in CVE, existing partnerships and networks, and strong capacity. The Commission recommends investing in such “intermediary organizations” to drive major strides in the field and help build the capacity of policymakers and practitioners.

**1) CVE Accelerators.** The United States and its allies, as well as the private sector, should make major investments in existing hubs and agencies that use research, technology, and a start-up mentality to incubate and accelerate evidence-based CVE programs and narrative campaigns. Such organizations occupy a central role in creating opportunities for entrepreneurs to design and implement successful CVE operations. With a proven track record and trust from both the government and civil society, they are also essential in delivering cutting-edge CVE programs, innovating and distributing strategic messaging campaigns, and mobilizing social movements against extremism, both on- and offline.

**2) CVE Training Academies.** Training academies in the United States and overseas—run by nongovernmental organizations and civil society actors and funded by the government—could fill vital knowledge gaps for government actors, law enforcement officials, local organizations, parents, teachers, and social workers. One model for this effort is the Hedayah International Center of Excellence, a UAE-based hub for building the capacity of CVE actors across the globe. Educational programs could cover: the risks and warning signs of radicalization; effective methods of counseling and mentoring; child brain development; how violent extremists use social media; how parents and social workers can discuss extremist propaganda; and trust-building and prevention fundamentals, including how to intervene with at-risk individuals. Ideally, CVE academies would connect policymakers and practitioners, informing community-level engagements with the understanding of how violent extremism manifests and how it can be stopped.

## Funding CVE

Implementing this vision will require approximately \$1 billion from the U.S. government on an annual basis. While that is a huge figure—and a significant increase for CVE funding—it is orders of magnitude less than the trillions required in military and law enforcement spending and the billions needed for humanitarian aid if violent extremist groups are able

to gain traction. This number is the least amount required to scale up CVE efforts to match the seriousness of the threat and catalyze further investment. The United States cannot do this alone, but this commitment is the first step in the right direction.

The Commission recommends the following allocation of funds to maximize the impact of this strategy on reducing the radicalization and recruitment of young people in the United States and all over the world.

### Grantmaking—\$550 million

Technology Innovation Fund (In-Q-Tel model):  
\$150 million

Domestic small grants and related operational costs: \$150 million

International small grants and related operational costs: \$250 million

### Research—\$50 million

Public-Private Research Coalition: \$10 million

Programmatic Database: \$5 million

Independent Research: \$35 million

### Community-based Actors—\$65 million

Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs:  
\$45 million

Network of Networks—Young Leaders: \$20 million

### Capacity Building Organizations—\$85 million

CVE Accelerators: \$55 million

Training Academies (3 at \$10 million/year):  
\$30 million

### Civil-Military “Jump Teams”—\$250 million

Operational Costs: \$250 million

U.S. investment in these areas is not intended to fulfill the vast need. Rather, the Commission’s recommendations are meant to spur other countries and stakeholders to ramp up their support for and commitment to CVE. With these elements and resources in place, we can significantly reduce support for violent extremism and safeguard this generation and generations to come. □



## Commissioner Biographies

### *Cochairs*

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*FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF  
THE UNITED KINGDOM*

Tony Blair served as prime minister of the United Kingdom from 1997 to 2007. Since leaving office he has spent most of his time on work in the Middle East, in Africa, and on the fight against religiously based extremism. The Tony Blair Faith Foundation and its Centre on Religion and Geopolitics track extremism across the world, providing thought leadership and education programs to counter extremist ideology.

**LEON PANETTA,**  
*FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL  
INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AND FORMER  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE*

A U.S. representative for 16 years, Leon E. Panetta was named director of the Office of Management and Budget for the Clinton administration in 1993 and then chief of staff to the president. Later, as director of the CIA, he oversaw the operation that brought Osama bin Laden to justice. Named secretary of defense in 2011, Secretary Panetta led the effort to develop a new defense strategy, conducted critical counterterrorism operations, strengthened U.S. alliances, and opened up opportunities for everyone to serve in the military.

