

A NEW
COMPREHENSIVE
STRATEGY
TO COUNTER
VIOLENT
EXTREMISM

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

A new strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism must:

1) Strengthen resistance to extremist ideologies:

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

2) Invest in community-led prevention:

Enabling civil society efforts to detect and disrupt radicalization and recruitment, and rehabilitate and reintegrate those who have succumbed to extremist ideologies and narratives.

3) Saturate the global market-place of ideas:

Mobilizing technology companies, the entertainment industry, community leaders, religious voices, and others to compete with and overtake violent extremists' narratives in virtual and real spaces.

4) Align policies and values:

Putting human rights at the center of CVE and ensuring that U.S. engagement with foreign partners advances the rule of law, dignity, and justice.

5) Deploy military and law enforcement tools:

Building a new force capability and coalition to quickly dislodge terrorist groups that control territory, avert and respond to immediate threats, weaken violent extremists' pro-

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

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

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

1. STRENGTHENING RESISTANCE TO EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES

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

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

ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM REQUIRES A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH



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

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

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

Stemming the export of extremist ideologies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inculcating respect for diversity and tolerance

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reinforcing Local Resilience to Extremist Ideologies and Narratives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

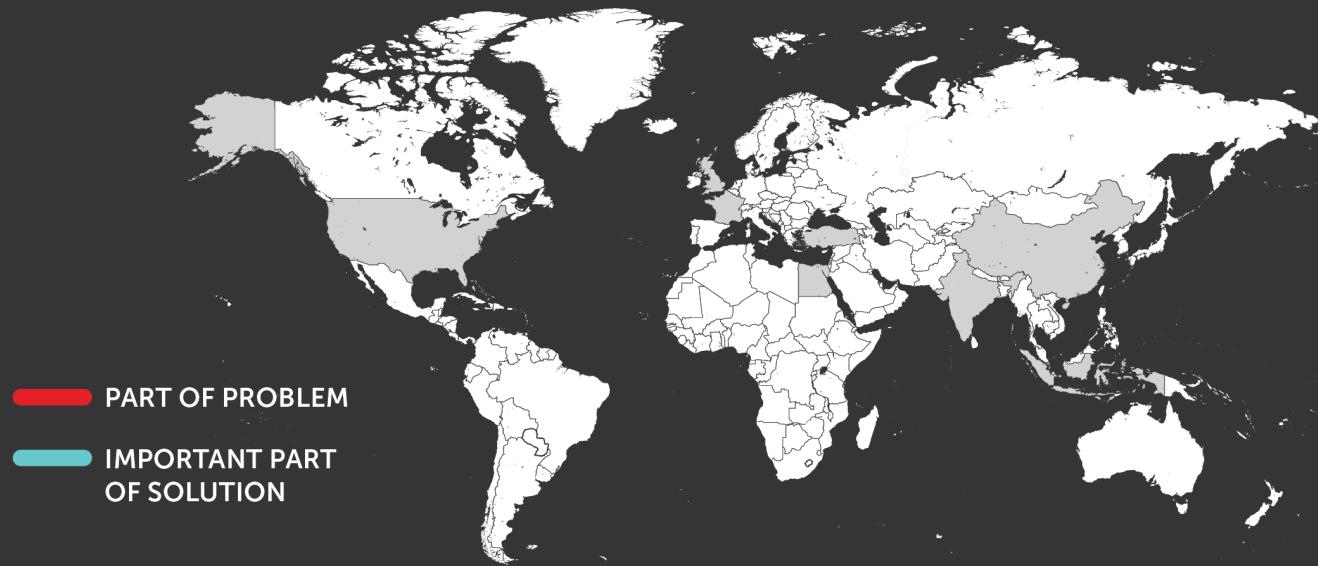
⁶¹ Ibid.

