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Sharpening Our Efforts

*The Role of International Development
in Countering Violent Extremism*

With a foreword by Tony Blair

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A Report of the CSIS PROJECT ON PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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Letter from the Editors

EROL K. YAYBOKE & SUNDAR R. RAMANUJAM

U.S. policymakers long have expressed concerns that efforts to eliminate violent extremism were being outpaced by efforts of extremists to radicalize populations. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld raised this issue more than a decade ago in a memo to his principal advisors that focused on the potential negative repercussions of a military-only strategy against violent extremism. Policymakers across the political spectrum are raising this issue, too, and rightly so. At best, the United States has been able to eliminate a few of the threats facing it and its allies, using its unequalled military might. At worst, those efforts have been used against the United States for recruitment purposes. Kinetic operations are critical to protect and secure people, places, and assets but durable solutions to extremism rarely result from them, even though they receive the lion's share of attention and resources.

Development and other non-kinetic approaches can and do play essential roles in eliminating violent extremism; how they do so is worthy of consideration. This anthology explores these new and different approaches. Do they work? How do we know? Are there ways of thinking about violent extremism that deserve increased attention and focus?

At its core, radicalization occurs as a response to development challenges faced by restless, young, and disproportionately male populations in underdeveloped economies. Sixty-five percent of the people in the Middle East and North Africa are under the age of 30; that number rises to 70 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. The emergence of new technologies and an increasingly interconnected world has set high expectations for the future, expectations that increasingly are not being met by governments and societies. Although not the only solution, development has an essential and underappreciated role to play in reducing some of the push and pull factors surrounding this threat to global security.

Thanks to the generous support and cooperation from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Project on Prosperity and Development at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) organized an off-the-record discussion in February 2019. Experts, policymakers, and a diverse set of stakeholders considered the role of development in countering violent extremism (CVE). The findings of the roundtable helped inform the topics selected for this anthology. The first essay examines the centrality of the social compact between the state and society, not just as a response to socioeconomic

and structural factors driving radicalization, but also by challenging deeper ideological pull factors. The second essay examines how the efficiency and success of CVE efforts can be measured and communicated. The third essay looks at the role of development programs led by multilateral institutions in tackling extremism. The fourth essay discusses how the root causes of gang violence and violent religious extremism offer interesting and useful parallels. Finally, the fifth essay provides a pathway for the U.S. government to rethink how it approaches CVE by identifying the gaps and redundancies in its inter-agency operations.

There is a critical role for development and other non-kinetic approaches to violent extremism; those described in the following pages deserve careful study. Unless the United States figures out better strategies, it runs the risk of relying only on the strength of its armed forces to counter violent extremism. History indicates that this would be a mistake. It is our hope that the following pages help policymakers and other stakeholders to reconsider their approaches to one of the most vexing challenges of our time.

Foreword

RT HON TONY BLAIR

Executive Chairman of the Institute for Global Change

Former Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Extremism knows no boundaries, it is not confined to poorer countries, but it thrives in ungoverned, failing or fragile states. Yet for too long the policy response to counter violent extremism has focused too heavily on security. Collectively, the world spends hundreds of billions of dollars every year on such measures. It spends a small fraction of that on soft-power measures that tackle the underlying ideology. This needs to change, but first there must be understanding of what works.

This is why this new anthology is so important. It raises significant questions to how we approach this issue, encompassing some of the key components needed to build a comprehensive strategy. Such a strategy must cover strengthening state capacity, addressing poverty, improving education and ensuring that people are not drawn to a pernicious and poisonous ideology. This is an urgent task.

In the West, hundreds have lost their lives as a result of the totalitarian ideology of Islamism, while rising far-right terrorism and anti-Semitism are of increasingly grave concern. All of these extremes and the intolerance they represent are affronts to the values we hold; they are the antithesis of the open mind and we can never become inured to the acts of violence perpetrated in their name. As RAND have estimated, the loss in terms of GDP as a result of Islamist terrorism alone has been significant. In little more than a decade, the United Kingdom and France both lost €43 billion, Spain nearly €41 billion.

For developing nations, whose budgets are tighter, the impact of these acts is even more profound. The huge cost of hard security diverts expenditure away from other crucial areas. In the long-term we need a better understanding of how best to funnel funds and resource. But in countries at the forefront of this fight this is a luxury they can ill afford right now. In Africa, where the scourge of Islamism has been rising, Kenya has been battling back against the Al-Shabaab insurgency that has spilled over the border from Somalia.

In January 2019, 21 people were killed in a horrific attack by the group in Nairobi. This followed other recent high-profile attacks at the Westgate Mall in 2013 and Garissa University in 2015. My Institute's Global Extremism Monitor (GEM), which tracks

Islamist extremism around the world each year and is the most comprehensive analysis of its kind, showed that Al-Shabaab launched nearly 70 attacks in the country in 2017.

These have significantly dented tourism, which is vital to the economy and their development plans. Foreign direct investment (FDI), which is needed to drive crucial infrastructure projects such as energy and transport, will also suffer in regions where violence pervades. Understanding the importance of this, the Kenyan government has been quick to take action. Recognizing that security is essential for their development goals, they have committed nearly 11 percent of this year's budget to measures including increased border security and modernising the military.

This follows measures taken in the aftermath of Westgate, which have improved the situation.

But for others on the continent, particularly where state capacity is lower, the challenge will increase unless action is taken. In the Sahel for example, poverty is chronic and governance capacity is weak. Across large swathes of territory, a vacuum has therefore been created, in which radicalisation and extremism are growing. In just the last six months alone, terror attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have killed nearly 5,000 people in 1,200 incidents, already a significant increase on the year before. On visiting the region, for example, to Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, it is clear that government efforts to combat the threat are valiant. But this does not hide the monumental nature of the challenge.

For policymakers in the West who will need to step up efforts to support these countries, security and development cannot be seen as separate issues. Development, foreign and security policy initiatives must be interlinked. In the United Kingdom, my government founded the Department of International Development in 1997, and it has done brilliant work around the world. But there is a gap between its role and that of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Home Office and other working on security issues. Similarly, in the United States, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is doing some deep-thinking about this issue, but as the problem grows and becomes more asymmetric, it will need to rethink its approach.

In part, this is about how to order the governments in the twenty-first century. It is less about distinct ministries, but about functions. Cross-functional, non-departmental teams with their own direct, incremental business case with the central government should be the norm—and tackling some of these complex and interconnected issues of development, governance, investment, counter-extremism and security make an obvious case for this realignment.

At a multilateral level, institutions and donors should similarly align, with countries working together and not replicating one another's efforts. No donor will give up control of its contributions, but everyone's contributions should be strategically aligned.

This is not going to be a short-term task. Uprooting an ideology and building state capacity will be a long-term commitment. As Dr. Emman Elbadawy from my Institute writes in her contribution, "it will take a generation of resource—and innovation—to challenge the problem of today's violent extremism." It is a battle of values similar to that of the Cold War. This time the conflict is between those of open mind against those who are closed

and intolerant to others. And we are right in the midst of it. As the GEM has shown, the ideology of Islamism is spreading, affecting over 60 countries, with more than 120 different groups worldwide actively engaged in this violence. And it will continue to proliferate unless we rethink our approach and fight back against it.

In a world that is more complex and connected, security and development cannot be disconnected. We cannot step back in the belief that what happens outside our borders does not concern us. Progressives should believe there is a moral imperative to do the most good for as many people as possible. But cold hard reason also says that it will be our concern either way.

We must step up our efforts, and CSIS is showing it is at the forefront of this thinking.



State and Society

The Importance of Maintaining the Social Compact When Addressing Violent Extremism

BY EMMAN EL-BADAWY

“Building resilience” and “strengthening societies” against extremism have been resonant terms in government and multilateral action plans for at least a decade. It is rare to find official strategies that do not adopt such language. Just as with similar previous strategies, the proposed US Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act front-loads phrases like “strengthening state-society relations” and “building community resilience;” central to the updated UK counterterrorism strategy from 2018 is engagement of a wide network of government, agencies, private sector and communities towards preventing radicalization and ‘building resilience’; the UN’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism emphasizes empowering youth, engaging communities, and “working jointly” with leaders, governments and the media toward “strengthening community resilience.”

Achieving ‘resilience’ is a long game that needs commitment, and there are no short-cuts. It will take a generation of resources—and innovation—to face the challenge of today’s violent extremism. But our most effective methods for change could stem from our most traditional ideas. In our drive to respond to violent extremism in the twenty-first century, it’s tempting to turn to technology, algorithms, and new media. Yet a revival and maintenance of the basics—the social compact between citizens and their governments—should be the foundation and vehicle for challenging violent extremism.

It’s all too easy to pay lip service to the big solutions. It’s much harder to build resilience and understand why state-society relations matter in this effort. It would be wrong, though, to assume that we have a choice. From the Taliban and al Qaeda, to the Islamic State (IS) and al Shabaab, extremists already are acutely aware of the value of a social contract. When IS declared its proto state in 2014, it exposed the global Islamist movement’s lofty ambitions to bridge welfare and warfare. Although IS leaders challenged al Qaeda’s monopoly over the global movement, they were following a consistent path that had long been adopted and refined by al Qaeda offshoots from Yemen to Mali. Capturing clusters of territory and securing havens among ungoverned

or badly governed communities, al Qaeda leaders imposed variations of Islamic law on local inhabitants for years, undermining modern state structures and systems while demonstrating a degree of competence in delivering basic services. By 2013, al Qaeda was consolidating lessons that would later serve as valuable tips of the trade for IS. Fleeing its Mali stronghold that year, al Qaeda left behind confidential documents that focused not on how to terrorize but how to govern.¹ Before imposing Islamic law, al-Qaeda leaders, according to such documents, first must find ways to make lives marginally better and easier for inhabitants and in time earn legitimacy.

Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia all fit a familiar mold. They each faced a multitude of social, economic, and political pressures for at least one generation and witnessed a rapid worsening of conditions over the course of a decade or more in each indicator for fragility.² But for every trend, there is an anomaly. Not every neglected town or village proves ripe for radicalization, and neither is the reach of violent extremism restricted to impoverished and underdeveloped countries. In 2017, 64 of 121 violent Islamist groups were operating outside of the world's conflict zones, and groups gained followers—and fighters—just as easily from developed countries as they did from so-called fragile or failed states; hundreds of violent extremists travelled to conflict zones from the hearts of thriving cities and privileged quarters, from London and Amsterdam, to Toronto and Melbourne.³ Violent Islamist groups historically have operated along the peripheries of countries, on borders or in remote and often neglected areas and failed districts. This made containment strategies much easier, yet recent trends suggest that violent extremism can capture sympathy from even the most connected and serviced communities in the seat of government authority. Since 2011, IS and al Qaeda have shown capacity not only to occupy but also sustain territory in major urban cities, including Syria's Raqqa, Iraq's Mosul, Libya's Sirte, Yemen's Mukalla, and Marawi in the southern Philippines.⁴

No longer do today's Islamist insurgents hide in remote corners of the world or are recruited only from deprived villages on the outskirts. They increasingly choose to live among populations, familiarizing themselves with local issues and disputes and integrating with local people. The links that al Qaeda established in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) with tribes, and with its power brokers in Yemen, contributed significantly to its ability to capture the coastal city of Mukalla in 2015 and continue to wield influence over local leaders. The group earned its power for years by having asserted itself as a defender of Sunni Muslims threatened by Shia Houthi fighters, and it offered a modicum of stability and services in a bitterly divided and resource-poor region. It spent millions it looted from banks to employ a Robin Hood strategy to earn popular support, paying salaries and fixing neglected infrastructure. By consolidating its influence in Yemen, AQAP has become a structural role model in the global Islamist movement, bridging welfare and warfare.

