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## DEFEATING IDEOLOGICALLY INSPIRED VIOLENT EXTREMISM

*A Strategy to Build Strong Communities and Protect the U.S. Homeland*

REPORT OF A BIPARTISAN  
WASHINGTON INSTITUTE STUDY GROUP

*Matthew Levitt, Editor*

*“This bipartisan Washington Institute report on preventing and countering violent extremism represents a balanced, sensible, and comprehensive strategy for reducing terrorist recruitment. The report does not shrink from identifying the dangerous role played by the political ideology of extremist Islamism, as distinct from Islam itself. At the same time, it correctly notes the rising threats posed by other forms of political extremism, as typified by the recent wave of threats and attacks against Jews and other minorities. As the study makes clear, we need a strategic effort to blunt and, if necessary, reverse violent radicalization.”*

—MICHAEL CHERTOFF

U.S. Secretary for Homeland Security  
George W. Bush Administration



## Preface

Speaking at his inauguration, President Donald Trump vowed to “unite the civilized world” against what he described as “radical Islamic terrorism.”<sup>1</sup> Doing so will require a multifaceted strategy involving a range of tools across military, intelligence, law enforcement, diplomacy, and other toolkits. Within the United States, the key to defeating jihadist terrorism will be to do so as part of a holistic effort targeting the full range of ideologically driven violent extremist groups.<sup>2</sup> And to get ahead of the curve and prevent the next homegrown violent extremist from being radicalized, it will be critical to empower communities on the frontlines of defense against homegrown violent extremism and build trusting partnerships with and within local communities to prevent and counter violent extremism.

The Washington Institute is uniquely positioned to provide this bipartisan study group report on *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Extremism: A Strategy to Build Strong Communities and Protect the U.S. Homeland*.<sup>3</sup> Over the past several years, Washington Institute scholars have authored numerous articles and analyses on the pressing need to complement strong U.S. military and intelligence counterterrorism (CT) efforts with equally muscular initiatives to counter the violent extremism underlying the terrorist threats the United States faces today. Anchoring these reports are two major group studies the Institute led: *Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterradicalization* (2009)<sup>4</sup> and *Fighting the Ideological Battle: The Missing Link in U.S. Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism* (2010).<sup>5</sup>

Since these two blue-ribbon studies, the world has become more dangerous still. The Arab Spring and failed governance in the Middle East have produced instability and insecurity across the region. The Syrian civil war and a lack of political reform in Iraq fanned the flames of sectarianism across the region. And the rise of the so-called Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL) has led to war crimes and genocide and a wave foreign terrorist fighters flocking to the region from more than a hundred countries around the world.<sup>6</sup> Some believe they are rebuilding the Caliphate, others are drawn to a jihadist battle, but nearly all are further radicalized by the experience. Some travelers have returned home to carry out terrorist attacks in the West. Still other individuals are radicalized and inspired to conduct attacks in their home countries.

Here in the homeland, the FBI reports it is running more than nine hundred counterterrorism investigations related to the Islamic State alone across all fifty states, reinforcing the critical need to counter Islamist extremism. But any serious and effective effort to counter the violent extremist ideology driving groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda must be part of a larger counter-violent-extremism strategy targeting the full range of Islamist and other violent extremist ideologies posing security threats to America. Indeed, law enforcement agencies across the country tend to be at least as concerned about political violence carried out by antigovernment violent extremists as they are by Islamist extremists, if not more so.<sup>7</sup>

In the United States, preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) became a priority policy issue over the past few years as a result of these events around the world and as a consequence of radicalization and terrorism in the homeland, starting with the Boston Marathon bombing. CVE pilot programs aimed at countering violent extremism were set up in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. An Office of Community Partnerships was established at the Department of Homeland Security in September 2015,<sup>8</sup> and an interagency CVE Task Force led by the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice was established in January 2016 as well.<sup>9</sup> Communities across the country are looking into ways of countering extremist ideology and building resilient communities.<sup>10</sup> The Department of Homeland Security dispatched regional coordinators to two key cities, and these have underscored how regionally and locally distinct radicalization patterns can be. Across the country, U.S. Attorneys led hundreds of community-engagement-related events on a host of issues, to include preventing and countering violent extremism.<sup>11</sup> There are many constants, however, including the fact that in an era of mass social media and digital communication, ideological radicalization and then mobilization to violence (the “flash to bang” ratio) is faster than ever. In light of the pressing national security threats facing the homeland, there has never been a greater need for smart, strong policies and programs that enable the United States to get ahead of the curve on countering Islamist and other forms of violent extremism.

A foundation exists upon which a smart and strong P/CVE infrastructure can be built here in the United States, which is something law enforcement officials have been eager to see for some time now. To be sure, many mistakes were made getting to this point and much more

needs to be done. The chair of the House Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX), has described CVE efforts to date as “failed” and vowed to “repeal and replace” these with something new.<sup>12</sup> Testifying before the committee, CVE Task Force director George Selim agreed that despite all the progress the brand new task force had achieved, there is no question that “more work remains.”<sup>13</sup>

What this study offers here is a bipartisan proposal for how to improve P/CVE efforts to best protect American communities from violent Islamist and other forms of violent extremism that drive the terrorist threats facing the country, while fully respecting the civil liberties all Americans hold dear.

While the United States has led the fight against al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, it has not yet developed a cohesive way of describing the spectrum of ideologically driven violent extremist threats at home nor sufficiently consolidated its lines of effort to either preempt or stop them. To adequately address the threat of Islamist and other forms of violent extremism, the Trump administration should develop an integrated strategy to both prevent and counter violent extremism that adapts to these changing circumstances.

A P/CVE strategy would include both efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism in the first place and countering extremism when prevention efforts fall short. Under a holistic P/CVE strategy, the federal government should support local public-private partnerships focused on (1) building resilience within communities to promote public safety and preventing violent extremist ideologies from taking root (PVE programming), and (2) promoting and facilitating community-led intervention programs focused on countering radicalization and recruitment (CVE programming). In both cases, it is important that P/CVE efforts maintain connective tissue to law enforcement partners—whether local, state, or federal—but are not wholly securitized. They must also be aimed at promoting public safety overall and address a spectrum of threats, from radical Islamist extremism to far-right and far-left extremists as well. These should be framed in terms of what communities themselves see as their local priority concerns and should be built upon existing frameworks and programs wherever possible.

In October 2016, the Washington Institute convened this study group on preventing and countering violent extremism in the homeland. The CVE study group is a bipartisan group made up of eight experts. Four outside experts—two from each major political party—have worked alongside four members from The Washington Institute’s Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. The outside experts are Rand Beers, Adnan Kifayat, Samantha Ravich, and Eric Rosand. The four Washington Institute staff members include Matthew Levitt, Katherine Bauer, Jacob Olidort, and Aaron Zelin. A list of the group members and their bios follows this memo as an addendum. Dr. Levitt served as the study group’s convener and the report’s primary drafter.

The study group drew on a series of seventeen CVE-themed roundtable discussions. The Washington Institute convened over the past year to explore cutting-edge research, challenges in implementation, and fault lines in naming and framing the issues at hand. The discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule and allowed for a full range of CVE stakeholders—from academics to community practitioners to federal agents, analysts, and policymakers—to speak candidly and engage in robust debate. The study group then followed up on these roundtable discussions with a series of small group briefings with key stakeholders—government officials, congressional staff, CVE practitioners, law enforcement and intelligence officials, and more—so that study group members could exchange ideas with these experts, develop a holistic perspective on the problem set, and think through proposed solutions. Over a period of six weeks, the study group held sixteen sessions with representatives from the executive branch, Congress, the NGO community, and the private sector.