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

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

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

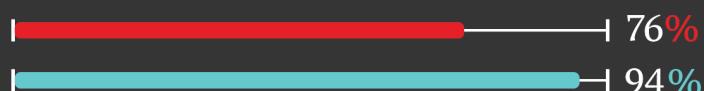
RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS: PART OF THE PROBLEM, PART OF THE SOLUTION



GLOBAL



INDONESIA



INDIA



EGYPT



TURKEY



CHINA



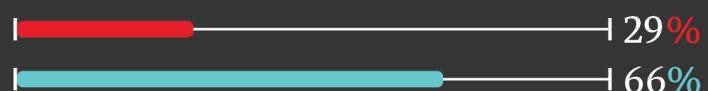
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FRANCE



UNITED STATES



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

Signature Recommendation

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

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

- **Open Government Partnership.**

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

- **Universal Periodic Review.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. INVESTING IN COMMUNITY-LED PREVENTION

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

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

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

Building trust among key communities and potential partners

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Improving detection and referral

Identifying early-warning signs

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

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

BEST PLACES TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM



SCHOOLS



MOSQUES



HOME



ONLINE



FRIENDS



ALL OF THE ABOVE



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

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

Helping these societies protect valued sites and artifacts is essen-

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

Threats to religious diversity and practice. One of the most visible early manifestations of violent extremism is these groups' hostility toward religious diversity. Their insistence on ideological purity means that those who differ in their beliefs or practices are subject to enslavement, torture, or death. As a result, religious minorities have been slaughtered by the thousands, their very existence considered a threat to extremist narratives. For example, Christians, Yazidis, Shi'a, and countless other minorities have been killed, enslaved, raped, and tortured by ISIS.⁷⁹ In Pakistan, as in some other parts of South Asia, the Ahmadis have faced discrimination and violence for generations, suffering their most recent publicized massacre in Lahore in 2010.⁸⁰

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

Raising Awareness

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

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

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

⁷⁷ Pandith and Zarate, "Winning the War of Ideas."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Increasing investment in intervention and rehabilitation

Creating the community infrastructure for early intervention

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

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

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

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

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

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

Developing off-ramps

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Focusing on Rehabilitation and Reintegration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Signature Recommendation

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

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

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



SHERMAN JACKSON AND AHMED ABBADI, COMMISSIONERS

leaders will never get involved in this indispensable work.