1. Rukmini Callimachi, Associated Press, "In Timbuktu, al-Qaida left behind a manifesto," Yahoo, February 14, 2013, <https://news.yahoo.com/timbuktu-al-qaida-left-behind-manifesto-173454257.html?guccounter=1>.

2. The Fund for Peace, "Fragile States Index," Data, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>.

3. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, Global Extremism Monitor, Violent Islamist Extremism in 2017 (September 2018), <https://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/Global%20Extremism%20Monitor%202017.pdf>.

4. Kim Cragin, "The Challenge of Failed Cities for Countering Violent Extremism," Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, <https://institute.global/insight/co-existence/challenge-failed-cities-countering-violent-extremism>.

But AQAP did not do all this for the sake of charity; nor did IS in Raqqa or ISWAP in Nigeria now. Violent Islamists fill a void to secure a revival of Islam among Muslim communities in corners of desperation; to offer those in despair a reminder that “Islam is the solution.” For violent extremists, there is no distinction between the ideology and the provision of services—the latter is simply a mechanism through which to revive Islam in everyday life. The Islamist conviction that Islam does not accept, or even tolerate, a separation of church and state, or either from society, is as thoroughly Islamic as it can be. Any attempt to reduce the movement to social, political, or religious factors entirely misses the point. The totality established by the Prophet Muhammad in the state of Medina—the first Islamic state—was the ideal for the founding members of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1930s Middle East, as it is the blueprint for the violent Islamists undermining modern states today and plunging them into conflict. Put a different way, the establishment of an alternative state has become the embodiment of the ideology.

Violence derived from Islamist extremism is like no other. It can be both the source of instability and (to some) the source of a solution. It survives and spreads through an ideology constructed from a political-religious narrative that attributes meaning to events and history, alongside the development of an offer—or manifesto—that, when analyzed, resembles the most primitive of social contracts; a transaction that combines tangible reward with abstract promise. The offer permeates and resonates in places and at times because there exist neglected communities or disenfranchised citizens. But it also gains traction where there is a crisis of identity and belonging; an absence of any real representation—political or social—at the seat of government and in everyday life.

Al Qaeda, IS, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Taliban: they all rose from the ashes of failing states. Offering protection, basic services, and rough law and order where no one else could, the movement’s many affiliates across the world filled a vacuum and forced communities to embrace their presence—through fear, and in some cases, convenience. But Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and Afghanistan were not failing states just because their governments failed to provide basic services. These territories became fertile soil for violent Islamists because their inhabitants no longer believed in the country’s self-conception and their place within it.

Modern states built social compacts on welfare provision and/or civilian security but also on an idea and common goal. Today, countries struggle to deliver both. The latter two—security and self-conception—were far easier to ensure when states had a monopoly on violence and when governments controlled a collective narrative of national belonging, built on common history and values. The social compact for violent Islamists is built instead on a theory of redemption, and it relies on communal guilt—the global Muslim community, so the argument goes, is in a state of humiliation and suffering because it has turned its back on an Islamic way of life. It is this belief that justifies, for the die-hard active supporters and the passive recipients of Islamist governance—whether it be in Hezbollah’s Lebanon, Hamas’ Gaza, or the Taliban’s Afghanistan—the inevitable trade-offs that come with a social contract that looks backward, not forward.

Efficiency in governance is necessary but not nearly sufficient to prevent extremism. To think so is to risk viewing radicalization and its associated violence in crudely deterministic terms. Development projects and good governance across all sectors does

not just need to be functional but also to reflect—and hold accountable—fundamental values that stand in opposition to the ideology that recruits and alienates at a global scale. So, justice reform should spotlight corruption, and community policing should not be only reliable but also integrous and non-prejudicial; service provision cannot be only efficient and plentiful, but also fair and without discrimination. And here is the hardest part—short-circuiting the pervasive notion that binds redemption with the alleviation of individual and collective suffering also needs credible national (and global) leadership, a chorus of voices supported by community leaders and local partners, with education systems that can prime the next generation to resist hateful rhetoric and live by values of inclusion and genuine solutions, not subversion and destruction.

The battle for hearts and minds has become attrition warfare for violent extremists. Al Qaeda and IS, and their many affiliates around the world, work tactically to undermine confidence in government and institutions to feed their savior complex. It's a simple equation: the violence and the offering of non-state social services undermines state authority while increasing legitimacy and support for violent extremists. So, the trust between local authorities and civilians is as fragile as it is critical. Communication and transparency will be as important as delivery and efficiency in keeping the social contract alive and preventing violent extremism. Attacks in public spaces and occupations of land that see security personnel flee in fear for their lives are effective ways to erode confidence and trust in local authorities. Yet in times of extended and heightened security threats, local authorities can be tempted to base the social contract on safety and security above freedoms and civic rights.

Young people across the world in today's volatile contexts are seen more as liabilities and security threats than as human resources and investments for the future. That will have to change. People under 25 now make up more than 50 percent of societies in the developing world, but this generation has inherited broken and stale social contracts not fit for their time. Systems that failed their parents and now look set to fail them too, are no match for ideologies that promise a utopian escape from underemployment and social stasis, while prophesizing a predestined victory as God's proxies on earth. Recruiters from violent extremist groups are daily enhancing tactics and strategies to reach and capture the attention of this deeply frustrated apathetic cohort. Whereas IS and al Qaeda recruiters flood messaging apps and social media with fanciful promises, governments and community leaders apply band-aid solutions to gaping wounds.

It is not just development and prevention strategies that rely on living and thriving social contracts between local government and their communities. By starting in under-governed areas, violent Islamists were able to build a base, consolidate, and strengthen ideologically and operationally. But the movement's increased willingness to embed insurgents within densely populated, urban areas poses new challenges for future military responses too, and it heightens the risk of high collateral damage, which in turn will further erode trust. The surgical operations needed to uproot insurgent networks from urban strongholds relies in part on the trust between local militaries and the communities held hostage by militants setting up camp in their cities. This was seen during the recapture of Raqqa and Mosul from IS. Relationships between local authorities and civilians are best built before, not during, conflict, and multilateral efforts such as

the coalition that fought IS from 2016 relied heavily on central governments having good relations with local populations.

Addressing violent extremism is not so much about maintaining the social contract as reimagining it. Welfare and service provision should be the foundations through which governments engage with populations, but efficiency in service is not enough in today's ideologically contested environment. Social compacts of tomorrow will benefit from being rooted in a vision of rising hope that has cultural meaning and global value, one that prioritizes a sense of belonging as much as accountability and service provision. Citizens then will feel that the social contract, if upheld on both sides, can help build good and meaningful lives. Upholding the social contract between the state and its people is as much about regaining loyalty and belief in a system and its origins as it is about delivery. It is in more than only fragile states where such systems seem broken.



Can We Measure Success?

Monitoring and Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism Programs

BY REBECCA WOLFE

A question that plagues efforts to prevent or counter violent extremism (CVE) is, what does success look like? A common challenge for policymakers and politicians is that even one terrorist attack can be used to question the entire endeavor, and the amount of potential public blame understandably increases policymakers' risk aversion to new approaches.⁵ Yet there are ways to demonstrate that CVE programs are working. In this chapter, I describe how the narrative regarding CVE and violence prevention more generally often hampers evaluation and how policymakers and practitioners should shift this narrative. I then present a framework for measuring the effectiveness of CVE programs, a number of examples of how effectiveness has been measured, and finally, recommendations to consider when evaluating CVE programs.

An Unfair Analogy

A potential misconception regarding CVE and other violence prevention efforts is that violence can be “cured.” That only if the right intervention was discovered—a vaccine of sorts—we would see an end to violence. However, comparing violent extremism to diseases that can be cured is likely the wrong analogy. Rather than being similar to diseases like malaria, polio, or the measles, the onset of violence and violent extremism is multi-determined. In this way, violent extremism and violence more generally are more similar to diseases like depression and various cancers. A combination of factors determines whether the “disease” will manifest—genes, the environment, societal factors. Consequently, no one protocol works for everyone, and often there is trial and error to see which protocol will work for a specific person. Moreover, the disease often is not cured in these instances but managed.

5. A. Peter McGraw, Alexander Todorov, and Howard Kunreuther. “A Policy Maker’s Dilemma: Preventing Terrorism or Preventing Blame,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 115, no. 1 (2011): 25–34. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2011.01.004>.

Similar to protocols for depression and cancer, one specific CVE intervention will not work everywhere and for everyone. The reasons people join violent extremist (VE) groups are many and there are numerous pathways that lead them to join a VE group.⁶ There are structural reasons—such as grievances related to inequity of political, social, and economic opportunities.⁷ People also join these groups as a form of protection and for vengeance.^{8,9} There are also short-term reasons (e.g., basic needs) and longer-term reasons (e.g., grievances) why people may join. Additionally, although men and women often have similar reasons for joining these groups, the groups do offer unexpected freedoms for the latter. Women in northeast Nigeria discussed being able to spend more time outside the house and have greater opportunities for learning after joining Boko Haram.¹⁰ Additionally, women who have joined the Islamic State (IS) said they gained more freedom by showing their commitment to Islam.¹¹ Thus interventions that are successful for men may not be as successful for women and vice versa. Moreover, in many situations, people have little choice in joining these groups. As we have seen in Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria,^{12,13,14} the line between choosing to join and being forced to join is quite blurred. As a result, interventions to reduce forced recruitment will look very different than voluntary recruitment.

Because people join VE groups for a variety of reasons, varied interventions likely will be necessary to reduce participation by large numbers. Therefore, the success for any one CVE program is likely to be incremental, as it will reach only a certain proportion of those at risk. For that specific intervention, how do we measure success? Can we see reduced support for these groups? Are there fewer mentions of these groups on social media emanating from a geographic area? Is there increased support for the government? Are there fewer attacks?

What Can We Measure?

A common concern related to CVE Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is what can be measured to show that a program is working. What makes this question difficult, particularly in preventing violent extremism—ensuring that people do not join these groups in the first place—is that very few people actually join, and attacks tend to be rare events.

6. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008): 415–433; Michael A. Jensen, Anita Atwell Seate and Patrick A. James, “Radicalization to Violence: A Pathway Approach to Studying Extremism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, (2018), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2018.1442330>.

7. Keith Proctor, *Youth and Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence* (Washington, DC: Mercy Corps, 2015).

8. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment* (New York: UNDP, 2017).

9. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model,” *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017): 205–216.

10. Hilary Matfess, *Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons and Witnesses* (London: Zed Books, 2017); Lisa Inks and Rebecca Wolfe, *Motivations and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth* (Washington, DC: Mercy Corps, 2016).

11. Kanisha D. Bond et al., “The West Needs to Take the Politics of Women in ISIS Seriously,” *Foreign Policy*, March 4, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/04/the-west-needs-to-take-the-politics-of-women-in-isis-seriously/>.

12. Mara Revkin, “After the Islamic State: Balancing Accountability and Reconciliation in Iraq,” *The Limits of Punishment: Transitional Justice and Violent Extremism* (New York: United Nations University, 2018).

13. Caroline Brooks et al., *Why Young Syrians Choose to Fight: Vulnerability and Resilience to Recruitment by Violent Extremist Groups in Syria* (London: International Alert, 2016).

14. Inks and Wolfe, *Motivations and Empty Promises*.

Therefore, in essence there is a truncated scale, and in some cases no scale—if there are no events during the program period, then the question arises whether the program prevented an attack or there would not have been one anyway (more on this below).

Therefore, to evaluate program effectiveness, additional measures are needed beyond the number of attacks and/or recruits. Measures can focus on attitudes or behavior; they also can focus on measuring various concepts directly or by proxy. The table below outlines these categories.

	Attitudes	Behavior
Direct	Support for VE groups Endorsement of policies (pro/anti-government)	Join a group Engagement in violence Attacks/violent incidents
Proxy	Grievances Self-identity Social cohesion	Engage in behaviors that provide support to VE groups Online engagement Social networks

Direct Behaviors: Measuring direct behaviors—that is, actual violence or joining a group—often provides the most convincing evidence of the effectiveness of CVE programs. In Somaliland, Mercy Corps was able to ask participants in a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded education program about their engagement in political violence; those who were involved in both education and civic engagement activities were 14 percent less likely to engage in political violence than those not involved in such activities.¹⁵ Databases collating violent events, often triangulated by news sources, also are useful for examining the effectiveness of interventions. Berman, Shapiro, and Feltner used the USG’s MNFI SIGACTS III database to measure violent activity and found that when reconstruction projects in Iraq were less than \$50,000 and therefore more locally determined, insurgent violence decreased by fivefold.¹⁶ Others have used similar measures in Afghanistan¹⁷ and the Philippines.¹⁸

Proxy behaviors: Because of the difficulty in measuring direct behaviors, finding proxies that may illustrate whether people are on a pathway towards more involvement in VE groups, or have gotten off the pathway, also help demonstrate whether a program is effective. One potential way is to ask people about their willingness to support VE groups—pay taxes, house fighters, provide information. This is how we measured a change in support for armed opposition groups in Afghanistan.¹⁹ Another proxy behavior is

15. Beza Tesfaye, *Critical Choices: Assessing the Effects of Education and Civic Engagement on Somali Youth’s Propensity towards Violence* (Washington, DC: Mercy Corps, 2016).

16. Eli Berman, Jake N. Shapiro, and Joseph Felter, “Can hearts and minds be bought? The economics of counter-insurgency in Iraq,” *Journal of Political Economy* 119, no. 4 (2011): 766–819.

17. Renard Sexton, “Aid as a Tool against Insurgency: Evidence from Contested and Controlled Territory in Afghanistan,” *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 4 (2016): 731–749.

18. Eli Berman et al., “Do Working Men Rebel? Insurgency and Unemployment in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 4 (August 2011): 496–528.

19. Jon Kurtz, Beza Tesfaye, and Rebecca J. Wolfe, *Can Economic Interventions Reduce Violence? Impacts of Vocational Training and Cash Transfers on Youth Support for Political Violence in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Mercy Corps, 2018); Jason Lyall, Yang-Yang Zhou, and Kosuke Imai, “Reducing Insurgent Support among At-Risk Populations:

social media engagement. Using geolocated data, Tamar Mitts found that a Department of Homeland Security CVE program reduced Twitter activity in support of IS.²⁰ This social media activity was reduced most where CVE interventions, such as community roundtables and consultations, and trust-building exercises between law enforcement and communities, were most concentrated.

Direct Attitudes: Although attitudes may not predict direct engagement in violence or joining a VE group, if people in a community support a violent extremist organization (VEO), the organization will have an avenue to infiltrate a community and recruit members.²¹ Therefore, a change in attitudes related to a VE group could indicate the degree to which they are able to maintain control of a territory and recruit people voluntarily. In Somaliland, we asked people directly about their support for political violence. Similar to engagement, we found that those in secondary education and involved in civic engagement activities were 21 percent less likely to support political violence.²² To address potential self-presentation biases (in which people may be reluctant to give truthful answers to sensitive questions), researchers have measured attitudes about violent groups by examining how much people support a policy endorsed by the government or a VEO.²³ We adapted this approach for our Randomized Control Trial (RCT) in Afghanistan.²⁴

Proxy Attitudes: An alternative to measuring direct behaviors and attitudes, which may make populations suspicious about the program and put both participants and implementers at risk, is to measure whether a program is addressing the factors that lead people to become engaged in VEOs in the first place. If these factors are reduced, ostensibly fewer people will become involved in VEOs. For example, anger, shame and insignificance among detained members of the Tamil Tigers was associated with engaging in violent actions against the Sinhalese majority.²⁵ Programs that reduce these feelings of anger, shame, and insignificance in theory would reduce the risk that people would engage in violence. Similarly, by measuring grievances towards the government²⁶ or how disconnected one feels from society²⁷—both drivers of violent extremism—and seeing if a program changes people’s attitudes about these factors may demonstrate reduced risk for recruitment or engagement in violence.

Experimental Evidence from Cash Transfers and Livelihood Training in Afghanistan” (2019) SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3026531.

20. Tamar Mitts, “Countering Violent Extremism and Radical Rhetoric” (Working Paper, 2019), https://www.dropbox.com/s/r1fcqdwz0q4edk/cve_v7.pdf?dl=0.

21. Lisa Inks, Annalies Veldmeijer, and Abdoul K.I. Fomba, “We Hope and We Fight”: Youth, Violence, and Communities in Mali (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps. 2017).

22. Tesfaye, *Critical Choices*.

23. Graeme Blair, Kosoke Imai, and Jason Lyall, “Comparing and combining endorsement and list experiments: Evidence from Afghanistan,” *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 4 (2014): 1043–1063.

24. Kurtz, Tesfaye, and Wolfe, *Can Economic Interventions Reduce Violence?*; Lyall, Zhou and Imai, “Reducing Insurgent Support among At-Risk Populations.”

25. Arie Kruglanski et al., “Processes of Radicalization and Deradicalization,” *Political Psychology* 35 (February 2014): 69–93.

26. Bledi Celiku, “Why People Fight: Inequality, Exclusion, and a Sense of Injustice,” *Pathways for Peace*: 109-139 (New York/Washington DC: UIN/World Bank, 2018).

27. Kruglanski et al., “Processes of Radicalization and Deradicalization.”

Additional Recommendations for Monitoring and Evaluation of CVE Programs

In addition to including the appropriate measures, there are a number of other considerations for monitoring and evaluating CVE programs.

The Importance of Counterfactuals: Although having a counterfactual often is ideal for any type of evaluation, it is particularly important when evaluating CVE programs. A potential challenge of CVE programs or any type of program that touts prevention is how to evaluate whether the violence or the recruitment would not have happened without the intervention (related to the above analogy, this is a problem for preventive healthcare as well). An additional challenge is that CVE programs often are implemented in dynamic environments, and it is difficult to know if it was the program or some other factor, like a military intervention, that caused the change. By comparing places that receive the intervention to those that did not, it is easier to attribute change or prevention to the program. RCTs, which are considered the gold standard are possible in these environments and provide the cleanest test of the counterfactual.²⁸ However, there are other evaluation designs that provide a counterfactual, such as regression discontinuity, matched comparisons, and synthetic controls. Even qualitatively, there are ways of construing a counterfactual—interviews with people in the program and those not in the program. Although not an impact evaluation, to understand why people joined various violent groups, Mercy Corps interviewed former members of VEOs and those who had never joined.²⁹ This approach could be adapted for evaluation as well. Other evaluation designs, such as process tracing and Most Significant Change, generate important learning about implementing CVE programs; however, their ability to generate persuasive evidence for policymakers is limited and therefore they are less effective at illustrating the utility of these investments.³⁰

Security of Respondents, Enumerators, and Data: The sensitivity of these programs and related data increase the number of security precautions that need to be considered. If VEOs understand the reason behind a program and related surveys, it can put both respondents and enumerators at risk. Indirect survey techniques like endorsement, list, and random response experiments reduce the security risk to respondents and enumerators as they are less explicit in what they ask respondents so that people would become less suspicious of the purpose of the survey. This is in part why Mercy Corps used these techniques in Afghanistan. Additionally, because of the way the data are analyzed, the anonymity of responses is maintained. Public data sources of violent events also limit the security risks of individual respondents and enumerators.

An additional consideration is how data is kept anonymous and secure. If VEOs learn who was participating in these programs, it could put them at risk. The other concern is

28. Rebecca Wolfe, “The challenges and promises of using RCTs in conflict environments,” in Yaesmin Acar, Sigrun Mossand, Özden Uluğ, eds. *Researching Peace and Conflict: Field Experiences and Methodological Reflections* (New York: Springer, forthcoming).

29. Mercy Corps, *Motivations And Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth* (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps, 2016); Inks, Veldmeijer, and Fomba, “We Hope and We Fight.”

30. Lucy Holdaway and Ruth Simpson, “Improving the Impact of Violent Extremism Programming: A Toolkit for Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation” International Alert, 2018.

that often these programs target “at-risk” populations for recruitment. The validity of the determination of being at-risk is questionable.³¹ However, if non-state and state security actors learn who is so designated, it is possible that these people would be targeted not just with prevention programs but with surveillance and other security measures that could violate human rights.

Gender Sensitivity: In addition to tailoring programs to the reasons why men and women join or support VEOs, how we measure attitudes and behaviors needs to be sensitive to gender. Depending on cultural context, the behaviors deemed appropriate may be different for men and women, particularly in conservative societies. This became clear in our study in Afghanistan. Male participants drove our results of reduced support for armed opposition groups. When reflecting on why this was the case, we realized the proxy behaviors we asked about—such as paying taxes, providing information, providing housing—were behaviors men were much more likely to engage in than women. In fact, women very rarely would pay taxes to anyone in Kandahar. Therefore, it is unclear if the lack of impact for women is due to the ineffectiveness of the program for women or gender-insensitive measures. Understanding what participation in violence looks like for both men and women needs to be considered when designing CVE measures.