This report is the product of a months-long effort, including weeks of writing, drafting, editing, and critiquing; it reflects the broad, bipartisan consensus of the study group members. Not every signatory endorses every judgment or recommendation in the report: members have endorsed this report solely in their individual capacities, and their endorsements do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions with which they are affiliated. Finally, this report does not necessarily reflect the views of The Washington Institute, its Board of Trustees, or its Board of Advisors.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trump administration officials made clear early on that countering the ideology driving groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda will be a high priority for this administration. Some of the political correctness of the past few years, such as the discomfort with referring to acts of jihadist terrorism or to Islamist extremism, will clearly be dispensed with in favor of blunt language calling out Islamism—a radical political ideology separate from Islam as a religion—as the extremist ideology posing the most challenging threat to U.S. security. Already, reports have emerged that the administration is considering doing away with the term “countering violent extremism” in favor of “countering Islamic extremism” or “countering radical Islamic extremism.”<sup>14</sup> To be sure, Islamist extremism poses an immediate threat to U.S. security, but any serious and effective effort to counter the extremist ideology driving groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda must be part of a larger strategy to prevent and counter the full range of Islamist and other extremist ideologies posing security threats to the United States. And the reason is not ideological; it is practical and programmatic and has to do with how good-governance and public safety programs actually work on the ground in local communities across the country. Communities are our first line of defense against violent extremism, so empowering and incentivizing communities to become more active in this space is in the local and national interest.

It is refreshing, however, for an administration to be focused on countering violent extremism from the outset. Countering violent extremism (or counterradicalization, as it had previously been known) was not a priority issue during the first half of the Obama administration, though the Bush administration’s 2006 National Implementation Plan called out, as one of its pillars, the need to “counter violent Islamic extremism” (CVIE, an acronym shortened to CVE under the Obama administration).<sup>15</sup> The Obama White House issued an anemic and unfunded CVE strategy in 2011, but it was only after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, carried out by homegrown Islamist extremists inspired by al-Qaeda, that CVE became a policy priority. Driven by national security concerns, CVE has over the past several years been increasingly securitized, even as academic studies and U.S. government reports have underscored the

need for CVE to become more of a whole-of-society movement to build resilient communities able to push back against violent Islamist and other forms of extremism and inoculate themselves against radical ideologies.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, desperate for tools to deal with this problem set short of arresting people, and seeing a need for greater local involvement that was not being met by local service agencies or community organizations, the FBI launched a short-lived “shared responsibility committees” initiative in 2016. Though flawed, and quickly disbanded, the initiative points to the importance for law enforcement of finding ways to partner with local communities.<sup>17</sup>

Aiming for just such a whole-of-society solution, this study group prefers the term “preventing and countering violent extremism” (P/CVE) because it covers the full spectrum of activities necessary to get the job done. A comprehensive plan to counter Islamist and other forms of radicalization should include both *preventive* measures intended to inhibit radicalization from taking hold within communities in the first place as well as measures meant to *counter* the process of radicalization affecting an individual when it does occur. The former focuses on the community, the latter on the individual. Distinguishing between the two allows for the commonsense application of a public-health-style model to community-led prevention while maintaining the ability to forge connective tissue between law enforcement and community service organizations when it comes to interventions. Broader community-led efforts can thus be largely desecuritized, while those efforts addressing individuals already on the path to radicalization can still be run in such a way as to address the legitimate equities of both the public health and law enforcement communities. This also allows for clearer distinctions between that which is P/CVE-*relevant* and that which is P/CVE-*specific*.

The question is how to build a P/CVE architecture that more effectively balances and addresses both national security and community cohesion concerns, builds trust among all stakeholders, confronts all forms of violent extremism threatening communities across the country, and is programmatically sustainable and scalable. In the words of former Boston Police commissioner Edward F. Davis III, “More than ever before, relationships between law enforcement partners, stakeholders and community members need to be in place to prevent attacks.”<sup>18</sup>

This study group suggests a few guiding principles for achieving these goals:

- Adopt the term P/CVE—representing the full spectrum of activities aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism—and explain where P/CVE sits in relation to counterterrorism. Fighting terrorism requires both tactical efforts to thwart attacks and strategic efforts to counter the extremist radicalization that fuels its hatred and violence and undergirds its strategy and global appeal. P/CVE is not a counterterrorism tool as such, but is a parallel and complementary policy option for dealing with disconcerting but not illegal activities that occur in the pre-criminal space. It also can play an important role in the post-criminal space of rehabilitation and reintegration. P/CVE efforts reduce the pool of potential terrorist recruits across the spectrum of violent extremist ideologies. And, equally important, P/CVE reinforces, rather than runs counter to, community cohesion while addressing national security concerns.
- Define P/CVE so that it is clear what is P/CVE-relevant and what is P/CVE-specific. To date, “CVE” has been so broadly defined that it can include everything from building playgrounds in “at risk” neighborhoods, to running localized intervention programs for people drawn to violent extremist ideologies, to rehabilitating people convicted on terrorism charges or returning foreign terrorist fighters. Breaking out those parts of P/CVE aimed at preventing violent extremism from those aimed at countering violent extremism is critical.
- Place P/CVE within the larger context of building community resilience against violent extremism and within existing public safety and emergency management infrastructure, while establishing effective, trustworthy channels between community programs and local, state, and federal law enforcement.
- Identify the extremist ideologies—from jihadism to white supremacy to leftist-inspired ethnocentric movements and more—as a key driver of radicalization and mobilization to violence, while acknowledging that both “push factors” (local grievances, mental health, and personal problems) and “pull factors” (kinship, radical ideology, and narratives) play roles in radicalization and mobilization toward violence and that their relative importance will vary from case to case. For example, the shooting attack carried out by Nidal Hasan at Fort Hood was not a “tragic attack” or a case of “workplace violence” but instead a terrorist attack inspired by Islamist extremist ideology.
- Break down the spectrum of efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism into three distinct categories addressing prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation/reintegration. At the front end, efforts to build resilience within communities against extremism would be categorized as *preventing* violent extremism (PVE) and focused at the community level. This would include a wide array of programs and initiatives that are clearly *CVE-related* but are not *CVE-specific*. The application of a public-health-style model could be beneficial in the PVE space, including the model’s three-tiered approach to: (1) prevent exposure in the first place, (2) look for preclinical signs of infection, and (3) deal with exposure if and when it happens. This last stage is more applicable to the broad middle of the counter-violent-extremism spectrum, which includes those efforts that are *CVE-specific* and focus on countering radicalization and recruitment at the individual level. Key here are local intervention programs that maintain strong connective tissue to law enforcement but are not wholly securitized. Toward the back end of P/CVE lies another important area: rehabilitation and reintegration programs for individuals who were radicalized and are now returning from prison or foreign travel and reentering society. Finally, efforts to prevent and counter extremism in the homeland cannot be fully separated from what is occurring overseas. Defeating foreign terrorist groups and bankrupting their ideology is a powerful component to stemming the appeal these groups will have to potential recruits, whether they are abroad or within the United States.