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

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

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

3. SATURATING THE GLOBAL MARKET-PLACE OF IDEAS

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

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

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

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

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

Rebooting strategic communications efforts

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

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

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

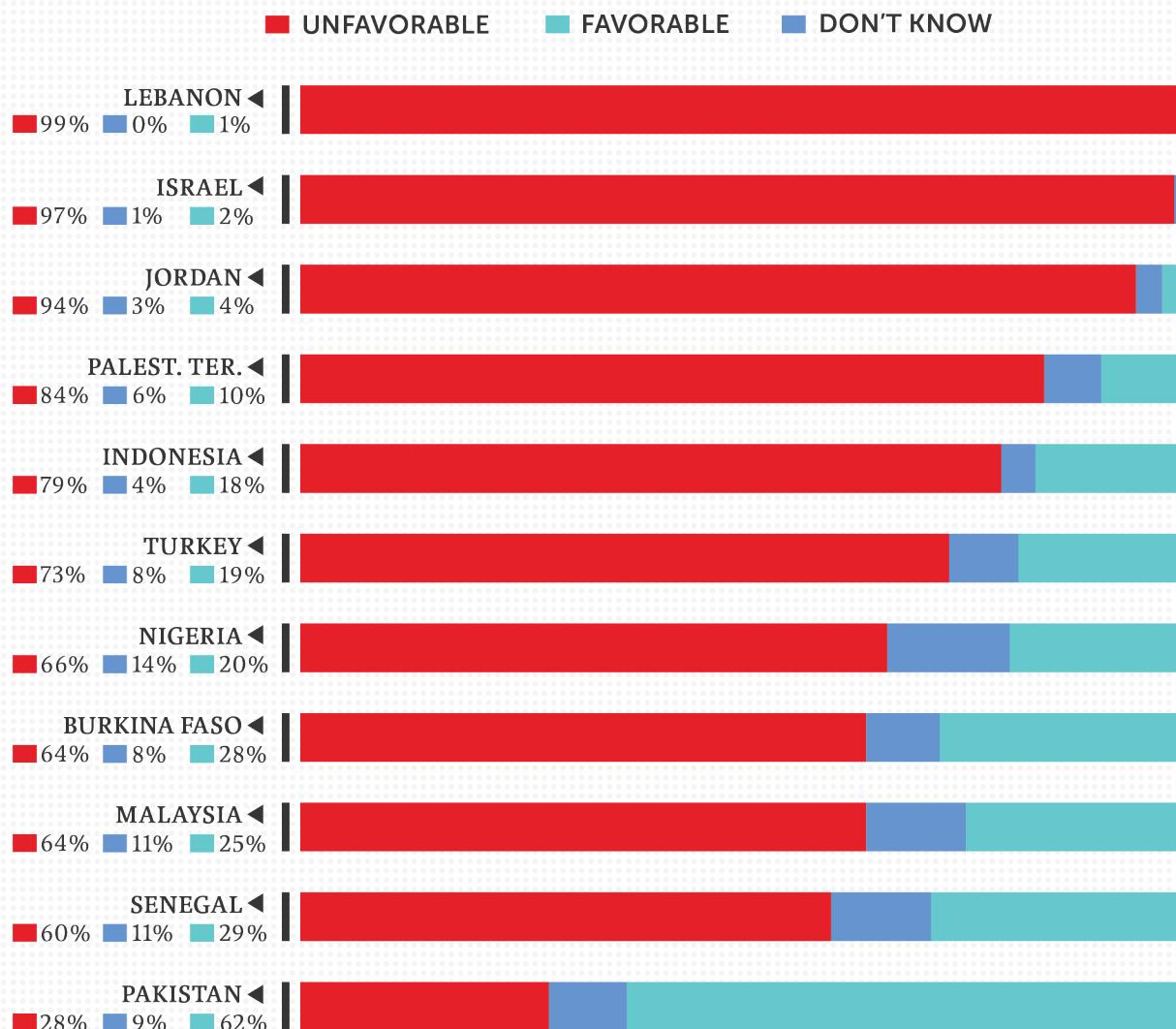
In spite of this deep-seated antipathy, the United States and its allies have not effectively competed with extremists’ narratives, on- or offline. Much of the attention to CVE in the last few years has been focused on “countermessaging.” Yet, these programs have had mixed success because of the absence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

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

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

⁹⁴ Ibid.