Balancing Adaptive Management with Evaluation: Similar to having a counterfactual, this approach is not unique to M&E of CVE programs. However, given the dynamic environment in which programs often are implemented, balancing being adaptive with having rigorous data can prove challenging. In a conflict environment with active VEOs, it can be difficult to keep a program from shifting over a one-to-two-year period. Additionally, VEO tactics shift and programs need to adapt accordingly. One way to balance this is to focus evaluative efforts on shorter-term interventions (e.g., six months) and rapid or nimble RCTs.³² Although the impact of shorter interventions may be limited, these more rapid evaluative efforts enable implementers to learn what works without constraining their hands too much. Additionally, this approach allows adaptations to be based on more rigorous evidence. Mercy Corps implemented a rapid RCT in northeast Nigeria with U.S. State Department funding to learn how radio messages can help increase community acceptance of reintegration of former Boko Haram members (results forthcoming). USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives used a similar methodology for its small grants program in northeast Nigeria, allowing the approach to be adapted over the lifecycle of the program.

Conclusion

Because of the difficulty in accessing violent behaviors, the sensitivity of the topic, the wide variety of determinants of violence, and how the phenomenon morphs over time, evaluating CVE efforts can seem daunting. Yet, since 2015, huge gains have been made both in innovative approaches to CVE and in evaluating these efforts. We now better understand the conditions under which CVE investments are successful, and when

31. Rebecca Wolfe, “Trump Ban Targeting Muslims Will Not Make America Safer,” *The Conversation*, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/trump-travel-ban-targeting-muslims-will-not-make-america-safer-97519>.

32. Dean Karlan, “Nimble RCTs: A Powerful Methodology in the Program Design Toolbox,” (Talk at the World Bank, May 2017): <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/626921495727495321/Nimble-RCTs-WorldBank-May2017-v4.pdf>.

those investments will have limited returns. What is also clear is that we must continue to hold ourselves accountable about which investments help stem the tide of violent extremism. Without that knowledge, there are risks that funds will be used ineffectively, marring the reputation of the CVE enterprise, and limiting the ability of policymakers to invest in interventions that do help improve security. Although not without challenges, as illustrated above, it is possible to design an evidence-based CVE policy based on good data and metrics. The hope is that with continued strong research and monitoring and evaluation of these programs, the CVE field will continue to innovate and adapt, improving security both in the United States and abroad.



From Battlefields to Boardrooms

A Development Approach to Fighting Violent Extremism

BY PAUL M. BISCA & OLIVIER LAVINAL

From battlefields to the boardrooms of multilateral development banks, violent extremism has become the subject of much concern and passion. But while academics, policymakers, and soldiers search for ways to address its symptoms and root causes, one fact goes undisputed—violent extremism (VE) is a scourge for economic and social development. In Iraq, the fight against the Islamic State (IS) forced more than five million citizens to flee their homes, left schools destroyed, and hospitals dysfunctional. According to a World Bank assessment, the costs of rebuilding regions affected by the conflict with IS rise to nearly \$50 billion.³³ In Syria, over half the population has been displaced by conflict, while cumulative losses to GDP amount to \$226 billion—four times the country's GDP in 2010.³⁴ In northeast Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgents have killed more than 37,000 people and forced 2.7 million people to flee their homes.³⁵ By attacking health centers, markets, roads, and schools, militants cause even more lasting damage: over 2,000 schools were closed in 2015, disrupting the education of more than 1 million children.³⁶ Violent extremism thus affects every aspect of public life, from safety and security to economic growth and the formation of human capital, all foundations of a sustainable future.

Peace and stability are global public goods without which sustainable development outcomes cannot be achieved. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing equitable access to justice, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions (SDG16).³⁷ Two of the World Bank's recent World Development Reports (WDRs) explored how conflict undermines

33. World Bank Group, *Iraq Reconstruction and Investment: Damage and Needs Assessment of Affected Governorates* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2018), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29438>.

34. The World Bank, *The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2017), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/publication/the-toll-of-war-the-economic-and-social-consequences-of-the-conflict-in-syria>.

35. John Campbell and Asch Harwood, "Boko Haram's Deadly Impact," Council on Foreign Relations, August 20, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/article/boko-harams-deadly-impact>.

36. Lauren Ploch Blanchard, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 29, 2016), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf>.

37. United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 16, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.

poverty reduction and good governance: the WDR 2011 on *Conflict, Security, and Development*³⁸ and WDR 2017 on *Governance and the Law*.³⁹ Yet although our understanding of causes and consequences of conflict—including violent extremism—has heightened, the evidence for how development policy, programming and implementation could help remains scarce. The new frontier for development agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) is to provide and finance global public goods by leveraging new tools and financing mechanisms that help counter fragility, conflict, and violence.

Against this backdrop, calls for a unified global response to VE that brings together security, diplomatic, and development actors have gained greater resonance. In 2018, *Pathways for Peace*, the United Nations-World Bank study of the prevention of violent conflict, argued that integrated efforts along the security-development nexus were necessary to tackle VE.⁴⁰ Deepening connections between security, diplomatic, and development actors is also a core tenet of the 2019 report of the Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States established by the U.S. Congress.⁴¹ To be sure, coordinating these efforts poses daunting challenges. Yet, unlike defense and foreign ministries, multilateral development banks (MDBs) and IFIs have little or no prior history of systematically addressing VE as part of their traditional programs. As a result, there is little evidence to assess what has worked, few mistakes to learn from, and much space to speculate on the “what” and the “how” of using development approaches to address VE.

How to rise to this challenge and mount an effective response? In this paper, we look to past and recent examples of World Bank interventions in fragile states to identify a set of basic principles that could contribute to global efforts to prevent violent extremism. We argue that the value proposition of development agencies and IFIs could be anchored in three core functions that they regularly perform:

- As knowledge providers, IFIs can compile data and generate new analytics on the root causes of VE or the incentives and socio-economic profiles of recruits.
- As partners to governments, IFIs can position VE at the center of data-driven policy dialogues that forge consensus between international organizations, donors, and national authorities.
- As financiers, IFIs can support large-scale interventions to help address the structural economic and social conditions where VE tends to focus.

To this end, we first look at two types of development interventions in fragile states, and then reflect on their potential to inform a similar approach to VE.

38. The World Bank Group, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, DC: The World Bank Group, 2011), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4389>.

39. The World Bank, *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2017), <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2017>.

40. The World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2018), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

41. United States Institute of Peace Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, <https://www.usip.org/programs/task-force-extremism-fragile-states>.

Precedents for a Development Approach to Violent Extremism

DISARMAMENT-DEMOBILIZATION-REINTEGRATION AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Investing in countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence is one of the World Bank's top priorities. In recent years, the bank has doubled the amount of financing allocated to fragile states from US\$7 to US\$14 billion,⁴² created special facilities to help countries coping with large numbers of refugees,⁴³ and is now developing its first ever strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV).⁴⁴ The movement of fragility from the margin to the core of development programming is in part exemplified by two types of World Bank-funded operations: disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and the development approach to forced displacement.

Starting in 1992 in Uganda, the World Bank financed over 30 DDR operations worth over \$1 billion in 20 countries. These projects largely were concentrated in Africa, where the bank managed two trust funds: The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP, 2002–2009), and the Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP, 2010–2017). Together, the MDRP and TDRP coordinated financing from 14 donors and partnered in implementation with 21 regional bodies, United Nations (UN) agencies, and NGOs.⁴⁵ The two programs helped demobilize more than 500,000 ex-combatants. Interventions ranged from livelihood support and vocational training for former fighters to capacity building for national governments struggling to implement comprehensive DDR plans.⁴⁶ To better improve beneficiary targeting and program design, both programs launched substantial research initiatives. For example, the MDRP and TRDP financed working papers and dissemination notes covering topics such as the socioeconomic profiling of former combatants, providing psychosocial support, linking DDR with security sector reform, and multi-country studies exploring successes, failures, and lessons learned from programs and beneficiaries alike.⁴⁷ Today, national and regional data collection, knowledge management, and innovative partnerships are priorities for the bank's new DDR facility, the Global Program for Reintegration Support (GPRS) financed by the State and Peacebuilding Fund.⁴⁸ The World Bank's work on DDR thus began with managing donor contributions and evolved into a full suite of services encompassing data collection, knowledge generation, project management, and capacity building for national authorities. Although good DDR outcomes ultimately depend on the degree to

42. The World Bank, *IDA18 Mid-Term Review: Fragility, Conflict, and Violence* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2018), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/259151542812499052/IDA18-Mid-Term-Review-Fragility-Conflict-and-Violence>.

43. "IDA18 Regional Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities," World Bank Group International Development Association, <http://ida.worldbank.org/replenishments/ida-18replenishments/ida18-regional-sub-window-for-refugees-host-communities>.

44. The World Bank, "World Bank Group Launches Worldwide Consultations on Future Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence," April 16, 2019, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/16/world-bank-group-launches-worldwide-consultations-on-future-strategy-for-fragility-conflict-and-violence>.

45. The Social Science Research Council, *The Changing Landscape of Armed Groups: Doing DDR in New Contexts* (Brooklyn, NY: The Social Science Research Council, 2018), <https://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/the-changing-landscape-of-armed-groups-doing-ddr-in-new-contexts/>.

46. Ibid.

47. The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program, http://tdrp.net/mdrp/doc_rep.htm; "TDRP Studies," The World Bank, <http://www.tdrp.net/tdrpstudies.php>.

48. The World Bank, *IDA18 Mid-Term Review : Fragility, Conflict, and Violence* (World Bank, 2018), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/259151542812499052/IDA18-Mid-Term-Review-Fragility-Conflict-and-Violence>.

which conflicting parties reach peace agreements, these services show how development interventions can concretely support the essential work of peacebuilders and diplomats.

By contrast, the development approach to forced displacement started from the knowledge side, with research informing the international policy dialogue on refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in fragile states. Published in 2016 as a joint study with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the flagship report *Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts* examined available data to better understand the scope of the challenge and propose solutions to help the displaced access jobs and services.⁴⁹ The report debunked several myths, showing that the average duration of exile for current refugees stands at 10.3 years, while the median duration is four years.⁵⁰ Noting that most data on refugees and IDPs represented educated guesses, the report called for a substantial effort to enhance the coverage, accuracy, reliability, and comparability of information across countries. The study also looked at specific ways in which development agencies can help—by bringing forced displacement into standard economic policy discussions with governments; and funding and adapting projects in health, education, employability, and job creation to the specific needs of refugees, IDPs, and host communities.⁵¹

This data-driven research then shaped the creation of new financing instruments. For the poorest countries, the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) allocated \$2 billion to support refugees and host communities.⁵² Meanwhile, for Jordan and Lebanon, middle-income countries struggling with the massive influx of refugees from Syria, the World Bank partnered with the UN and Islamic Development Bank to launch the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) in 2016. Jordan and Lebanon currently hold the largest proportion of refugees per 1,000 people in the world.⁵³ Although such high numbers put tremendous pressure on service delivery and jobs, the two countries previously were unable to borrow cheap money to fund urgent investments in health, education, infrastructure, or jobs. The reason rested purely on a technicality in development finance—as middle-income countries, they did not meet criteria for lower interest rates and longer maturities (e.g., concessional financing) that are available to poorer conflict-affected countries.