## A NEW THREAT ENVIRONMENT

Over the past several years, the terrorist threat environment facing the United States and its allies has evolved into something more dangerous and complicated than ever before, with implications for both international and domestic security. It should not surprise, for example, that Jordan's King Abdullah discussed the importance of countering violent extremism with U.S. secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly when the king visited Washington in January 2017, just days after the inauguration of President Donald Trump.<sup>19</sup> The new secretary of Homeland Security has reason to be concerned, given that the terrorist threats from homegrown violent extremists have increased significantly. For example, of the 101 Islamic State–related indictments in the United States between March 2014 and June 2016, 78 defendants were U.S. citizens.<sup>20</sup> The threats from jihadist groups specifically, and of violent extremism more broadly, have both multiplied and become more complex, particularly with the tectonic political and security shifts in the Middle East, the media and Internet landscapes, communications technology, and domestic public security threats.

### *The Arab Uprisings and Failed States*

Beginning in December 2010, local populations in the Middle East initiated a series of political uprisings that led to the eventual collapse of regional states. The results of these efforts—first known as the Arab Spring (later the Arab uprisings)—were mixed at best, with Tunisia's struggling unity government being the success story. While demonstrations were suppressed in the Gulf states, their successes elsewhere produced further instability and insecurity. In Egypt, the birthplace of Sunni Islamism, the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak made way for the Muslim Brotherhood, which had long been outlawed in the country and had gained the trust of local communities because of its ability to provide social services. However, when the government of Mohamed Morsi centralized power, it too was overthrown, in 2013, by the military under Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who currently oversees a police state that penalizes the fractured Islamist and jihadist groups as well as

journalists and academic communities in the country. The ouster of Libyan dictator Muammar Qadhafi

left a power vacuum into which various jihadist militias have entered. Iraq continued along its earlier course, and became even more polarized and violent following the tenure of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who drew enmity for privileging Shiite voices in the country. In Yemen, the exit of President Ali Abdullah Saleh created a power and governance vacuum where both al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Houthi rebels took advantage. There, too, a civil war has become increasingly sectarian and a battleground for pitting regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran against each other. Similarly, in Bahrain conflict between the Sunni ruling family and the country's Shiite majority population has led to mass protests, a military crackdown, and Iranian support to local Shiite militants.

### *The Syrian Conflict*

Bashar al-Assad sparked a civil war with his brutal response to peaceful protests, which included the use of barrel bombs and chemical weapons against his own population. The conflicts in Syria and Iraq, which are home to sizable Sunni and Shiite populations alike, gave some the impression of being timeless sectarian conflicts. Besides helping feed jihadist causes, this has also created obstacles in the U.S. administration's efforts to build local coalitions. In Syria, al-Qaeda's front group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham), has positioned itself as the most formidable alternative to the Assad regime by entrenching itself within local communities and consistently merging with other Sunni militias.

In June 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) renamed itself the Islamic State (IS) when it claimed a "caliphate" that transcended local political borders and identities. Today, the Islamic State perpetuates its transregional and transnational brand through the territories it still controls in Syria and Iraq and its territorial "provinces" around the world. The strongest independent forces positioned to oust IS from the area are Kurdish militias, some of which do not seek a unified Iraq, and Iran-backed Shiite militias. In its final year, the Obama administration struggled to build and train an effective local fighting force while avoiding supporting sectarian or nefarious ambitions among these various groups.

## *The Media and Internet Landscape*

These large-scale political changes took place during and as a result of large-scale changes in the media environment. Chief among these was the use of social media as a new basis of transborder communication, on-the-ground reporting, and propaganda. This opening that the new media landscape created for journalists and activists through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube created similarly unprecedented openings for more nefarious groups and individuals to spread their message. These new spaces of communication and media have also facilitated tactical changes by groups such as IS, including the new threat of “influencers” (jihadist voices who may or may not have any formal ties with major jihadist groups but who disseminate jihadist material and rhetoric) and the mirror effect of individuals becoming either “inspired” or “radicalized” by consuming this material from their computers, without necessarily having any direct links to jihadist clerics or groups. IS has also pioneered an effective outreach strategy in which its operatives engage on a personal and consistent basis with disaffected individuals, with the aim of recruiting them to join IS and/or commit terrorist acts on its behalf. In part due to innovations in terrorist adoption of new technologies and messaging techniques, the radicalization process itself is now often much faster than it was before the explosion of social media technology and platforms.<sup>21</sup>

## *Foreign Fighters, Returning Fighters, and Inspired Attacks*

The proximity of the bloody conflicts in Syria and Iraq, combined with the propaganda and recruitment efforts by IS, has broadened the kinds of threats emanating from jihadist groups. In addition to the directed terrorist attacks for which al-Qaeda was long known, authorities are now contending with attacks initiated by individuals with no direct links to a foreign terrorist organization, which came to be known as “inspired attacks.” In fact, the perpetrators of several attacks around the world have claimed inspiration from both al-Qaeda and IS ideologues. With the rise of foreign-inspired and enabled but not directed attacks, authori-

ties turned their focus to identifying “lone wolves” (or, the preferred term, “lone actors”)—individuals at risk of becoming susceptible to ideologically driven extremist groups both at home and abroad. Aside from attention to directed and “inspired” attacks, IS has also encouraged the migration of non-Arabs to Iraq and Syria to help its territorial project—some as fighters, but many also hoping to live what they naively believed to be “purely Islamic” lives. Foreign fighters numbered in the tens of thousands, with some estimates showing double growth in these figures between 2014 and 2015 from Western states. This phenomenon prompted new concerns in policy and U.S. government circles about the nature and scale of the threat these fighters might pose if and when they return to their countries of origin, drawing parallels with Afghanistan in the 1980s. Skeptics, however, warn that while directed terrorist attacks against the West may increase, those individuals specifically migrating to Syria pose a different risk from those who flocked to Afghanistan because the former do so for a range of nonviolent reasons as well as violent ones, leading in turn to the possibility of disillusionment with the entire IS enterprise. Meanwhile, the influx of Iran-supported Shiite foreign fighters into Syria is also cause for concern. Indeed, it must be noted that while most people focus on the Sunni foreign fighter phenomenon, there are at least as many Shiite foreign fighters in Syria today. Most are from Iraq, but others have come from as far afield as Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Cote d’Ivoire, and even Australia.

## *Public Safety Threats from Other Ideologically Based Extremist Groups*

Concurrent with the growing threat of homegrown jihadist violence and individuals attempting to fight in conflict zones, there has been a sharp rise in people joining or sympathizing with extreme right-wing ideologies.<sup>22</sup> In the words of Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX), chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, “As we’ve seen recently in France, Tunisia, Kuwait, and even right here at home in places like Garland, TX, and Charleston, SC, violent extremism comes in many forms. Violent extremists show no mercy when executing their evil plots, or when luring in vulnerable recruits and brainwashing them.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the past few years

have seen several major incidents tied to extremist far-right groups: the Bundy Ranch standoff, the South Carolina Methodist church shooting, and the murder of Muslim students at the University of North Carolina, among others.<sup>24</sup> There has also been a steep rise in hate crimes, in particular focusing on Jewish Americans.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, while many have been concerned with the presence of IS on Twitter, the number of Nazis on Twitter currently exceeds IS at the latter's peak in 2014. Between 2012 and 2016, Nazi usage on Twitter grew 600 percent.<sup>26</sup> According to a recent study based on a decade of data collection, it appears that "far-right extremists tend to be more active in committing homicides, yet Islamist extremists tend to be more deadly."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, while a continued focus on jihadist extremism is absolutely necessary, officials should not ignore or neglect other extremist groups and ideologies that could bring harm to our communities and country.