VIEWS OF ISIS OVERWHELMINGLY NEGATIVE



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

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

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

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

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

Engaging the private sector

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

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

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

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

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

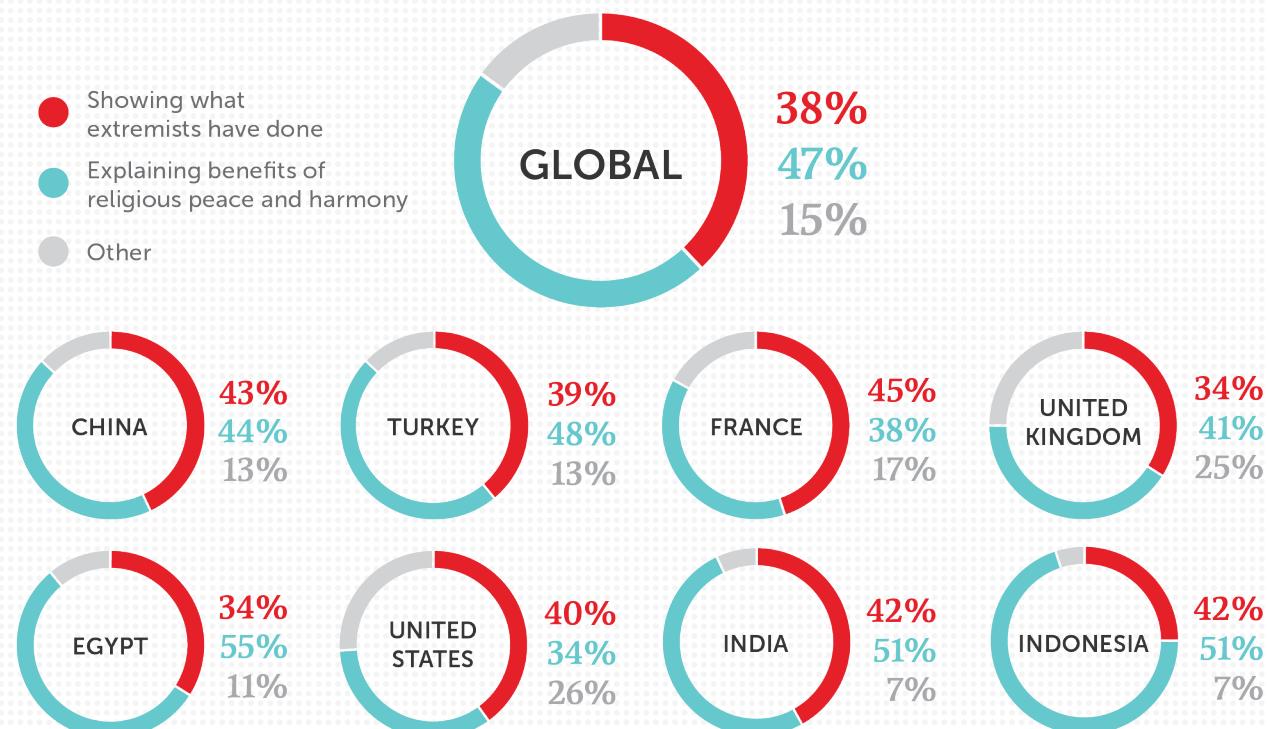
Social media and technology companies, as the hub of global communications, also offer important

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

⁹⁵ “Homeland Security Advisory Council,” 23.

POSITIVE MESSAGES ESSENTIAL FOR OVERCOMING EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

What imagery is more effective in countermessaging campaigns?



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

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

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

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

Creating alternative opportunities for young people

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁹⁷ Rachel Kleinfeld and Harry Bader, *Extreme Violence and the Rule of Law: Lessons from Eastern Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2014), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/violence_rule_of_law.pdf.



MARTHA MINOW, COMMISSIONER

Signature Recommendation

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

4. ALIGNING POLICIES AND VALUES

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

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

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

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

address the grievances and narratives that drive radicalization and recruitment.

Prioritizing rule of law and human rights

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

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

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

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

Resolving tensions between counterterrorism objectives and human rights

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

⁹⁸ Proctor, *Youth & Consequences*.

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

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

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

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

address the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism in just and sustainable ways.¹⁰⁴

Protecting and enlarging civic space

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

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

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

Signature Recommendation

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

¹⁰¹Ibid.

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

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

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

¹⁰⁶Green, "Violent Groups Aggravate."

