DEFINING THE PROBLEM

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

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

This section addresses three questions:

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

Motivations and Drivers

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

[20] Pew Research Center, "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050: Muslims," April 2, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/.

[21] Kristin Lord, "Here Come the Young," *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/12/here-comes-the-young-youth-bulge-demographics/.

[22] Magnus Ranstorp, "The Root Causes of Violent Extremism," RAN Centre of Excellence, January 4, 2016, 3, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf.

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

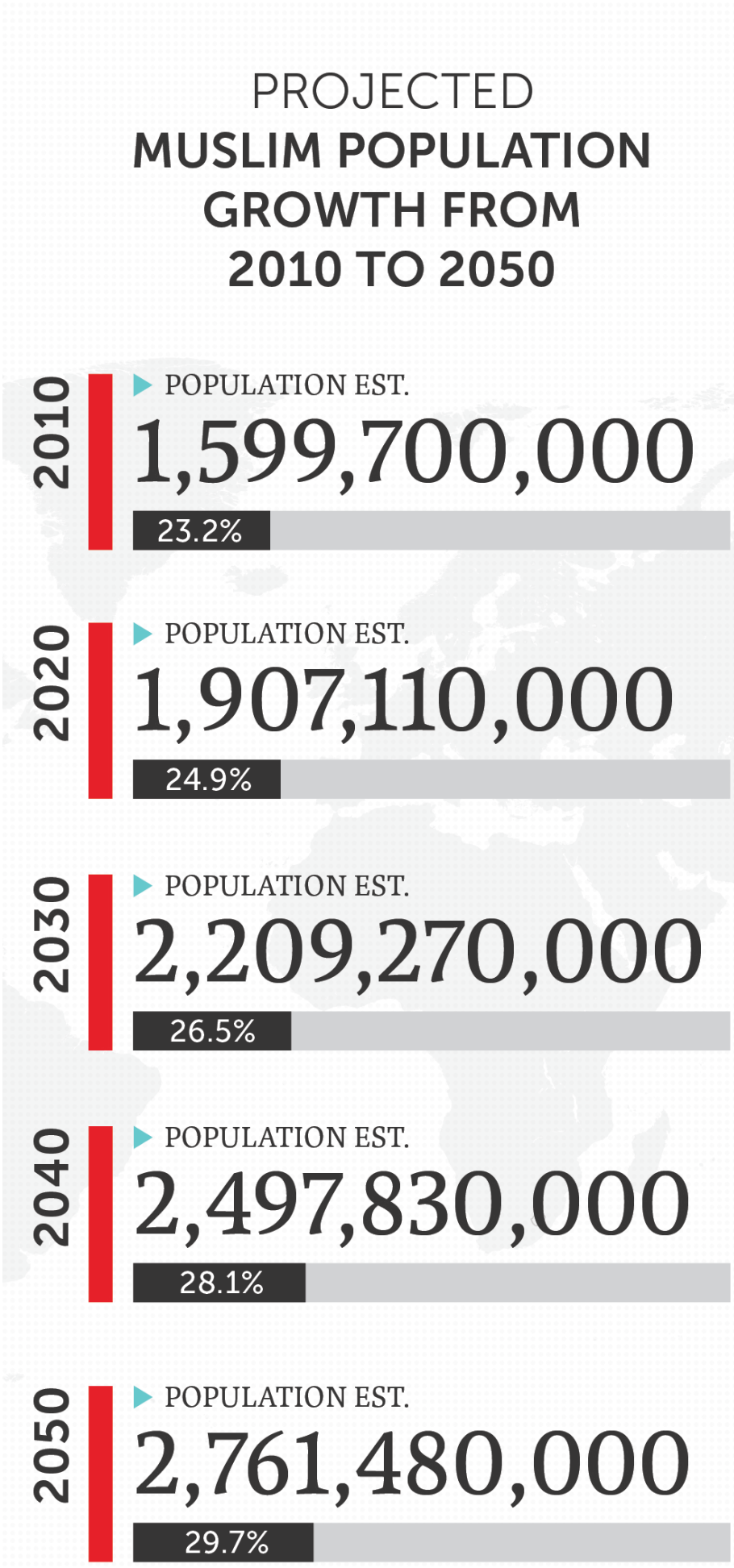
In spite of the diversity of paths that may lead a person to take up the banner of violent extremism, there does appear to be a common thread. Throughout the world, many Muslim millennials suffer from a profound identity crisis. From Boston to Paris, Nairobi to Dhaka, young Muslims are struggling to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

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

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

[25] Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, phone interview with Suhaib Webb, CSIS, August 31, 2016.