## THE EARLY MAKINGS OF A DOMESTIC CVE INFRASTRUCTURE

As the threat from homegrown violent extremism has grown, the U.S. government has broadened its policy optic and expanded its infrastructure to address the challenge of homegrown radicalization. In 2009, a series of Somali-Americans left their Minnesota homes to fight with the al-Shabab jihadist group in Somalia, triggering federal attention. A congressional hearing on al-Shabab recruitment in the United States was held that year, and in 2010, the Homeland Security Advisory Council published its recommendations to counter homegrown violent extremism.<sup>28, 29</sup> An executive call to action came in August 2011, when the Obama White House released its first CVE strategy report followed by its first Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) on counterradicalization. The 2011 SIP emphasized community-led program development, with U.S. Attorneys leading the federal effort on the ground.<sup>30</sup> In February 2013, the White House moved further toward a coordinated effort by establishing the Interagency Working Group to Counter Online Radicalization to Violence, chaired by the National Security

Staff.<sup>31</sup> As the administration laid out the bare bones of a federal CVE policy, a smattering of federal, state, and local actors began to address issues of violent extremism in their own communities. Working with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) rolled out the Community Awareness Briefing (CAB) and Community Resilience Exercise (CREX) programs.<sup>32</sup> These initiatives became the preferred means of federal engagement with local communities on CVE, but were wholly insufficient both in terms of programmatic maturity and scalability.<sup>33</sup>

The Boston Marathon bombing in the spring of 2013 was a watershed event, prompting a turning point in Washington's CVE discussions. The bombers acted without any direction from al-Qaeda leadership, but demonstrated how serious the threat now was from inspired homegrown violent extremists (HVEs). Across the executive branch, reports and testimonies in the

following year featured a renewed call for community-based CVE efforts in the homeland.<sup>34, 35, 36, 37</sup>

In September 2014, the Department of Justice announced the "Three City Pilot" program. The program held up three cities—Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles—as leaders in CVE, and tasked them with convening local stakeholders to develop CVE strategies for their communities.<sup>38</sup>

In February 2015, President Barack Obama held a CVE Summit with leaders at the local, federal, and international levels.<sup>39</sup> Thereafter, the administration spearheaded the establishment of new government initiatives such as the DHS's Office of Community Partnerships (September 2015) and a DHS-housed CVE Task Force (January 2016).<sup>40</sup> The DHS Homeland Security Advisory Council released a report laying the groundwork for new programs like a CVE grants program in June 2016,<sup>41</sup> and the following month the CVE Task Force rolled out its first grants program. Some \$10 million was awarded for domestic CVE practitioners in January 2017 before the Trump Administration took office,<sup>42</sup> though some recipients have since declined to accept grants they competed for and won over concerns about anti-Muslim rhetoric and the direction of P/CVE policy.<sup>43</sup>

The FBI initiated its own public CVE efforts in Octo-

ber and November 2015 with its online “Don’t Be a Puppet” online educational initiative and Shared Responsibility Committees (SRCs).<sup>44</sup> The Justice Department reportedly ended the SRC program in October 2016 after fierce criticism by civil rights organizations, and the online tool was criticized too,<sup>45</sup> but they underscored the importance law enforcement agencies give to the need for effective violence- and terrorism-prevention programs.<sup>46</sup> The FBI appears to still be running SRC-style programs in some locations.<sup>47</sup> In October 2016, the White House released an updated CVE SIP, with major changes being a new focus on interventions, reintegration/rehabilitation programs, public-private collaboration, and an explicit call for resources.

This renewed focus on CVE efforts quickly underscored several emerging challenges, including:

- **NEW TARGETS OF COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM.** With the introduction of CVE as a policy objective came new subjects of focus for U.S. government efforts. With the popularity of social media (and the Islamic State’s pioneering use of it), the U.S. government broadened its focus from terrorist networks to HVEs and “self-radicalized” or “inspired” individuals. This new category was exemplified by the Boston Marathon bombers in April 2013; Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, who killed fourteen people in San Bernardino, California, in December 2015; and Omar Mateen, who killed forty-nine people at a gay nightclub in Florida in June 2016. The latter two attackers were exposed to the Islamic State’s propaganda based on their own pledged oaths to the group but had no known direct contact with it. These and similar recent cases in Europe have underscored to local and federal authorities the importance of maintaining strong relationships with local Muslim communities and coordinating more closely with them in identifying and “off-ramping” individuals considered at risk of becoming radicalized—whether toward plotting attacks at home or preparing to travel to various jihadist safe havens.
- **NEW TACTICS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.** Aside from investing resources in building partnerships with local communities and developing closer intelligence sharing between law enforce-

ment and national security departments (in particular, strengthening the “fusion centers” established during the Bush administration under the auspices of the Homeland Security and Justice Departments), the U.S. government has worked to counter the message of the Islamic State overseas through the work of the State Department’s Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, whose counterpropaganda performance received poor ratings at a panel review in December 2015. The State Department has expanded its efforts in this realm, with its new Global Engagement Center coordinating its efforts in countermessaging and stopping online exposure to extremist content by working with partners in the region (e.g., the Sawab Center and Hedayah in the United Arab Emirates) as well as partnering closely with Google’s Jigsaw, Facebook, and Twitter to develop strategies for handling jihadist online content and communications. Other countermessaging efforts are taking place within the Defense Department and the intelligence community that should be assessed and, where found productive, expanded.

- **DEFECTORS AND COUNTERRADICALIZATION.** Aside from its counterpropaganda efforts, the U.S. government has coordinated with its Middle East and European partners to develop its approach to countering radicalization. Programs such as Channel in Britain and the Aarhus initiative in Denmark have served as models of how nationally driven programs with local partners and local programs with national-level support can effectively challenge the space within which ideologically driven extremists operate. A program such as Teach Women English in Lebanon, run through Hayya Bina, focuses counterradicalization efforts on mothers. This groundbreaking program offers much sought-after English classes to women and, under that rubric, provides these women with the knowledge to spot potential recruitment efforts aimed at their sons and the means to counter them. Additionally, defectors from the Islamic State have increasingly come out in public to broadcast their testimonials about their disillusionment with the group, thereby serving as indispensable sources of insight into life

in IS-controlled territory and as material for dissuading potential recruits.

#### ■ INTERVENTIONS OR “OFF-RAMPING”

The few nascent intervention programs that have been established are still navigating the nuts and bolts of what they should be doing and how. The existing collection of CVE research is still being mapped, and efforts to share best practices, ensure that research and analysis inform CVE-related training, and establish evaluation methods and standards for CVE programs are all in flux. These are some of the key tasks assigned to the new Countering Violent Extremism Task Force that was established in 2016 at the DHS after an extensive interdepartmental evaluation of existing CVE programs. Efforts to synchronize and integrate a whole-of-government approach to CVE are still in their infancy, however. Much work remains to be done to professionalize counterradicalization intervention programs, which should be the heart and soul of *countering* violent extremism efforts. And at the back end of CVE, the development of “off-ramping” or diversion programs—such as alternative dispositions to convictions of low-level offenders in terrorism-related cases—is in its infancy.