5. DEPLOYING MILITARY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TOOLS

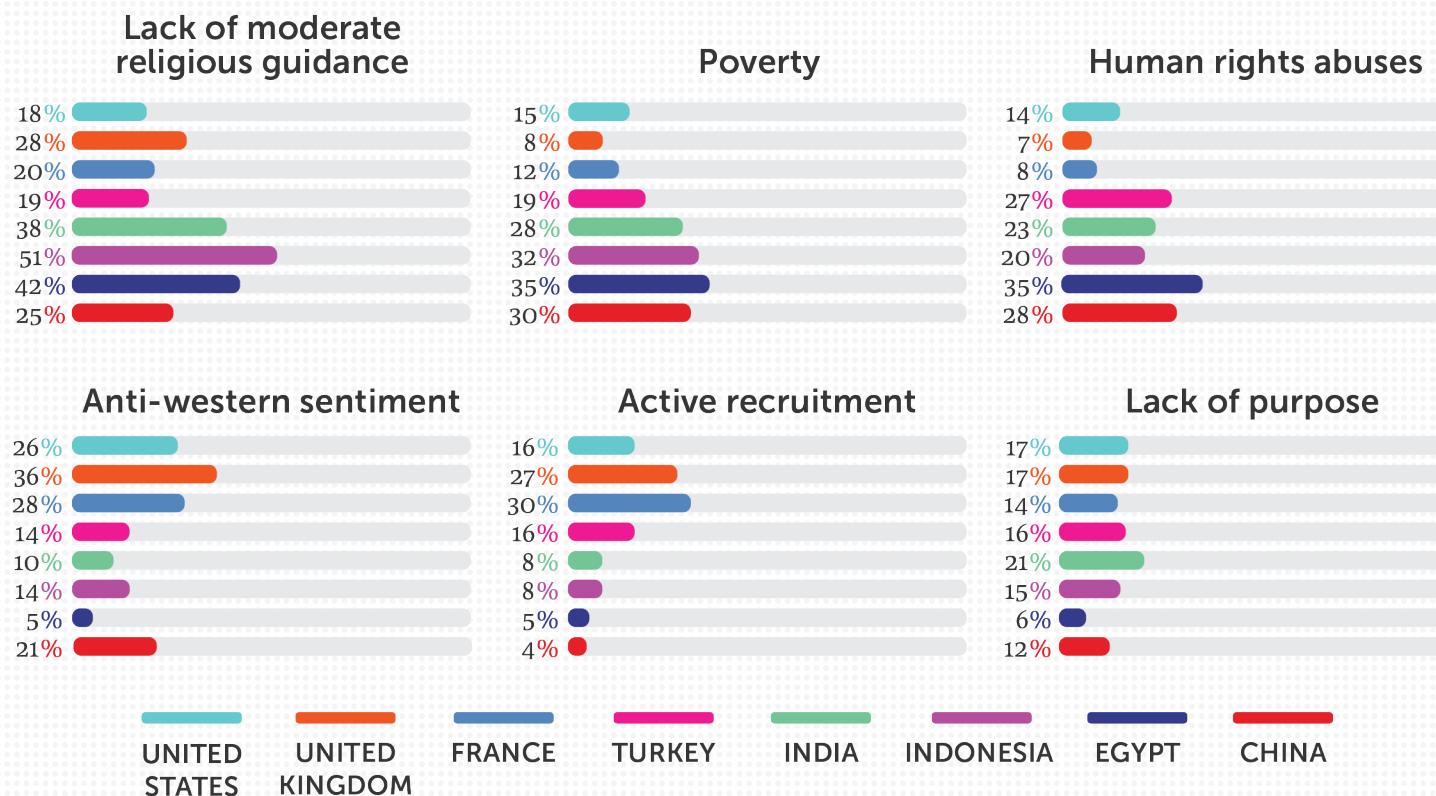
Preventing the radicalization and recruitment of young people and dealing with the physical manifestations of extremist ideologies will require mobilizing all elements of national and international power, including military and law enforcement tools. While the Commission believes that CVE must be kept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

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

- Utilize counterterrorism tools as part of a broader political and diplomatic strategy. The United States and its allies will need to continue to conduct military and law enforcement operations to avert and respond to immediate terrorist threats, dislodge extremist groups that control territory, assist and support other nations engaged in the fight against terrorism, and discredit terrorists' assertions of invincibility and momentum.
- Strengthen counterterrorism capabilities. The United States should deepen partnerships with frontline states and strengthen its own and its partners' operational capabilities to address today's global terrorist threats.
- Build rapid response teams. Militaries and law enforcement agencies should use their unique assets and training to protect civilian populations and important religious, cultural, and historical sites at risk from violent extremist groups.