[26] Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Farah Pandith, CSIS, July 22, 2016.



Source: http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/, Chart titled "Projected Global Muslim Population, 2010 to 2050"

FARAH PANDITH, SENIOR ADVISER AND COMMISSIONER

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

This search for identity plays out differently depending on one's circumstances. In some countries where Muslims are in the minority, they face systematic disenfranchisement and injustice. Muslims are often passed over for jobs simply because of their last name or address.[28] For example, a 2010 study indicated that French Muslims of Middle Eastern or North African descent were 2.5 times less likely to receive a call back from an interview than their Christian counterparts.[29] Moreover, Muslims are often physically separated from society, as seen in the *banlieues*, a pejorative term for the impoverished and neglected neighborhoods on the outskirts of Paris.

The failure to integrate generations of Muslim immigrants, particularly in Western countries, sends the message that they will never be truly accepted as equal and valued members of society. Immigrants in Germany, for example, encounter an education system that forces young people to choose their course of study in their early teens, disadvantaging those who are nonnative German speakers.[30] In the Netherlands, the Dutch word used for individuals born outside the country or with at least one parent born outside the country, *allochtoon*, is often applied more broadly to those who are nonwhite and not "indigenous" to the soil. This usage creates a second class of citizens, including Muslims, who are labeled as outsiders even if they were born and have lived their entire lives in the Netherlands.[31] The response from some Muslims in the West has been to reject assimilation and adopt an inflexible, unfavorable view of Western culture and ideals.[32] According to an individual incarcerated in the United States for linkages to terrorism, "I was so bitter. I felt discriminated against as an African American man in America, but also as a Muslim. I felt like Muslims in America were being targeted as the enemies, and this exclusionary treatment led me to seek answers from the wrong people. I went down the wrong path."[33]

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

[27] Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Scott Atran, CSIS, May 13, 2016.

[28] Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Peter Neumann, CSIS, July 22, 2016.

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

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

[31] Shannon N. Green, managing director, CVE Commission, interview with Farah Pandith, CSIS, July 22, 2016.

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

[33] Courtney La Bau, interview with an individual whose name and location have been withheld, June 16, 2016.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[36] Keith Proctor, *Youth & Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence* (Portland, OR: Mercy Corps, 2015, https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps_YouthConsequences-Report_2015.pdf.

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

[38] Courtney La Bau, consultant, interview with an individual whose name has been withheld, London, July 11, 2016.

[39] Courtney La Bau, consultant, interview with Mubin Sheikh, London, July 11, 2016.

SURVEY FINDINGS—

GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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

PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROBLEM

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

MOTIVATIONS AND DRIVERS

Views on motivations for violent extremism are divided between Muslim-minority and Muslim-majority countries. In every country except for Turkey and Egypt, "religious fundamentalism" is identified as the primary root cause of violent extremism. In Turkey, military actions by foreign governments are perceived to be the main driver, while Egyptians cite human rights abuses and poverty. At a secondary level, Western countries consider anti-Western sentiment to contribute to radicalization, with active recruitment mentioned in the United Kingdom and France. A lack of moderate religious guidance comes out as a secondary influence in Indonesia, Egypt, and India.