Despite these and other efforts by the U.S. government and its community and international partners, the threats posed by the Islamic State and the phenomenon of “inspired” terrorist activity will continue to evolve as the group loses territory in Iraq and Syria and shifts focus to attacks in Europe and the United States, as it has been messaging in its latest propaganda. Moreover, while the influx of foreign fighters has been significantly reduced—and will likely continue to fall as the U.S.-led coalition claims successes in the territorial fight against IS—the group’s operatives remain active on social media and in the cyber domains, pushing out literature on a regular basis and exploiting the latest mobile and other communications technology to further their cause and connect with at-risk individuals. Developing closer collaboration and trust with local communities in the United States and in Europe, where the nonintegration of local Muslim communities is a distinct challenge, will remain a top priority as the United States and its partners seek a strategic advantage over IS and other jihadist groups in the communications domain.

## CONCEPTUALIZING A STRONGER P/CVE STRATEGY

Contrary to conventional wisdom, efforts to prevent and counter violent Islamist or other forms of extremism are not and should not be confused with traditional, security-focused CT measures.

### *P/CVE as a Necessary Complement to Traditional Counterterrorism*

P/CVE is not a soft alternative to CT, but rather a parallel and complementary policy option for dealing with disconcerting but lawful beliefs and activities that occur in the pre-criminal space. Countering terrorism requires both tactical efforts to thwart attacks and strategic efforts to counter the extremist radicalization that fuels its hatred and violence and undergirds its strategy and global appeal. Building resilient communities capable of resisting and countering violent extremism is clearly in the national interest. But U.S. counterterrorism experts also see P/CVE as a key part of the toolkit necessary to preempt terrorist activity in the first place and to help handle the many cases of extremism that will fall below the legal threshold for investigation. P/CVE efforts are attractive to law enforcement for the way they reduce the pool of potential terrorist recruits across the spectrum of violent extremist ideologies.<sup>48</sup>

Law enforcement, security, and intelligence agencies must continue to pursue counterterrorism cases at all times. But there is a pressing need for programs that move the needle earlier in the process, before an individual has stepped over the Rubicon and a crime has been committed or is imminent. P/CVE done right involves proactively intervening to prevent the radicalization of individuals in the first place or to off-ramp those already along the radicalization process away from the extremist ideologies radicalizing them and mobilizing them to violence. In other words: Someone recruiting individuals into a terrorist network or plotting an attack would be the target of law enforcement and/or intelligence counterterrorism authorities, while the persons being targeted for radicalization could be candidates for intervention. The “countering” part of P/CVE involves proactive mea-

tures to counter extremist narratives and ideologies intended to radicalize individuals to violent extremism, and intervention to prevent the radicalization of individuals already on the path of radicalization.

P/CVE is best situated within a local, not a federal, context, and it will be most successful when it is not solely a corollary function of counterterrorism efforts, but rather a complementary effort to build a resilient and socially cohesive society. To the extent that P/CVE efforts are not strictly securitized, it will also be easier to integrate nonsecurity partners—like the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education—in P/CVE efforts. But the fact is that CVE only became a priority issue under the Obama administration in the wake of the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombings—a jihadist terrorist attack inspired by al-Qaeda—and was driven not by federal service agencies or local community actors but by the national security community. What the national security community has learned to appreciate, however, is the tremendous benefit of partnering with local actors for a whole-of-community approach that involves diverse faith and ethnic communities, social service organizations, schools, public health and emergency management agencies, and more.<sup>49</sup> These benefits are consistent whether countering Islamist or other forms of violent extremism.

Often, law enforcement officers will be the first to come across a case of radicalization in the course of their regular community policing or federal law enforcement and intelligence functions. But law enforcement will never be able to identify all cases of radicalization, which is why working with local community groups is so important. It is critical that parents, teachers, clinical social workers, mental health professionals, counselors, and other such figures have somewhere to turn other than law enforcement when they encounter individuals who appear to be drawn to radical ideas and behaviors but have not yet acted on these ideas, increasing the likelihood that they could come forward and get help. Local service providers and community organizations are best positioned to spot radicalization in its earliest phases. Creating local networks of trained professionals to attend to such cases, as clinical social workers and mental health professionals do in all kinds of cases daily around the country, helps complement a whole-of-government counterterrorism approach with a whole-of-community approach to public safety and community resilience. Community policing

has an important role to play here, where the goal is not investigating crimes but working with local community partners to solve problems and address the conditions that could give rise to public safety issues.

Sometimes, community service organizations will find themselves facing a case in which an individual does not respond to services or interventions and the organizations have a legal and professional “duty to warn” law enforcement of the case as a threat to public safety. The need for connective tissue between local networks of community service organizations and law enforcement therefore cuts both ways: law enforcement will sometimes need partners to whom it can hand off cases involving lawful but disconcerting or unstable suspects, and community service organizations will sometimes need to refer persons posing an imminent threat to public safety to law enforcement authorities. Determining how to structure that connective tissue can be tricky and in several areas—such as the threshold for professionals’ “duty to warn” of potential violence—are in desperate need of clarity and guidance. Local groups do not want to be seen as platforms for government surveillance programs, and law enforcement cannot be expected to inform community groups of ongoing criminal or intelligence investigations. The key is developing trusting relationships between the parties so that intervention programs can be desecuritized on the one hand while maintaining the necessary connective tissue with law enforcement on the other.

## PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

### **PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

*PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM* encompasses proactive efforts to build community resilience to violent extremism. PVE is good governance: It works from the bottom up, addressing local drivers of extremism, educating community members and leaders on the signs of radicalization, and building networks to address radicalization should it manifest itself. Its focus is on the community at large.

### **COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

*COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM* involves proactive, nonkinetic measures to counter extremist narratives and ideologies intended to radicalize individuals to violent extremism, and intervention to prevent the radicalization of individuals already on the path of radicalization. Its focus is on the individual.

A key CVE challenge of the day is developing a framework for moving the needle so that individuals on a path to violent extremism can be countered earlier in the radicalization process, instead of waiting until they have already been radicalized and are mobilized to carry out or support an act of violence. For their part, the FBI and its sister federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies are not well positioned to play an effective role in this pre-criminal space. Law enforcement agencies do not want to be seen as the thought police, nor are their officials trained to be social workers. And community organizations often express discomfort at the prospect of partnering on community cohesion and resilience projects with the same agencies tasked with conducting surveillance and running national security investigations. Building trust between communities and the federal government, in particular, demands more than sending NCTC analysts around the country to deliver a Community Awareness Briefing on the nature of the terrorist threat, and it cannot work if the local officials involved in that engagement may be involved in a surveillance or arrest within the community later that day or week.

### *Countering Extremist Ideology*

Community engagement is a necessary component of relationship and trust building, but it cannot dictate against the sometimes uncomfortable but absolutely critical need to respond to the ideological underpinnings of radicalization, including developing effective counternarratives. Healthy relationships with Muslim and other relevant communities are extraordinarily important, for the government and the communities alike. And local communities are uniquely qualified to take on religious debates and contest violent ideologies draped in religious justification, something the government is particularly unfit to address. As uncomfortable as the topic may be, it is essential to address the radical ideologies underpinning violent extremist narratives and their movements from the Islamic State to white supremacists.