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

SECONDARY FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH VIOLENT EXTREMISM



Utilizing counterterrorism tools as part of a broader strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Strengthening counterterrorism capabilities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



MARK J. PENN, COMMISSIONER

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

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

Building rapid response teams

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

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

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

Signature Recommendation

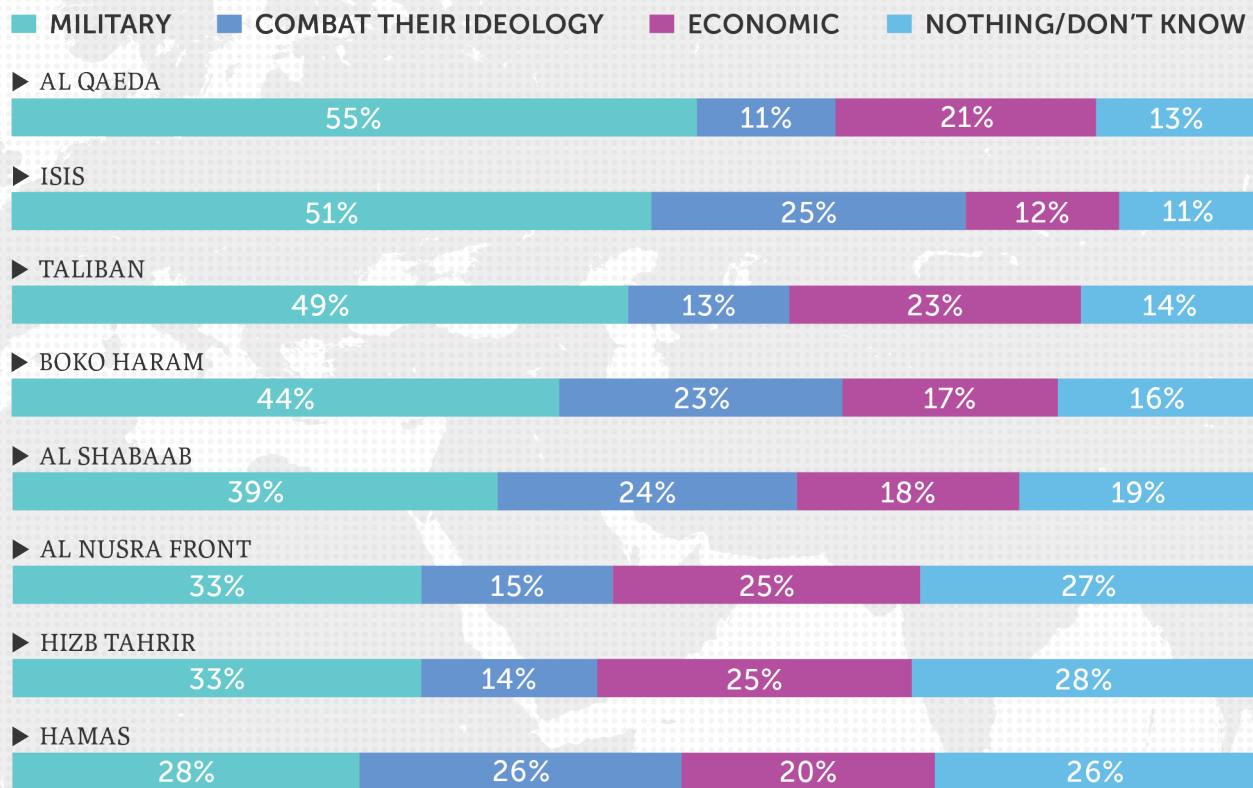
Build an enduring coalition to degrade and defeat terrorist organizations and dismantle their strategic communications infrastructure, while creating rapid response mechanisms to protect threatened civilian populations and cultural heritage sites.

Considerable progress has been made in building the network of international cooperation needed to fight terrorism in the 15 years since September 11. Those existing arrangements provide a strong foundation. However, the next administration needs to develop deeper partnerships with frontline states in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

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

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

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR MILITARY ACTION ALONG WITH OTHER MEASURES



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

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

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

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

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

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