RESPONSES TO DATE

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

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

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

The Recruitment Process

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

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

Evidence suggests that recruiters are more successful when they have strong social, familial, or business ties with their target. al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and al Shabaab have long relied on personal connections to facilitate recruitment.[41] Indeed, social ties and personal relationships may help explain why some extremists cross into violence while others do not. For instance, one study estimates that peer-to-peer recruiting accounts for more than 80 percent of ISIS recruits.[42]

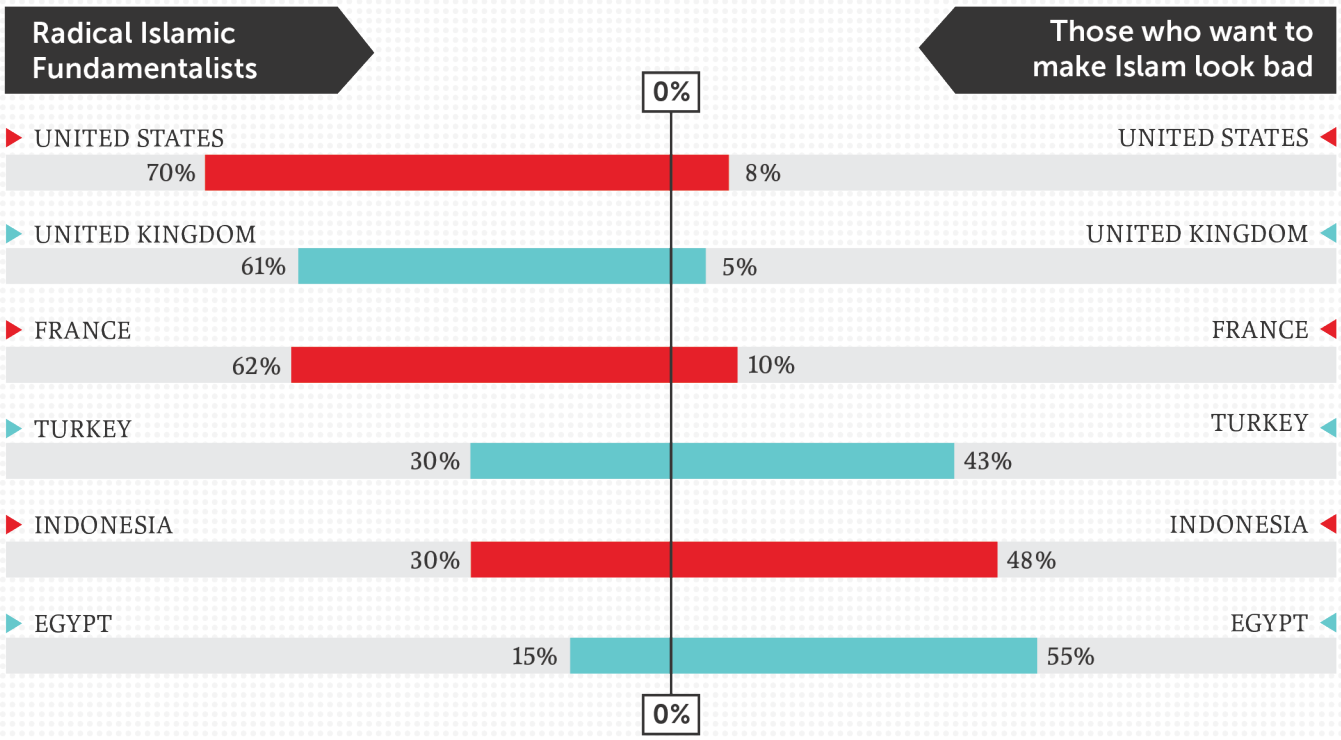
Social media is not the cause of violent extremism, then, but a powerful amplifier and accelerant. Digital platforms and increased access to smart phones and internet connectivity help facilitate radicalization and recruitment. According to CIA director John Brennan,

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

[41] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

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

DIVERGENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM



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

THE FUTURE OF THE THREAT

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

THE FUTURE

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

RESURGENCE OF AL QAEDA

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

TACTICS

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

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

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

PROFILE OF RECRUITS

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

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

AHMED ABBADI, COMMISSIONER

Enabling Environments

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

Widespread violence—whether perpetrated by the state or the result of civil conflicts—creates environments conducive to radicalization. The 2015 Global Terrorism Index identified two factors closely associated with terrorist activity: political violence committed by the state and the existence of a broader armed conflict. Eighty-eight percent of terrorist attacks in 2015 occurred in countries embroiled in conflict.[46] In such environments, terrorist groups are able to take advantage of the chaos and vacuum created by state collapse. It seems, then, that violent extremism arises out of conflict and disorder as much as it contributes to these conditions.[47]