Given the slippery ideological slope between extremist radicalization and mobilization, it is important not to ban or criminalize but to actively challenge and debate even extremist narratives that do not explicitly advocate violence yet do provide the “moral oxygen” for supporting violent extremist groups. A clear distinction must be

made between lawful beliefs and unlawful behaviors when it comes to law enforcement activity, but society need not sanction or leave unchallenged extremist narratives and radical ideologies. When a person has the kind of cognitive opening that can be filled by violent extremist ideas, someone needs to be there to provide alternative narratives and ideas.

And those ideas are not necessarily pinned to a specific terrorist group. As a George Washington University study concluded, American recruits to jihadism tend to be drawn to a broadly defined violent Islamist ideology shared among a variety of sometimes rival groups. It should therefore not surprise that radical ideologues like the late AQAP leader Anwar al-Awlaki have inspired followers of al-Qaeda, IS, and homegrown extremists alike. In the United States, many terrorist recruits are “driven by a broad counter-cultural idealism, and are less tangled up in the minutiae of the power plays that divide such groups abroad.” As a result, the study noted, understanding the current threat of homegrown jihadist terrorism “requires an examination of the appeal of Salafi-Jihadist ideology in the U.S. as a whole, regardless of group affiliation.”<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, the U.S. government has a structural and programming deficit when it comes to preventing and countering the ideological aspects of violent extremism. By default, P/CVE has been housed within the law enforcement community, with U.S. Attorneys’ offices taking the lead in their jurisdictions and the new Task Force being housed at the DHS and co-led by the DHS and Justice Department. Contesting extremist ideologies and narratives is not the purview of government, let alone law enforcement, which appropriately resists anything that could be seen as creating a thought police, but we as a society cannot afford to wait until someone commits a violent act. The goal must be to move the needle earlier in the radicalization process. To date, federal, state, and local P/CVE efforts—including the pilot programs in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles—have largely avoided anything having to do with ideology or counternarratives, focusing instead on community outreach. In fact, the two are not mutually exclusive: community organizations are best situated to address extremist narratives and their underlying ideology as part of a holistic effort to counter violent extremism.

Ironically, the U.S. government has acknowledged the importance of countering terrorist propaganda—

including Islamist extremism—online, establishing the earlier-noted Global Engagement Center (GEC) in March 2016 to “lead the coordination, integration, and synchronization of Government-wide communications activities directed at foreign audiences abroad in order to counter the messaging and diminish the influence of international terrorist organizations.”<sup>51</sup> Since then, the center has partnered with foreign organizations and governments to counter terrorist propaganda and has established partnerships with Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, France, Libya, and Jordan, and at least a half-dozen more countries.<sup>52</sup> Gen. Joseph Votel, commander of U.S. Central Command, described the GEC’s work as “absolutely vital,”<sup>53</sup> and yet domestic countermessaging platforms and the tools to take down or challenge extremist websites within the United States are sorely lacking,<sup>54</sup> despite gaining the attention of the Justice Department’s Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).<sup>55</sup> Cooperation with nongovernmental organizations working in this space, such as the Counter Extremism Project’s (CEP’s) Digital Disruption program, shows promise for making progress.<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, ideology is not the be-all and end-all of terrorist recruitment, especially in the age of the Islamic State. On the one hand, one of the main reasons recruits are drawn to the jihadist group is that they buy into its message that the end of the world is near and that the “caliphate” represented by the Islamic State is a fulfillment of prophecy. Note the centrality for IS of the small, geographically unimportant town of Dabiq, which according to one apocalyptic tradition is the site of a future battle between true Muslim believers and the infidels. On the other hand, many IS recruits know little about Islamic scripture. Indeed, “they are not particularly religious, many of them, but they are intoxicated by the idea of fighting an end-times battle and absolving their own sins.”<sup>57</sup> The relative weight of push (e.g., grievance, social alienation) and pull (e.g., ideology, kinship, and belonging) factors will vary from case to case, but both will figure to one extent or another in most cases.

Radical ideologies and narratives play a key role in extremist propaganda, but it is critical that authorities address the full gamut of extremist ideologies radicalizing individuals and mobilizing them to violence. In the United States, that means focusing not only on Islamist ideology and narratives but also on white supremacist, far-right, and far-left ideologically inspired violence. Consider that two months before the Boston bombings,

authorities arrested two New York men who were in the process of building a truck-borne radiation weapon for use in a mass attack on Muslims and others.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, local law enforcement agencies across the country often push back on federal government directives to focus too heavily on international terrorism threats at the expense of the everyday criminal and public safety issues that dominate the day-in, day-out work of police officers. A study funded by the National Institute of Justice found that “new terrorism-related demands and resources are now competing with other national public safety priorities, placing a strain on local law enforcement agencies. Local officials cite drug enforcement and community policing initiatives as two local priorities that are being affected by shifting federal programs.”<sup>59</sup> That is not to say they do not want to counter international terrorism, they just want to be able to prioritize and resource the full spectrum of their responsibilities according to the level of threat they see in their locality.

Growth in far-right groups has been on an almost unbroken upward trend over the past fifteen years. The number of antigovernment “patriot” groups skyrocketed from 149 in 2008 to 512 after the election of President Obama and peaked at 1,360 in 2012.<sup>60</sup> Violent far-right attacks since Obama’s election included an attack by a neo-Nazi at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2009; an attempted bombing of a Martin Luther King Jr. parade by a white supremacist in Spokane, Washington, in 2011; the attack on six Sikhs in Wisconsin by a white supremacist in 2012; and the shooting of nine African American churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015 by a young white man attempting to start a race war.<sup>61</sup> In January 2017, a man known for far-right, nationalist views killed six people and wounded eighteen more in a shooting attack at a Quebec City mosque.<sup>62</sup>

Hate crimes are on the rise in the United States, according to the FBI, especially those targeting Muslims.<sup>63</sup> New York City, typically a haven for diversity, has been the scene of hundreds of alleged postelection hate crimes and instances of harassment. New York responded by creating a special police unit and hotline for residents to report episodes of bias and discrimination. The hotline received more than four hundred calls in its first six days.<sup>64</sup> Followers of major white nationalist Twitter accounts increased from 3,542 in 2012 to 25,406 in 2016.<sup>65</sup> In February 2017, a federal jury in Tennessee convicted Robert Duggart of solicitation to burn down a mosque. In a recorded phone conversa-

tion between Duggart and others, which was played for the jury at trial, Duggart said, “I don’t want to kill children, but there’s always collateral damage.”<sup>66</sup> That same month, the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness issued a report on the domestic terrorism threat posed by white supremacists in the state.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, law enforcement agencies across the country express at least as much concern about political violence carried out by antigovernment extremists as they do about Islamist extremists, if not more so.<sup>68</sup>

In short, to effectively prevent violent extremism in the homeland, it is critical that P/CVE efforts address the full spectrum of ideologically inspired violence, including Islamist, far-right, and far-left violence, as well as non-ideologically inspired violence. This is the case not only because the country faces threats from across the ideological spectrum, but also because efforts to address Islamist violent extremists will be more effective as part of a comprehensive approach that addresses other types of extremists as well. Across Europe, for example, lessons learned from interventions and other programs designed to address right-wing extremism have proven useful in developing those targeting left-wing and Islamist extremism—many of the same tools apply. This is a theme that arose at the 2016 NCTC CVE workshop as well, which featured experts on Islamist, neo-Nazi, and other forms of extremism in an effort to apply relevant lessons learned in one area of radicalization to another. Indeed, there is broad consensus on this point with the law enforcement and intelligence communities. The summary note on the NCTC workshop articulated “the U.S. government’s need to explain that countering violent extremism is not just focused on Muslim communities. This explanation needs to include the fact that white supremacists, sovereign citizens, and black extremist groups also operate in the United States.”<sup>69</sup>