The GCFF thus addressed a critical gap in the global aid architecture. It helped middle-income countries facing refugee crises to access funds for development that otherwise would have been unattainable. Funding is available at concessional terms because the facility partners with MDBs such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to reduce the borrowing

49. The World Bank, *Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2017), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25016>.

50. Ibid.

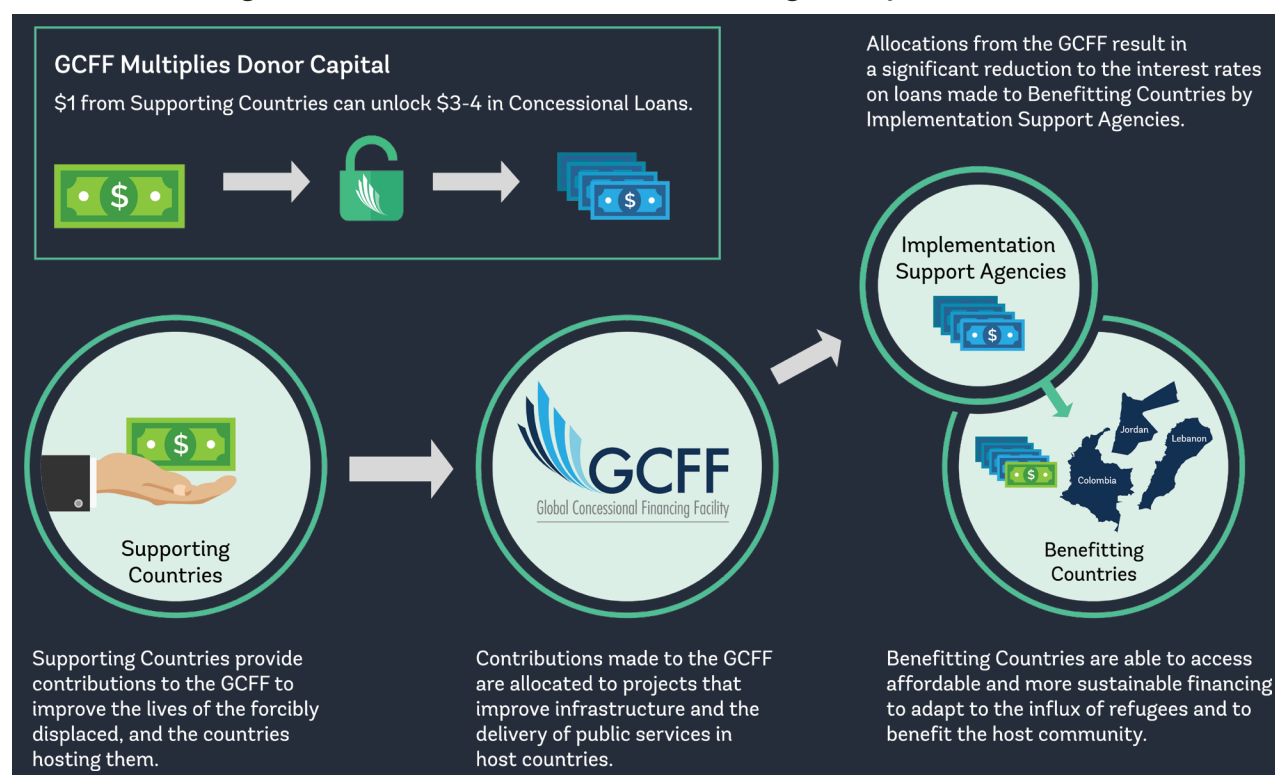
51. Ibid.

52. The World Bank, *14 Countries Now Eligible for IDA Financing to Support Refugees and Hosts* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2018), <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/countries-eligible-for-new-ida-financing-to-support-refugees-and-hosts>; "IDA18 Replenishment," World Bank Group International Development Association, <http://ida.worldbank.org/financing/replenishments/ida18-overview>.

53. UNHCR, *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2017* (Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2017), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html>.

terms of Jordan and Lebanon, and thus diminish the financial burden that these countries take on to help refugees and host communities. In the past two years, the facility has approved \$500 million in grants to Jordan and Lebanon and is now supporting Colombia to address the Venezuelan refugee crisis.⁵⁴ Moreover, the GCFF leveraged donor contributions to unlock more than \$2.5 billion in concessional financing for development projects that create jobs, expand vital public services (such as health and education), and build sustainable infrastructure. In effect, this means that countries affected by refugees have borrowed cheap money to address the core needs of non-citizens whose lives are inextricably tied to the growth and security of the host nation. In this way, the GCFF is helping these countries better afford to provide a global public good to the world.

Figure 1: The Global Concessional Financing Facility in Action



Source: Global Concessional Financing Facility, 2019, <https://globalcff.org/about-us/>.

Data, Resources, and Convening Power

BUILDING BLOCKS OF A DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO VE

The history of World Bank-financed DDR programs and the transformation of the forced displacement agenda into a globally acknowledged poverty reduction effort can help policymakers sketch the broad contours of a development approach to VE. In both cases, the challenges were complex, and the response involved three core elements: deepening analytics to increase mastery of real facts and data; using knowledge and finance to build alliances and set the stage for global policy consensus;⁵⁵ and daring to try something new.

54. Global Concessional Financing Facility, <https://globalcff.org/about-us/>.

55. Some of these points also are argued here: Eric Rosand, "To prevent extremism, don't forget the existing multilateral architecture," The Brookings Institution, March 4, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/or->

Taken together, these steps could form the blueprint for future IFI and MDB interventions to prevent or tackle VE.

First, the multifaceted role of IFIs and MDBs as centers for knowledge and data, and platforms for multiple stakeholders, makes them uniquely suited to fill critical knowledge gaps in our empirical understanding of VE. Research on DDR and forced displacement aimed to better grasp the root causes of these dynamics and the psychosocial and socioeconomic makeup of the protagonists—the ex-combatants, refugees, and IDPs. Similarly, the impact of VE on economic and social opportunities and livelihoods could become part of standardized country and regional assessments.

For example, in October 2016, the World Bank’s Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Economic Monitor complemented the usual analysis of indicators such as GDP and inflation with a chapter on economic perspectives on violent extremism.⁵⁶ In the wake of the then just-released MENA regional strategy that uniquely promoted economic and social inclusion for peace and stability,⁵⁷ the study sought to shed light on how a market of radicalization is formed, as well as the intrinsic and financial motivations of individuals to join VE groups. Using regression analysis on a leaked database of 3,800 foreign recruits to IS, the analysis found that terrorism was not associated with poverty or low levels of education. In turn, economic exclusion as measured by high unemployment rates for men held greater explanatory power. One hypothesis was that exclusion from economic life diminishes the opportunity costs of joining VE groups and increases grievances against the state. The conclusion is that policies that promote jobs benefit young people seeking employment but may also help thwart the spread of VE.⁵⁸ A new 2019 World Bank working paper strengthened the link between unemployment and IS recruitment, but found that the lack of jobs as a driver for VE was relevant only in countries located near Syria.⁵⁹ Data limitations notwithstanding, research to build the evidence base necessary to understand the motivations behind individual and community support for VE, as well as their economic, social, and gender characteristics, are critical to informing strategies and programming at country, regional, and global levels.

Second, a development approach to VE would seek to use knowledge and financing instruments to forge a global consensus on the scale, impact, and possible solutions to the problem. The DDR and forced displacement experiences can serve this purpose in different ways. A relatively recent question in debates about next-generation DDR interventions is whether they can help demobilize combatants who fight in VE groups that profess to be engaged in a life or death struggle, as with IS or al-Shabaab in Somalia. A series of studies commissioned in 2015 by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO, now referred to as UNDP) examined points of convergence between DDR and deradicalization

der-from-chaos/2019/03/04/to-prevent-extremism-dont-forget-the-existing-multilateral-architecture/.

56. The World Bank, *MENA Economic Monitor, October 2016: Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2016), <http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/mena-economic-monitor-fall-2016-economic-and-social-inclusion-to-prevent-violent-extremism>.

57. The World Bank, “Our New Strategy,” November 5, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/brief/our-new-strategy>.

58. United Nations University, *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2015), <http://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:5532#viewAttachments>.

59. Mohamed Abdel Jelil, Kartika Bhatia, Anne Brockmeyer, Quy-Toan Do, and Clement Jean Edouard, *Unemployment and violent extremism: evidence from Daesh foreign recruits*, The World Bank (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2018), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/967561522155860057/Unemployment-and-violent-extremism-evidence-from-Daesh-foreign-recruits>.

programs.⁶⁰ The conclusions were mixed. Although these programs operate according to different theories of change, they also place importance on family participation and creating strong bonds that endure beyond the program.⁶¹ A more recent article found many points of operational convergence, including ensuring safe passage for fighters who surrender and providing access to vocational training, education, and psychological counselling.⁶² These are precisely the kinds of debates that MDBs can help overcome.

The data and knowledge generated to facilitate the global conversation on VE can then inform the establishment of new financing solutions to tackle this problem. According to the 2019 report of the Task Force on Preventing Violent Extremism in Fragile States, the world needs a new financing vehicle for particularly vulnerable—but not necessarily conflict-affected countries—that will coordinate international support to preventing VE.⁶³ The international institutional and financial framework necessary to catalyze such concerted investments currently seems to be lacking, notably in middle-income countries facing similar constraints to Jordan and Lebanon. But as we have seen with the GCFF, IFIs and MDBs can create innovative platforms that help countries access cheaper capital to mitigate the impact of conflict spillovers. The same principles of blended finance that led to the creation of the GCFF could be used to build a partnership facility for the prevention of VE in fragile states. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines blended finance as the strategic use of development finance for the mobilization of additional funding towards sustainable development in developing countries.⁶⁴ The goal is to use the scarce resources of MDBs and IFIs and crowd in additional funds from commercial investors to meet the indispensable financing needs of the SDGs. If, as the OECD suggests, blended finance can be used to unlock private investments and maximize development outcomes, why not use it to promote peace and stability? Indeed, MDBs, IFIs, and the private sector could partner to create a well-coordinated platform to support peace and stability as global public goods in fragile states.