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

Geopolitical conditions create narratives that violent extremists are able to manipulate to win popular sympathy. The generations-long conflict in Israel and Palestine provides a ready flashpoint for terrorist propagandists who use it to feed their "us versus them" narrative. Similarly, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have manufactured the grist for extremist propaganda about the "crusading West." This plays along sectarian lines as well. The Iranian nuclear deal animates conspiracy theories about a U.S. agenda to keep Sunni Arabs fractured and weak. For some, the United States' refusal to engage militarily in Syria against the Assad regime proves Washington's callousness to the mass suffering of Sunnis. Terrorist recruiters hold up these examples as evidence that the West is at war with Islam and that Muslims will never truly be valued by Western countries.

Assessing Efforts to Date

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

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

[44] Kilcullen, *Blood Year*, 120–123.

[45] Ibid.

[46] IEP, *Global Terrorism Index, 2015*, 4.

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

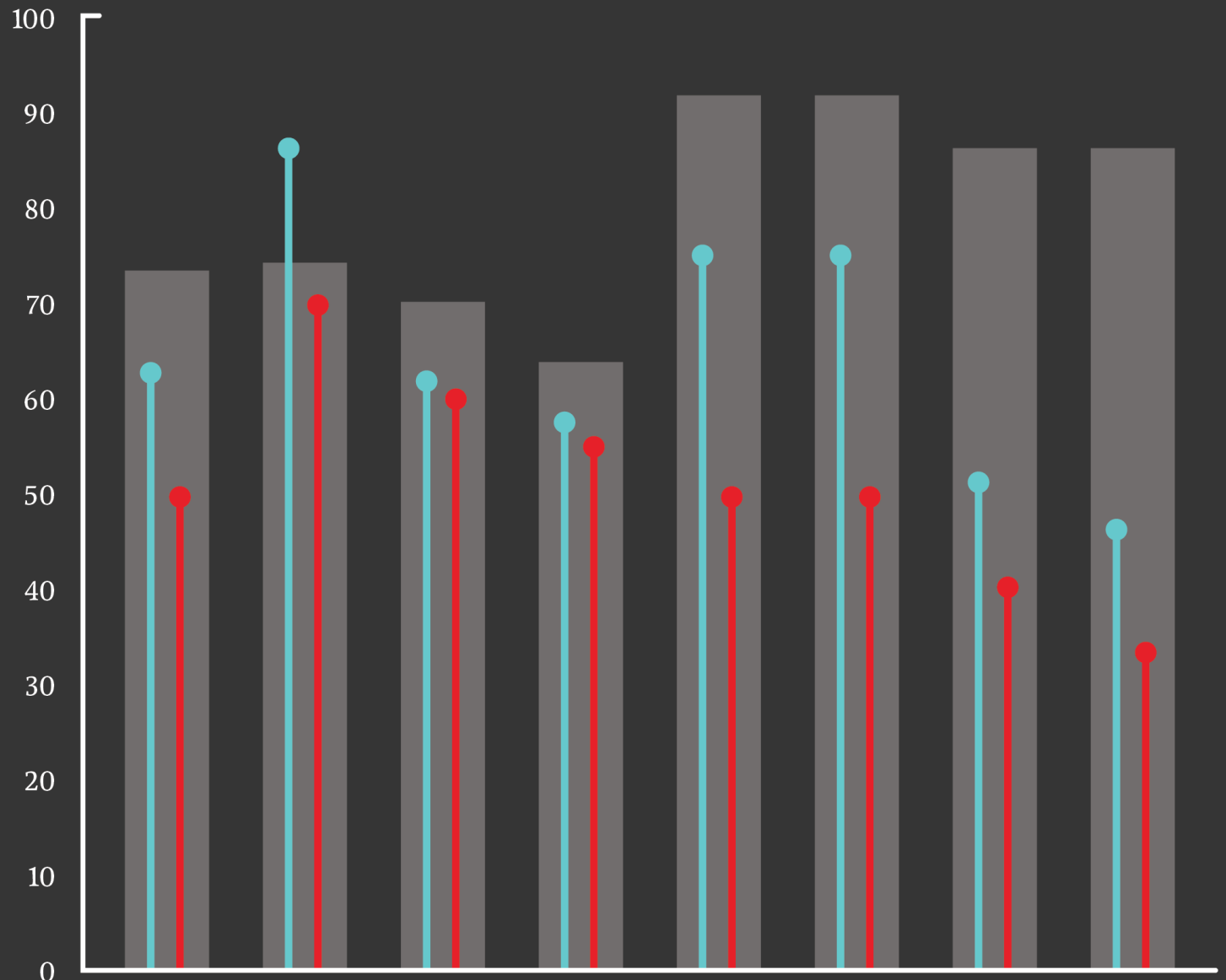
[48] Ibid.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM
DESERVES GREATER ATTENTION