### *Covering the PVE-CVE Waterfront*

A comprehensive plan to counter Islamist and other forms of radicalization should include both *preventive* measures intended to inhibit radicalization from taking hold within communities in the first place as well as measures meant to *counter* the process of radicalization affecting an individual when it does occur. At the back end, P/CVE rehabilitation and reentry programs are key to steering people who finish serving terrorism-related

prison sentences away from a return to violent extremism. The former focuses on the community, the latter on the individual. Distinguishing between the two allows for the commonsense application of a public-health-style model to community-led prevention while maintaining the ability to forge trusting connections between law enforcement and community service organizations when it comes to interventions. Broader community-led efforts can thus be largely desecuritized, while those efforts addressing individuals already on the path to radicalization can still be run in such a way as to address the legitimate equities of both the public health and law enforcement communities. This also allows for clearer distinctions between that which is P/CVE-relevant and that which is P/CVE-specific.

Preventing violent extremism is a group of proactive efforts to build community resilience to violent extremism. PVE is good governance; it works from the bottom up, addressing local drivers of extremism, educating community members and leaders on the signs of radicalization, and building networks to address it should it manifest itself. Truly preventive efforts focus on building the kind of community resilience that is critical for the functioning of healthy and safe communities. This kind of upstream preventive work already exists in local communities across the country and addresses a variety of issues, from anti-bullying and harassment programs in schools to anti-drug and anti-gang programs run through community centers, and much more. Programs aimed at preventing violent extremism—including both preexisting initiatives as well as new ones geared more specifically toward the threat of terrorist radicalization and recruitment—offer a wide variety of tools focused on expanding community-led initiatives to address the local drivers of violent extremism.

Preventive efforts would be well served by adopting a public-health-style approach to efforts to prevent radicalization within a given community. A public-health-style model—which typically focuses on preventing exposure to disease in the first place, looking for pre-clinical signs of infection, and then dealing with exposure if and when it happens—could be adapted to the P/CVE space as well.<sup>70</sup>

In the preventive space, primary prevention would focus on community-wide efforts to build resilience against extremism by leveraging existing public safety and violence-prevention efforts. Community policing efforts are important here, as are community integration and social cohesion programs such as making sure

residents know how and where to access services. Secondary prevention would focus on individuals, neighborhoods, schools, or ethnic communities demonstrating characteristics—such as exposure to extremist ideologies or contacts with virtual or physical radical networks—that place them at higher risk for radicalization. Training for teachers, parents, counselors, and mentors, and extracurricular programming or school or job assistance opportunities, would be employed as secondary-prevention options in this still-preventive space.

Research conducted by the Department of Homeland Security demonstrated that within this preventive space addressing community and environmental factors can help prevent individuals attracted to a variety of different ideologies from “going down the path toward ideologically motivated violence.” Irrespective of their specific motivation, the DHS found, “an increasing number of violent individuals take similar paths and adopt a similar tactical approach in preparing for and carrying out acts of violence.”<sup>71</sup> Community- and environment-wide prevention efforts addressing these common radicalization access points therefore make a lot of sense.

Tertiary prevention, meanwhile, transitions into the more traditional *countering* violent extremism space, focused on countering a disease—in this case, extremist ideologies or terrorist recruiters—to which individuals have now been exposed despite prevention efforts. Interventions, or “off-ramping” efforts, are where the true P/CVE rubber meets the road once an individual has started down the path of radicalization.

In some cases, law enforcement will be the first to identify an individual who has been exposed to violent ideologies but has not engaged in any criminal behavior. In such cases, the individual could be referred by the FBI or other state or local agencies to a community-based team of professional clinical social workers, mental health professionals, clergy, family, friends, and others who could tailor a multidisciplinary intervention plan for the individual. It is possible the FBI may still conduct an intelligence investigation of the individual in the event that sufficient information exists to support such a case (i.e., evidence the individual is considering acting on his or her violent extremist beliefs). But law enforcement would not be otherwise privy to the individual’s therapy treatment unless and until the individual appeared to present an imminent threat under a therapist’s traditional “duty to warn.” In other cases, individuals on a path suggesting signs of radicalization

or mobilization to violence will come across the radar not as referrals from law enforcement but from community partners engaged in the primary- and secondary-prevention programs described above. Consider the case of white supremacist Dylann Roof, who murdered the nine African American worshipers at a Charleston church. Roof had told friends before his deadly rampage that he intended to carry out an attack in order to start “a race war.” Had community-wide preventive efforts been in place, someone might have been in a position to report such a statement to an intervention team, which could have warned authorities.

Sometimes, preliminary investigations reveal no prosecutable conduct and nothing to warrant an ongoing intelligence investigation, either. With more than nine hundred counterterrorism investigations related to the Islamic State alone across the United States, the FBI and its federal, state, and local sister agencies simply do not have the bandwidth to maintain open-ended investigations on every single case of radicalization that crosses their radar. It therefore should not surprise that the FBI and other law enforcement agencies have been at the forefront of the debate over how to create local community networks to which law enforcement could refer cases of concern—involving issues such as mental instability, radical ideological fervor, poor social integration, or marginalization.

Consider the cases of Orlando club shooter Omar Mateen and of New York and New Jersey bomber Ahmad Khan Rahami, each of whom had come across the FBI’s radar prior to their 2016 attacks. In each case, the FBI ran the reports of radicalization to ground and ultimately determined—correctly—that the case involved no violation of the law and that First Amendment protections applied to the suspect’s expressions of radical ideology.<sup>72</sup> In neither case was there anyone to whom the FBI could refer the suspect for further observation or intervention, and in both cases the suspect subsequently carried out an ideologically inspired terrorist attack.

Finally, the back end of P/CVE policy—that is, creating “off ramps” for individuals who have been radicalized but will be reentering society—has hardly been addressed here in the United States at all. This is an issue that has received significant attention in Europe and elsewhere, where significant numbers of foreign terrorist fighters have traveled to Syria, Iraq, Libya, or elsewhere to join the ranks of groups like IS or al-Qaeda.<sup>73</sup> Some

of those fighters will not return to their home countries either because they are killed fighting, die of natural causes, prefer to remain within what is left of the Islamic State, or move on to the next jihadist front. But many have already started to return to their home countries, overwhelming security and law enforcement personnel who cannot possibly maintain open cases on that many individuals at once. Security agencies are therefore the ones most desperately calling for the establishment of terrorist disengagement and rehabilitation programs.<sup>74</sup>

The number of American foreign fighters has been comparatively tiny, and the country's far more developed counterterrorism infrastructure makes the United States much better able to track the few who have gone and returned. But over the next few years, a significant number of individuals convicted in U.S. courts of providing material support to terrorist groups or plotting some type of terrorist activity will complete their sentences and be released back into society. The vast majority of these are American citizens, and to date there are no terrorist disengagement or rehabilitation programs within the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). So far, BOP has been content to apply whatever programs it has in place for the general criminal population to the population of terrorism-related convicts. Moreover, within those programs participation is voluntary and nothing is tailored to the context of ideologically driven terrorism. Nor is there a program in place specifically tailored to addressing the release, restrictions, and monitoring of convicted terrorists let out from prison after serving their sentences.<sup>75</sup>