Lastly, financing the prevention of VE in fragile states will need to take a bold step into uncharted territory and take smart risks. In *Pathways for Peace*, the World Bank and United Nations emphasized that many contemporary violent conflicts are rooted in group-based grievances around exclusion that forge deep-seated feelings of injustice and unfairness. Vulnerable communities, particularly youth and women, suffer the most. Whether based on facts or perceptions, groups who feel excluded or relatively disadvantaged are more prone to violence than those who feel treated equally. This is especially relevant in the case of young people, whose aspirations for social and economic mobility, as well as recognition, are often unmet in fragile states. Yet, the Pathways report also underscored that IFIs and MDBs still are highly constrained from engaging on sensitive issues with governments by their mandates, institutional makeup, and internal culture.

60. United Nations University, *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is It Fit for Purpose?*

61. Ibid.

62. Joanne Richards, “Demobilising and Disengaging Violent Extremists: Towards a New UN Framework,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 6, no.1 (October 23, 2017):14, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.543/>.

63. United States Institute of Peace, *Preventing Extremism in Fragile States: A New Approach*, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/02/preventing-extremism-fragile-states-new-approach>.

64. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Principle 2: Design Blended Finance To Increase The Mobilisation Of Commercial Finance*, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/blended-finance-principles/principle-2/>.

At early signs of risk and in pre-crisis contexts, these constraints often limit the scope for development programming to address causes of tension and sensitive areas such as security and justice.⁶⁵ Security and justice are precisely the areas where new financing instruments could make a difference.⁶⁶ If global efforts to prevent and contain VE are to be successful, constraints to MDB engagement in these areas need to change—and individual shareholders should set the tone.

65. The World Bank, *Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2018), 251, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

66. For example, a 2017 UNDP study of nearly 500 volunteers who had joined extremist organizations showed that more than 70 percent of respondents held grievances against state security actors are particularly pronounced among those most vulnerable to recruitment, <http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/>.



In Search of Common Ground

Applying Shared Lessons from Countering Violent Extremism and Preventing Gang Violence

BY ENRIQUE BETANCOURT & TODD DIAMOND

Violence, in all its forms, remains a top international concern despite well-documented decreasing levels of homicide and conflict-related deaths worldwide.⁶⁷ Behind this concern lies the fact that violence disproportionately affects developing regions around the globe. For example, although only having 8 percent of the world's population, the Latin America and Caribbean region accounts for 30 percent of global homicides. In the same vein, only four countries—Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia—account for nearly half of the homicides that take place every year in the world.⁶⁸ Extremist violence and radicalization have spread from the Middle East to threaten the stability of parts of the Sahel, East Africa, and Asia. Likewise, victimization disproportionately affects underserved and disenfranchised demographic groups, particularly young men, women, and children. In these contexts, extreme levels of violence perpetuate and expand the inequality gap, weaken the adherence to the rule of law and the progress of democracy while also hindering other related development efforts such as poverty alleviation and access to health and education.

Countering violent extremism (CVE) and gang violence prevention (GVP) increasingly are becoming priorities for government agencies and donors in the development sector looking at both issues through a national security lens. For the most part, geographic and geopolitical differences have limited the interaction of practitioners working to address these issues, but experience shows us there are enough similarities in causality, entry points, and potential mitigation measures that examining both for lessons and recommendations is worthwhile.

67. Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Viking, 2011).

68. Ignacio Cano and Emiliano Rojido, *Mapeo de Programas de Prevención de Homicidios en América Latina y el Caribe* (Laboratório de Análise da Violência, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2016), <https://www.oas.org/ext/es/seguridad/red-prevencion-crimen/Recursos/Biblioteca-Digital/mapeo-de-programas-de-prevencion-de-homicidios-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>.

Whether violent extremism in the Middle East or gang violence in Central America, weak institutions and a lack of state legitimacy creates a power vacuum that is often filled by non-state actors. These can be extremist groups or gangs that are likely to exploit and weaponize citizen grievances for their own benefit. Similarly, underserved neighborhoods—where schools, social networks, and families already have some level of affinity or affiliation to these groups—typically have been hotbeds for recruitment. Children who have experienced the type of armed conflict prevalent in Syria for the past six years, for example, face multiple risks and vulnerability that make them more susceptible to extremist teachings. Activities aimed at reducing violence and bolstering state legitimacy are crucial to achieving long-term stability and development impact.

For many years the international community has approached this crisis from a variety of perspectives. In tackling the problem from a law enforcement perspective, police (and in some cases, armed forces) have focused their efforts on incapacitating gangs or extremist groups' criminal networks by "taking out" targeted individuals and their associates. Efforts to address the problem through a preventive lens have entailed the provision of social services to underserved communities to address the root causes of gang or extremist violence and the mechanisms they use to recruit group members. Lastly, counterinsurgency stabilization approaches and crime control operations like "weed and seed" have implemented a sequence of the former two approaches under the assumption that target communities need to be cleared from criminal elements first and subsequently targeted with social services.

Our experience operating programs to address extremist and gang violence in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, as well as in Mexico and Central America, suggest that these approaches typically fall short of achieving sustained violence reduction because prevention and stabilization activities often are not coupled with efforts to achieve longer-term capacity-building objectives to strengthen the legitimacy of the state.

Prevention efforts tend to prioritize service delivery to the general population and to focus on addressing the root causes of violence. Such efforts often lack the capacity to direct relevant and evidence-informed programming to the smallest portion of people who cause the largest portion of violence. This approach also overlooks the fact that the motivation for the implementation of "prevention" activities in the first place is the existence of already overwhelming levels of gang or extremist violence and that these groups often capitalize for themselves the benefits of state and international efforts and resources. In parts of Syria, the Islamic State and other extremist groups controlled the education sector, closing or exploiting schools to promote its extremist ideology. Similar methods can be observed with groups like MS-13, which exerts full control of community life in large swaths of the most important urban centers in Central America.

In the same vein, pure crime control efforts tend to be too punitive in nature and to perpetuate the cycles of violence, the stigmatization of whole communities, and the lack of trust in state institutions. "Taking people off the streets" leaves a great deal of collateral damage in the form of fragmented families, disinvestment, and a sense of unfairness by overlooking the trauma and victimization experienced in these communities.⁶⁹ Perhaps

69. Katy Reckdahl, "Mass Incarceration's Collateral Damage: The Children Left Behind," *Nation*, December 16,

the one aspect that most hinders the effectiveness of this approach is its tendency to challenge group identity and affiliation, which, paradoxically, likely will strengthen the group's cohesion. Efforts targeted against MS-13 in Central America, and even the adverse impact of increased incarceration in underserved communities in the United States, confirm the unintended consequences of this approach.

Furthermore, stabilization approaches typically fail for two main reasons. They result in unintended but real ancillary harm because of their reliance on military or crime control methods across a given community. There also is an inherent difficulty in seamlessly connecting strong-arm approaches and the delivery of social services because those responsible for implementing each of these strategies operate with competing institutional agendas that define success in divergent ways.

A growing body of evidence, as well as developing communities of practice that have implemented concrete successful efforts in places as diverse as Oakland, Ciudad Juarez, and Raqqa, suggest that there are ways to mitigate the drivers of group violence. In each of these circumstances, a main ingredient has been the alignment of diverse actors—such as locally elected officials, clergy, tribal leaders, and educators—around efforts to incorporate specific development objectives within the context of changing group behavior. By nurturing change agents such as mayors, teachers, and community police officers, interventions can enable them to implement ongoing interventions while capturing and empowering political will.

More than four years of U.S. government-funded support to the Syrian education sector has demonstrated that targeted interventions can provide badly needed learning opportunities for students and a level of political legitimacy for, in this case the moderate opposition-controlled Ministry of Education, even when challenged by an extremist non-state shadow “ministry.” However, in many of these areas, the influence of armed and terrorist groups on education still poses a challenge to stability, social cohesion, and legitimate economic opportunities. With a student population of about 1.3 million, education systems in opposition-held areas of Syria have struggled to make up for six years of severely limited literacy, numeracy, and other basic learning, leaving children and youth susceptible to violent extremism.⁷⁰ Our response has been a series of programs that address this deficit through a systemic approach to remedial learning and practical skills building that enlists key change agents to lead these efforts.

In both opposition-held northwest Syria and post-Islamic State Raqqa, the alternatives to extremist groups have included the promotion of space for moderate dialogue and support for structured activities that enable youth to engage with their communities. Moderate governance actors who have led this effort have been free education directorates, local councils, and the Syrian Civil Defense, among others. CVE programs were designed to use psychosocial support and education as complementary means to reduce the influence and interference of armed actors. Funding was directed where there was local political will or

2014, <https://www.thenation.com/article/mass-incarcerations-collateral-damage-children-left-behind/>.

70. “Status of Early Primary Education in Syria: Early Grade Reading and Early Grade Mathematics Assessments, War Stressor Survey, and School Effectiveness Survey Results Report,” Prepared for the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID)/Syria, Prepared by Dr. Brenda Sinclair and Dr. Michel Rousseau, Chemonics International Inc. Consultants, September 2017.

where it could be cultivated among governance and civil society actors, with activities that were key to combatting the factors that attract young people to violent extremist groups.

In the city of Morelia, Mexico, efforts dubbed Civic Justice driven by local authorities with the support of international donors have successfully implemented a collective impact effort to reduce violence and bolster trust between community actors and their government.⁷¹ A key realization of local authorities was that close to 70 percent of homicide victims had previous arrest records due to administrative offenses and misdemeanors at the municipal level. The civic justice model partners municipal police, municipal courts, and the delivery of key social services, such as cognitive behavioral therapy and conflict mediation, focusing on the early manifestation of social disorder and providing assistance to victims of violence.

Efforts in Morelia included the development of measures to collect granular data at the neighborhood level, an enterprise only local authorities can enable and sustain; a dynamic deployment of law enforcement and victim assistance services to places of concentrated violence; and an increased focus on problem-oriented policing and strengthening collaboration between municipal police and state-level justice actors. These efforts were coupled with a swift and certain sanctions approach in municipal courts requiring mandatory community service for all minor offenses instead of jail time or economic sanctions. The Civic Justice approach in Morelia, now being replicated in other cities in Mexico, reduced homicides by 20 percent while strengthening the trust between the state and Morelia's most vulnerable communities.

With this in mind, we put forth five principles to design and implement programs aimed at countering and preventing violent extremism and enabling stable environments for improved development:

ADAPT TO THE UNSTABLE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

A project's ability to assist local governments in responding quickly and appropriately to community needs is paramount to establishing credibility and trust between the project and its counterparts. Similarly, projects in fragile contexts need ongoing analysis based on shifting opportunities and constraints to stay relevant and responsive to changing power dynamics throughout implementation. Programs in fragile contexts often proceed without linear progression; the best programs utilize feedback loops and iterative design to help achieve their goals.