### *Senior Advisers and Commissioners*

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A diplomatic entrepreneur and foreign policy strategist, Farah Pandith is a member of Secretary Jeh Johnson's Homeland Security Advisory Council, an adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, and a senior fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. As a political appointee in the George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Barack H. Obama administrations, she has served in positions at the National Security Council, U.S. Agency for International Development, and U.S. Department of State, most recently as the first-ever special representative to Muslim communities. A CVE pioneer and author, she has traveled to nearly 100 countries and launched global youth-focused initiatives and networks to counter violent extremism and continues to do so from outside government most notably cofounding Halcyon, an innovative global organization dedicated to mobilizing youth against extremist ideologies.

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The Honorable Juan Zarate is a senior adviser at CSIS, the chairman and cofounder of the Financial Integrity Network (FIN), and the chairman and senior counselor for the Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance (CSIF) at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Mr. Zarate also serves as the senior national security analyst for NBC News and MSNBC and is a visiting lecturer of law at the Harvard Law School. Mr. Zarate served as the deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security adviser for combating terrorism from 2005 to 2009, was the first-ever assistant secretary of the treasury for terrorist financing and financial crimes, and is a former federal prosecutor. Mr. Zarate sits on several boards, including the Vatican's Financial Information Authority, and is the author of multiple publications, including his most recent book, *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare* (2013).

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Dr. Ahmad Abaddi is secretary general of the Mohammadian League of Religious Scholars (Rabita Mohammadia des Oulémas). He was a professor of Islamic studies, comparative history of religions, tafsir, and Islamic thought at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Marrakesh, and a professor of sociology of North Africa in the program of cooperation between Cadi Ayyad University and the University of De Paul in Chicago. Dr. Abaddi has been appointed to a number of councils in Morocco including the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, the National Council for Human Rights, and the Higher Council for Education.

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Monika Bickert is Facebook's head of product policy and counterterrorism. Bickert joined Facebook in 2012 as lead security counsel, advising the company on matters including child safety and data security. She was a formal federal prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice for over a decade.

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Nicholas Burns is professor of the practice of diplomacy and international relations at the Harvard Kennedy School. He serves on Secretary of State John Kerry's Foreign Policy Advisory Board. In a long diplomatic career, he was U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs, U.S. ambassador to NATO and to Greece, and State Department spokesman. He also served on the National Security Council staff for Presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush.

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Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg served as German federal minister of defense and as federal minister of economics and technology in the cabinet of Chancellor Angela Merkel. As minister of defense, he led the most significant structural reform of the German armed forces since the Bundeswehr's founding in 1955. Baron zu Guttenberg is a distinguished statesman at CSIS as well as chairman and founder of Spitzberg Partners, an international advisory and investment firm that focuses on new technologies and geopolitics.

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Stephen J. Hadley is a principal of RiceHadleyGates LLC, an international strategic consulting firm founded with Condoleezza Rice, Robert Gates, and Anja Manuel. Mr. Hadley is also board chairman of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and executive vice chair of the Board of the Atlantic Council. Mr. Hadley served for four years as the assistant to the president for national security affairs from 2005

to 2009. From 2001 to 2005, Mr. Hadley was the assistant to the president and deputy national security adviser, serving under then National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.

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Fred Khosravi is the cofounder and managing partner at Incept, LLC, a health sciences and medical technology development company. Mr. Khosravi is a Silicon Valley medical device entrepreneur who has, over the last 25 years, pioneered development of life-saving technologies such as stents and angioplasty devices for coronary artery interventions, minimally invasive implantable heart valves, and life-improving technologies such as intraocular lenses for treatment of cataracts. A cofounder of 14 medical companies, Mr. Khosravi also held senior management positions in large medical device companies such as Guidant Corporation (now part of Abbott), Boston Scientific Corp, and Alcon Surgical Corp and is the author or coauthor on over 160 issued or filed patent applications, involving unique and novel medical devices.