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IS SOLVABLE

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS TAKEN INADEQUATE STEPS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN INADEQUATE STEPS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM



GLOBAL	TURKEY	FRANCE	U.S.	EGYPT	U.K.	INDIA	INDONESIA
73%	74%	70%	64%	91%	91%	86%	86%
64%	87%	63%	58%	75%	75%	51%	47%
50%	70%	60%	55%	50%	50%	40%	33%

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

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

Conceptual Challenges

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

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

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

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

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

Organizational and Funding Challenges

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

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

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

- **International cooperation with other governments.** Many of our partners and allies have pioneered promising CVE efforts in their own countries, including on the emerging challenge of deradicalizing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating fighters that are returning from conflict zones or those whose prison sentences for terrorism-related crimes are coming to an end. While we are still seeking to evaluate the impact of these programs, the U.S. government can and should benefit from their experiences. There are several forums for information sharing, notably the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), which brings together experts and practitioners from around the world to share expertise and develop tools and strategies on combatting terrorism. Through its CVE Working Group, GCTF is also supporting the development of national CVE action plans. However, the exchange of best practices has been sporadic and is often at too senior of a level to sustain and benefit those actually responsible for implementing CVE policies or programs. In addition, these forums do not typically focus on stemming the spread of extremist ideologies and narratives. The United States needs to strengthen mechanisms for collaboration, at multiple levels, with key allies throughout the world, specifically geared toward reducing the appeal of violent extremism.

- **Collaboration with nongovernmental partners.** There is incredible room for innovative partnerships to counter violent extremism and its manifestations; this is because CVE requires engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. However, to date, public-private partnerships and private-private partnerships have been characterized by ad hoc or hastily assembled coalitions. Technology sector representatives, entertainment industry executives, and civil society leaders complain of erratic outreach, broad statements of interest in collaboration with few concrete asks, and little follow-through from U.S. government officials. Developing meaningful, sustainable, long-term partnerships will require rebuilding trust between the government and partner communities and better defining the scope of collaboration.

- **Measurement.** Political leaders and Congressional appropriators have largely focused on the issues that can be measured. The number of terrorists killed or the number of troops deployed fit into metrics that more easily satisfy government oversight bodies. Accountability and results are important. However, the old dictum of "what gets measured gets done" can unfortunately distort the kinds of interventions implemented. Long-term efforts to stop cycles of radicalization and recruitment resist quantification, requiring greater patience and more creative ways of assessing attitude and behavioral changes over time.

- **Funding.** Despite the rhetorical commitment to preventing and countering violent extremism over the past decade, programmatic resources for the effort have failed to materialize. Within the U.S. government, the Office of Community Partnerships at DHS, charged with liaising with and supporting the work of local partners, has a mere $10 million in FY 2016 for grant programs and roughly

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

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

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

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

[49] Susan B. Epstein, Marian L. Lawson, and Alex Tiersky, "FY2017 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Budget Request: In Brief," Congressional Research Service, February 19, 2016, http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc824741/m2/1/high_res_d/R44391_2016Feb19.pdf

[50] U.S. Department of State, "Syrian Refugee Response," http://www.state.gov/j/prm/policyissues/issues/refugeeresponse/.

[51] Susan B. Epstein and Lynn M. Williams, "Overseas Contingency Operations Funding: Background and Status," Congressional Research Service, June 13, 2016, https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44519.pdf.

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

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