TARGET GROUP BEHAVIOR RATHER THAN IDENTITY

Programmatic approaches informed by focused deterrence principles establish a coalition of law enforcement, clergy, social workers and tribal and other community leaders to reduce gang participation and violence. This holistic approach has systematically proven effective in affecting group behavior.⁷²

71. Paulina Villegas, "As Violence Soared in Mexico, This Town Bucked the Trend," *New York Times*, September 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/01/world/americas/mexico-violence-police.html>.

72. Anthony A. Braga and David L. Weisburd, "The effects of 'pulling levers' focused deterrence strategies on crime," *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, March 4, 2012, <https://campbellcollaboration.org/library/pulling-levers-focused-deterrence-strategies-effects-on-crime.html>.

PROVIDE PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CITIZEN-CENTERED JUSTICE SOLUTIONS

Programs to strengthen the rule of law should complement long-term institutional reform efforts with context-specific justice measures focusing on the most immediate needs of citizens. Procedural justice⁷³ approaches can have a positive effect on the experience of citizens with the justice system and strengthen their adherence to the rule of law.

PRIORITIZE INCLUSIVE AND PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

Programmatic activities must address youth and civic engagement, treating high-risk individuals with psychosocial methods, such as cognitive behavioral therapy and engaging populations that have been marginalized or excluded from their communities. Taking an inclusive approach reinforces individual empowerment and helps establish or rebuild trust in the governance structure. This engagement should happen as a precursor or concurrently with more traditional state- or donor-sponsored reintegration, education, and community outreach activities.

ENABLE COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Collaboration and coordination cannot be mandated by government decree nor by an international donor. Research shows that successful efforts to address a complex problem such as group violence requires multi-agency efforts coordinated by a dedicated team accountable for facilitating collaborative efforts.⁷⁴ When spearheaded by local ownership of the problem, such teams are capable of monitoring and solving problems related to the implementation of a common agenda with clear and shared goals while managing communication among key internal and external actors.

While we continue to search for commonalities among CVE and GVP implementation in identifying and tackling the root causes of violent behavior, we should focus on empirically-informed solutions from each of the two sectors, adapted to their contextual conditions, to collectively respond to the similarities that affect both of these critical development and national security challenges.

73. Lorraine Mazerolle et al., "Procedural justice and police legitimacy: a systematic review of the research evidence," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 9, no. 3 (September 2013): 245.

74. J. Kania and M. Kramer, "Collective Impact," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.



Institutionalization and Coordination for the U.S. Approach to CVE

BY RYAN GREER

Countering violent extremism (CVE) is a relatively new policy issue, and it would benefit from an institutionalized, systematized, and coordinated approach throughout the U.S. government.⁷⁵ The United States has not embraced CVE at a sufficient scale to truly evaluate the full discipline and yet the objective of countering radicalization continues to be essential to international security. This essay argues that CVE is hindered not by lack of capability or an idea of what should be done, but by a convoluted U.S. government architecture that must clarify its leadership, communicate with more specific examples, and evaluate all programs as rigorously as possible. Ideally, that would include realigning legal authorities with activities, and significantly scaling up CVE programs writ large.

Since 9/11, the U.S. and partner governments have embraced CVE unevenly. CVE programs tend to be implemented narrowly, such as a targeted program in a specific region, but CVE is discussed by thought leaders and policymakers broadly, rhetorically treated like a theoretical hypothesis devoid of specific examples. Meanwhile, the threat from Islamist-inspired extremism has grown and evolved, and the threat of far-right terrorism has emerged domestically and in the West as a similarly serious security concern.⁷⁶ The need to counter extremism and prevent violence has never been clearer, yet the mechanisms for implementing and coordinating such efforts are not. Committing to a comprehensive approach, mirroring that of similar issues, could clarify, streamline, and unlock the potential for positive change to prevent the next wave of terrorism.

Policy and strategic direction for CVE are somewhat convoluted. At the U.S. Department of State, for example, there is a CVE Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism (equivalent to a Deputy Assistant Secretary), but that official does not directly oversee program

75. For ease of reading, the author includes within the umbrella concept of Countering Violent Extremism other similar terms such as Preventing Violent Extremism, Terrorism Prevention, and Targeted Violence Prevention.

76. See Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, *Preventing Extremism in Fragile States: A New Approach*, "Final Report of the Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States" (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2019), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/preventing-extremism-in-fragile-states-a-new-approach.pdf>; Center of Extremism, *Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2018* (Anti-Defamation League, 2019), <https://www.adl.org/murder-and-extremism-2018>.

funds for CVE, a program-driven discipline. CVE research at the State Department is also overseen separately, by the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO). The Global Engagement Center (GEC), the primary counter-messaging and online engagement mechanism, which is interagency-staffed, interagency-funded, answers to an entirely different State Department Undersecretary than either Counterterrorism or CSO—the Undersecretary for Public Affairs. Moreover, the GEC’s implementation has been spotty: its mission has shifted twice in recent years, and its funding, size, and mandate have ebbed and flowed, leading to uneven spending of program dollars and inconsistent oversight and leadership.^{77, 78, 79}

Similarly, at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), CVE is spread broadly with minimal clarity over leadership or consistency in management and oversight. Many mission issue areas similar to CVE are overseen by the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA); a significant portion of the CVE implementation is at the hands of the Office for Transition Initiatives (OTI); and yet there is a separate CVE Executive Secretariat with an unclear mandate and minimal funding. Although the Executive Secretariat recently has been expanded, including with DCHA personnel, its continued separation from the standard structure does not break the trend of CVE management and oversight being outside the norm for other issues. Meanwhile, the White House National Security Council (NSC) staff coordinates interagency processes. NSC used to have a Director for CVE, but that official focused mostly on domestic CVE, and the position has been vacant for some time. The NSC’s Counterterrorism Directorate offers some counterparts for interagency CVE leads, but the portfolio is spread among regional Counterterrorism Directors (e.g., Middle East) and only somewhat related functional Directors (e.g., Terrorist Use of the Internet), without a direct and consistent CVE role either domestically or for foreign affairs. If this seems confusing, that is because it is.

That the United States government has an interest in the success of CVE initiatives is clear. As outlined in a recent USIP report, global terrorist attacks have increased fivefold per year since 2001.⁸⁰ Today, there are twice as many Islamist-inspired extremist groups as there were in 2001.⁸¹ The cost to U.S. taxpayers for our efforts to counter terrorism have amounted to as much as \$5.9 trillion, whereas preventing conflict has been shown to cost less than engaging in one.^{82, 83} A preventive solution and a new approach to

77. Matthew C. Weed, “Global Engagement Center: Background and Issues,” Congressional Research Service, August 4, 2017, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IN10744.pdf>.

78. Deirdre Shesgreen, “Trump’s State Department lacks money, clear mandate to fight Russian disinformation, ‘fake news,’” *USA Today*, September 21, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/09/21/trump-administration-lacks-resources-fight-russian-fake-news/1292089002/>.

79. Alex Marquardt, “State Department suspends funding of anti-Iran Group which targeted journalists and activists,” CNN, June 5, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/05/politics/us-suspends-funding-anti-iran-group/index.html>.

80. Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, “Preventing Extremism in Fragile States: A New Approach: Final Report of the Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States,” U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP), February 26, 2019, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/02/preventing-extremism-fragile-states-new-approach>; “Global Terrorism Database,” National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>; Seth Jones et al., *The Evolution of the Salafi-jihadist Threat* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2018), 9, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/181221_EvolvingTerroristThreat.pdf.

81. Jones et al., *Evolution of the Salafi-jihadist Threat*.

82. Ibid.

83. USIP, United Nations, and World Bank, “Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict” (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), 4–5, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

countering extremist threats is needed. Studies have suggested that some programs aimed at preventing violent extremism have made progress, including (but not limited to) the following examples:

- When educated about appropriate perceptions of Jews, students at the University of Pakistan were less likely to join a violent extremist organization with anti-Semitic views.⁸⁴
- Empathy and self-esteem workshops with Muslim migrants in the Netherlands reported significantly less interest in violent extremism after participation.⁸⁵
- Participants in a youth employment program in Niger, Chad, and Mali were more likely to listen to peace and tolerance radio programming than those in regions where the programs were not present.⁸⁶
- Ten percent of conversations between an at-risk individual and a former extremist via Facebook showed evidence of a reduction in violent proclivities.⁸⁷
- The online behavior of 90 percent of violent jihadists exposed to “redirect” messaging suggested they may have found it compelling.⁸⁸

Only one of these examples, from Pakistan, used a randomized-control trial method of evaluation; therefore, claims of success should be taken with a grain of salt. But even some evidence of success in preventing terrorism and extremism is promising.

Programs to reduce extremist violence that use best practices ranging from international development to economics to psychology, among other disciplines, have shown significant potential to prevent violence. These small, seemingly disparate programs are inexpensive and effective: if scaled up, they could fundamentally affect global trends in violent extremism. And yet the policy community, and even practitioners, hesitate: Do we want to do this type of work? At what scale? If we do, who is in charge?

Even a cursory glance across CVE conference agendas, CVE-related op-eds, and experience with CVE practitioner watercooler banter make evident that preventing radicalization has a group of motivated program leaders.⁸⁹ However, policymakers seem to support these

84. Sina Beaghley et al., *Development and Pilot Test of the RAND Program Evaluation Toolkit for Countering Violent Extremism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1799.html; Amjad, Naumana, and Alex M. Wood, “Identifying and Changing the Normative Beliefs About Aggression Which Lead Young Muslim Adults to Join Extremist Anti-Semitic Groups in Pakistan,” *Aggressive Behavior* 35, No. 6 (November–December 2009): 514–519.

85. Ibid. RAND Corporation (Beaghley et al.); Feddes, Allard R., Liesbeth Mann, and Bertjan Doosje, “Increasing Self-Esteem and Empathy to Prevent Violent Radicalization: A Longitudinal Quantitative Evaluation of a Resilience Training Focused on Adolescents with a Dual Identity,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45, No. 7 (July 2015): 400–411.

86. Ibid. RAND Corporation (Beaghley et al.); U.S. Agency for International Development, *Mid-Term Evaluation of USAID’s Counter-Extremism Programming in Africa* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2011), http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacr583.pdf.

87. Todd C Helmus and Kurt Klein, *Assessing Outcomes of Online Campaigns Countering Violent Extremism: A Case Study of the Redirect Method* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2813.html; Follow-up to the “One to One” pilot study: Former extremists engaged with more than 800 individuals on Facebook who identified as Islamist or right-wing extremists: Davey, Jacob, Jonathan Birdwell, and Rebecca Skellett, *Counter Conversations: A Model for Direct Engagement with Individuals Showing Signs of Radicalization Online* (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2018).

88. Ibid.

89. See Eric Rosand, “The global CVE agenda: Can we move from talk to walk?” Brookings Institution, April 20, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2016/04/20/the-global-cve-agenda-can-we-move-from-talk-to->

programs half-heartedly at best, and most enthusiastically following a terrorist attack when it is too late for prevention. What is missing is not CVE activity, or even expertise, but the scale, systemization, and institutionalization of prevention efforts.