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Nancy Lindborg has served since February 2015 as president of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an independent institution founded by Congress to provide practical solutions for preventing and resolving violent conflict around the world. Prior to joining USIP, she served as the assistant administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) at USAID. From 2010 through early 2015, Ms. Lindborg led USAID teams focused on building resilience and democracy, managing and mitigating conflict and providing urgent humanitarian assistance.

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Imam Mohamed Hagmagid is the executive director of the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS), the chairperson of the International Interfaith Peace Corp (IIPC), and the former president of the largest Muslim organization in North America, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Imam Magid has a long history of commitment to public service through organizations such as The Peaceful Families Project, Annual Twinning of Mosques and Synagogues, Fairfax Faith Communities in Action, Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington Assembly, and the Buxton Interfaith Initiative. He also has extensive experience in public health advocacy, development, countering violent extremism, and peace building in West Africa.

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Martha Minow, the Morgan and Helen Chu dean and professor of Law, has taught at Harvard Law School since 1981, where her courses include civil procedure, constitutional law, family law, international criminal justice, jurisprudence, law and education, nonprofit organizations, and the public law workshop. She served on the Independent International Commission Kosovo and helped to launch Imagine Co-existence, a program of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, to promote peaceful development in post-conflict societies.

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Mark Penn served as White House pollster to President Bill Clinton for 6 years and was a key adviser in his 1996 reelection and second term in office. Mr. Penn also served as chief strategist to Hillary Clinton during her

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Dina Powell is head of Goldman Sachs' Impact Investing business and president of the Goldman Sachs Foundation. She also serves as global head of the Office of Corporate Engagement and is a member of the Partnership Committee. Ms. Powell joined Goldman Sachs as a managing director in 2007 and was named partner in 2010. Prior to joining Goldman Sachs, she had an exemplary career in government, serving as assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs and deputy undersecretary of public affairs and public diplomacy. Ms. Powell also served as a member of the senior staff of the White House as assistant to the president for presidential personnel.

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Jane Rosenthal is executive chair of the multiplatform media company Tribeca Enterprises, which operates a diverse network of branded entertainment businesses, including the Tribeca Film Festival, Tribeca Studios, and Tribeca Film Festival International. A distinguished producer, Rosenthal cofounded the Tribeca Film Festival following the attacks on the World Trade Center, evolving from an annual event to spur the economic and cultural revitalization of lower Manhattan into one of the foremost innovative storytelling events in the United States. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and sits on the boards of the Tribeca Film Institute, the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at The World Trade Center, the Child Mind Institute, and the NYU Tisch School of the Arts Dean's Council, and Interlude.

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Jay Winik is one of the nation's leading historians. He is the author of three consecutive New York Times bestsellers, most recently *1944* and *April 1865*. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, an elected fellow of the Society of American Historians, and served on the Governing Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a presidential appointment, as well as the boards for American Heritage magazine and the journal *World Affairs*.



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Shannon N. Green, director and senior fellow of the Human Rights Initiative, was the managing director of the Commission and the driving force behind its work. She and Keith Proctor, independent consultant, served as the principal drafters of the report. Both provided vital research and lent their expertise to inform the Commission's deliberations and findings.

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ground research, and managing consultations. Elliot Hecht made sure that Commission meetings went smoothly. Julie Snyder, helped get the report over the finish line, organizing countless meetings and consultations, drafting key elements of the report, and reviewing multiple drafts. They are the unsung heroes of this effort.

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The CSIS Commission on Countering Violent Extremism consulted with a wide and diverse array of experts, practitioners, academics, private-sector representatives, government officials, and others to shape the strategy and recommendations in this report. We are eternally grateful for each of their contributions and have included their names here. However, we would like to note that being listed does not necessarily indicate endorsement of the report's findings or conclusions. We would also like to thank those interviewed and consulted, not listed here, for their support and input.

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MOSUL, IRAQ - OCTOBER 25: A child is seen on the street as smoke rises from oil wells set on fire by ISIS to limit coalition forces' eyesight and take the wells out of service following the Iraqi army's retaking of Al Qayyarah. Picture taken in Mosul, Iraq on October 25, 2016.