When questioned about the hesitancy to scale up and give higher priority to CVE programs, many policymakers demonstrate confusion about what CVE is, which leads to questions about CVE program longevity and scale. Is a particular program considered CVE, CVE-adjacent, CVE-related, or unrelated, and how do we know that it will be effective? Some questions are about the appropriateness of a program's context: should a security objective be carried out through a non-security agency, and does a program that is explicitly security-related risk attracting undue attention to the issue in an otherwise sensitive community? Sometimes questions focus on implementation. Is the implementer credible? Is the lead organization a security agency doing the job of a non-security agency? Could the host government—or other key stakeholder—be part of the problem by giving rise to radicalization in the first place? These are all valid questions. In framing case-by-case consideration of them, one might look to how other issue areas grapple with them.

CVE comprises a range of activities united by a common objective, reducing radicalization, and as such, one would expect a programmatic coordination and management structure to resemble that of human rights, democracy promotion, or rule of law initiatives. Similar to those issues, sometimes a particular program will explicitly address them, whereas at other times it may simply benefit from shared expertise. For example, a criminal justice program that advances human rights may fall in either category but requires expertise from both fields. As with those issues, the most appropriate implementers are likely to be USAID and the Department of State. CVE may require security support, intelligence, or other coordination from the defense and intelligence communities. Activities should derive from an agency's authorities: non-defense agencies should advance non-security programs like youth engagement and community resilience. As with any other category of programs, if one method proves ineffective or an implementer proves not to be credible, the approach should be discontinued or modified. For some reason, with CVE (as opposed to human rights and rule of law, for example), such questions lead to an existential ennui and questioning of the discipline as a whole.

Considering the international interest in curbing radicalization, and in light of the progress that the discipline of CVE has made since its inception, the ideal way forward is to institutionalize, systematize, and significantly scale up CVE efforts. Like other categorical issues that are national priorities (e.g., human rights, rule of law, democracy promotion), CVE would ideally have a Senior Director position on the National Security Council staff to coordinate across agencies with the gravitas of an Assistant Secretary-equivalent rank. Further, CVE should be housed under consistent bureaus and offices within agencies, mirroring DCHA, State/CT, and State's Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL). Finally, as the CSIS task force on CVE recommended a "surge" in funding to \$1 billion annually,⁹⁰ and the Obama administration's Homeland Security Advisory Council

walk/; Robin Simcox, "Can America's Countering Violent Extremism Efforts Be Salvaged?" Heritage Foundation, December 19, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/terrorism/commentary/can-americas-countering-violent-extremism-efforts-be-salvaged>.

90. Shannon Green and Keith Proctor, *Turning Point: A New Comprehensive Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2016), https://csis-ilab.github.io/cve/report/Turning_Point.pdf.

recommended a tenfold increase in domestic funding for CVE grants,⁹¹ policymakers should consider an overall surge in the scale and funding for CVE programming across the board. Simply put, implementers follow funds. Both the Executive Branch and Congress prioritize some elements of oversight of initiatives based on scale (i.e., smaller programs and fewer tax dollars dedicated to an initiative may lead to fewer oversight inquiries and policy priority requirements). We will never truly know what works to prevent and counter extremism unless programming to counter radicalization is proportionate to the challenge and not dwarfed by corresponding hard security programs.

Three principles would help to achieve this institutional reform:

1. Establish clear leaders, such as an NSC senior director and assistant secretaries for CVE at relevant agencies.
2. Ensure that these leaders match the credibility and appropriateness of their function. For instance, non-security implementation should flow through non-security agencies, and actors that may fuel radicalization in their home countries should be avoided as direct stakeholders in program decisions through clever grantmaking and other policy levers.
3. Implementation guidance should derive from those authorities. That is, agencies with radicalization expertise should advise, and agencies where implementation is most appropriate should implement. CVE-specific programs should fall to the agency lead for CVE, CVE-relevant programs should solicit their advice, and implementers should use the language of implementation like “youth engagement” when implementing rather than causing undue controversy by using the language of “violent extremism.”

Absent support from Congress, many of these suggestions are idealistic, at best. In the interim, there are a range of smaller reforms through which the CVE practitioner community may more effectively organize. Unless and until legislative reform shapes appropriate authorities and scales up funding, the interagency should work to clarify leadership, communicate using storytelling and examples, and evaluate all programs rigorously.

- **Clarifying Leadership:** Many CVE practitioners throughout the interagency are still unaware that each other exists, let alone what each has found to work well (or not). Many still ask who is in charge in various scenarios. The interagency should work to break down these barriers by consistently communicating which office performs which function. The interagency CVE Task Force somewhat supported this mission during the previous administration.⁹² However, it was unevenly staffed, mostly domestically focused, and has now been discontinued. An issue as critical as preventing radicalization should not require interagency task forces: it should be dealt with through the interagency processes that govern every other issue. If Congress cannot legislate such an institutionalized role for CVE, then another task force, with an equal weight on international programs and authorities, would help coordinate across agencies so all actors are aware of ongoing initiatives.

91. Homeland Security Advisory Council, “Interim Report and Recommendations,” Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Subcommittee. June 2016, <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Countering%20Violent%20Extremism%20%28CVE%29%20November%202017.pdf>.

92. Disclaimer: The author was an advisor to the CVE Task Force.

- **Communicating Using Storytelling and Examples:** Telling the stories of the residents of Timbuktu who listened to peaceful radio programs, the former extremists who engaged at-risk individuals using Facebook, and the Muslim migrant youth who learned self-esteem exercises⁹³ can be far more compelling than a structural description of what CVE could be. Do not confuse this for criticism of the use of best practices or a systems approach to coordination; CVE handbooks and road maps are critical to the industry. However, sharing specific stories of what has worked and in what contexts too often takes a back seat to macro- and meso-level analysis of CVE theory. One way to do this would be to consistently and broadly share CVE “clearinghouses” so that program examples and evaluations are broadly available across groups of practitioners.⁹⁴ Moreover, CVE too often becomes a bogeyman because security language is used to describe non-security functions. When the term is presented as a theoretical concept, it can confuse listeners who wrongly believe it has not yet been tried or has not succeeded. Conferences and roundtables are consistently filled with rhetoric that confuses CVE as a category with a type of program. CVE identifies an objective, not a specific approach. If we can shift to communicating more directly about actual activities and their context, we can reduce the existential ennui that keeps many from fully embracing CVE efforts.
- **Evaluating Rigorously:** At CVE’s inception, there was a view that programs did not need to be evaluated or that they could not be. Now, many of the barriers to implementing CVE efforts are related to questions about whether they can succeed. Rather than circumventing evaluation or believing it impossible, we should instead embrace that we must evaluate CVE programming rigorously. The Government Performance and Results Modernization Act requires that programs be evaluated, and program management best practices demand it. As the examples described here show, it is possible to evaluate CVE programming. It may not be feasible to show precisely which people would have become terrorists if not for CVE programming, but smaller programs can evaluate outcomes based on radicalization prevention hypotheses, and larger programs can demand resources up-front to establish methods for experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation methods. If the CVE community commits to some form of evaluation as part of all programming, then future questions about CVE will shift from “should we do this?” to “how should we do this?”

I have experience with issues related to counterterrorism and countering terrorist financing, criminal justice, and counter-narcotics, and cybersecurity. Each of those issues has challenges, and the implementation of programs that address them is difficult and requires coordination, communication, and evaluation. However, in no other issue do

93. Beaghtley et al., *Development and Pilot Test of the RAND Program Evaluation Toolkit for Countering Violent Extremism*.

94. “Tools,” Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), <https://www.thegctf.org/Tools-and-Manuals/Overview>; RESOLVE Network Research Library, <https://www.resolve.net.org/research>; “Development Experience Clearinghouse,” USAID, <https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx>; “Resource List,” Countering Violent Extremism Task Force, <https://www.dhs.gov/cve/resources>; U.S. Department of State-supported GCTF-hosted tool, “International Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism Capacity-Building Clearinghouse Mechanism (ICCM),” Global Counterterrorism Forum, <https://www.thegctf.org/Tools-and-Manuals/Overview>; U.S. Department of State, “Global Counterterrorism Forum Co-Chairs’ Fact Sheet: The Deliverables,” Press Release, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/09/247368.htm>; “About Diplopedia,” U.S. Department of State, July 15, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/m/irm/ediplomacy/115847.htm>.

we so consistently question our very purpose than CVE. In other issue areas, consistent Interagency Policy Committees (IPCs) convened by the NSC coordinate through agency Executive Secretariats to ensure that all relevant parties are involved and are responsive to taskings. Assistant Secretaries lead programs in issue areas and their staffs advise. For whatever reason, CVE efforts have been disjointed, requiring extra effort toward communicating and clarifying, and for evaluating to prove the merit of their approaches. Streamlining efforts ironically, may require embracing the doing of CVE—at scale—so its lessons can be learned at scale and efforts coordinated at scale.

About the Project Director and Editors

Daniel F. Runde is senior vice president, director of the Project on Prosperity and Development, and holds the William A. Schreyer Chair in Global Analysis at CSIS. A global thought leader and change agent, his work centers on leveraging U.S. soft power and the central roles of the private sector and good governance in creating a freer and more prosperous world. Mr. Runde has been recognized for influencing the debate on USAID-State Department relations, as an architect of the BUILD Act, and led the debate surrounding the role and future of the World Bank Group. Mr. Runde has also influenced thinking about U.S. economic engagement with Africa (of which he is in favor of much more) and domestic resource mobilization. Mr. Runde holds the Officer's Cross in the Order of Isabel la Católica, a Spanish Civil Order. Previously, Mr. Runde held senior leadership roles at the International Finance Corporation (IFC). From 2005 to 2007, he was director of the Office of Global Development Alliances (GDA) at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and he led the GDA partnership initiative by providing training, networks, staff, funds, and advice to establish and strengthen public-private partnerships. His efforts at USAID leveraged \$4.8 billion through 100 direct alliances and 300 others through training and technical assistance. Mr. Runde is the chairman of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA) and serves on the board of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Advisory Council, and the Ashesi University Foundation (a private university located in Accra, Ghana). Mr. Runde is a regular contributor to *The Hill* and hosts a podcast series, *Building the Future with Dan Runde: Freedom, Prosperity, & Foreign Policy*.

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Enrique Betancourt is the director of the Citizens Security Initiative at Chemonics International. His work focuses on the creation of collaborative mechanisms to bridge the gap that exists between the design and implementation of evidence-based violence and crime prevention policies at national and local levels. At Chemonics, he provides citizens security technical support to a portfolio that includes projects in Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Honduras. Prior to joining Chemonics, Enrique was the executive director of the National Center for Crime Prevention of the Government

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