There is one area, however, where back-end P/CVE issues are just now beginning to be addressed in the United States, albeit in haphazard fashion. In Minneapolis, a federal judge has hired Daniel Koehler, a German expert with experience evaluating both Islamist and far-right violent extremists, for the purpose of assessing their candidacy for alternative dispositions.<sup>76</sup> These are cases of individuals who have been investigated and arrested on terrorism-related charges but may not be hardened terrorists. Young men and women lured by terrorist recruiters who contemplated or tried to travel overseas but did not travel and committed relatively minor terrorism-related crimes might be better off directed to an appropriate "off-ramp" program rather than sentenced to long prison terms. Today, they might be assessed to be misguided youth—and, if not, a diversion program would not be under consideration—but after decades in prison they could easily be fully

radicalized and present a greater security risk when they are ultimately released from prison. Such "deradicalization" programs should never offer blanket amnesty and should be subject to close metric and evaluation review to make sure they really work. Alternative disposition programs would have to be court-ordered and subject to some type of parole structure, and would be especially useful in the case of reintegration of "formers" or "terrorist dropouts" whose personal stories could prove very powerful in P/CVE programs. But such programs should be coordinated at the federal level so that prosecution and sentencing guidelines remain consistent across the country.<sup>77</sup> While terrorism charges would be federal, others may be prosecuted at the state level on other charges, so guidelines should be developed for state-level prosecutions and sentencing as well.

### *A Layered Approach to Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism*

What is needed is a layered P/CVE concept that leverages not just a whole-of-government but a whole-of-society approach that works from the bottom up. P/CVE will be most effective when local communities partner with local government, with the support of state and federal partners, to address the various manifestations of violent extremism as they play out in their local contexts. Expressions of violent extremism and mobilization are by their nature very locally driven phenomena.

And yet there is much U.S. policymakers could learn from what America's foreign partners have done abroad, often with U.S. support. Unlike most areas of counterterrorism, the United States sits in the back of the class when it comes to P/CVE. A number of countries in Europe, Australia, and Canada, among others, have outpaced the United States in this field, whether in terms of developing the relevant policy frameworks, designing and implementing multidimensional local intervention programs, involving both law enforcement and non-law-enforcement professionals, not to mention local communities, or allocating resources. Much, but not all, of this deficit as compared to Europe in particular stems from the fact that the homegrown violent extremist threat in the United States is relatively low.

Whereas the United States didn't develop a domestic CVE framework until 2011—one that has been implemented in a haphazard fashion with few dedicated resources—Europe was spurred to action by the March

2004 attacks in Madrid and its long history of dealing with far-left terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s. The European Union identified prevention as one of the four pillars of its 2005 counterterrorism strategy,<sup>78</sup> which was updated in 2014 to reflect the “changing nature of the threat and the need to prevent people from becoming radicalised, being radicalised and being recruited to terrorism and to prevent a new generation of terrorists from emerging.”<sup>79</sup> Just last year, the European Commission issued a communication focused on enhancing support for EU member states’ efforts to prevent radicalization in a number of areas.<sup>80</sup> These include countering online radicalization, addressing radicalization to violent extremism in prisons, promoting inclusive education, boosting research and networking, and promoting inclusive and open societies at home. This communication, which emphasizes the importance the EU places on reaching beyond law enforcement and security actors, builds on more than a decade of EU work in this area.

As a complement to this regional framework, a number of European countries have developed national P/CVE or counterradicalization strategies, including Britain, with its well-known Prevent strategy, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden. The new administration would be wise to look closely at the content, not to mention the successes and shortcomings in the implementation, of these different strategies as it considers how best to build on the P/CVE framework of its predecessors.

Looking beyond the normative, strategic level, there is also much the United States could learn from its European counterparts—while keeping in mind that the scale of the radicalization challenge is significantly smaller in the United States. Thus, the new administration should pursue deeper and more systematic cooperation with Europeans at every level—EU, national, and local—as compared to the ad hoc, piecemeal cooperation with Europe on P/CVE of the past few years. This is particularly the case should the administration choose to jump-start tailored local prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation programs for addressing violent extremism, programs with which European policymakers and practitioners have a growing body of experience, largely triggered by the fast rise of the phenomenon of European foreign terrorist fighters traveling to Syria, from which to draw.

Examples of some of the more innovative European CVE efforts include:

- **THE EU’S RADICALIZATION AWARENESS NETWORK.** RAN consists of more than three thousand frontline practitioners (e.g., police officers and prison and probation authorities, as well as teachers, youth and community workers, civil society representatives, local authority officials, healthcare professionals, representatives from victims of terrorism associations, and academics) from across Europe who work with people who are already or are vulnerable to being radicalized.<sup>81</sup> Its nine working groups cover issues of particular relevance to CVE debates in the United States, including health and social care, education, prison, and youth and families. Since October 2015, the RAN Centre of Excellence has become a European hub for identifying best practices, issuing practical recommendations and offering tailor-made support and guidance to policymakers and public authorities. It has EU funds to help national and local authorities develop programs aimed at implementing RAN best practices.
- **MUNICIPAL-LEVEL INITIATIVES.** A small but growing number of cities and other local authorities have developed strategies and programs, often involving both law enforcement and non-law-enforcement agencies, to address the violent extremist threat at each stage of the radicalization cycle, with Aarhus, Denmark, often cited as a model. Other examples include Barcelona, Bordeaux, London, Malaga, Malmö, The Hague, Vienna, and Vilvoorde, with these and many other cities across the continent connected to one another through the European Forum for Urban Security’s CVE network.
- **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.** A number of European countries have developed multidisciplinary programs, whether involving clerics, mentors, family members, peers, or health professionals, for those wishing to leave far-right and other violent extremist groups. In Germany, drawing on successful experience countering extreme right-wing recruitment to violence, officials have launched emergency hotlines for families and peers of those being targeted by violent extremist recruitment and are working with mosques and Muslim communities to help them identify individuals who might be at risk for radicalization to violence, including those fleeing conflict zones.

An effective, holistic whole-of-society approach to countering extremism in the homeland starts with a community-led model. The most developed example of such a model is the “Montgomery County Model,” developed by the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE) and now being expanded as the Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) model in additional jurisdictions across the country.<sup>82</sup> This model looks broadly at a variety of risk factors that might influence radicalization, including psychological factors, sociological motivators, economic factors, political grievances, and ideology, beliefs, and values. The idea is to “engage a wide range of stakeholders—including faith community leaders, public officials, law enforcement officers, educators, and social service providers—in a way that promotes trust, respect, and positive social interaction.” Once a cohesive community network committed to overall public safety has been established, and its stakeholders have been educated to the public safety needs of the community (including but not limited to terrorism), they can serve as an early-warning network of trusted professionals who can connect at-risk individuals to the network of professionals for intervention. Community policing fits easily into this model, though trust building is critical here as it is in any community policing effort. This first layer of a whole-of-society model incorporates both components of P/CVE and is broadly focused on a geographic area. In the words of its founder, Hedieh Mirahmadi, “This is not a Muslim-centric program; it is an all-of-community model. The community as a whole is best placed to understand the risk factors associated with extremist behavior and how to intervene, from schoolteachers to law enforcement officials to religious figures.”<sup>83</sup>

The second layer builds on the first, and includes more targeted outreach to religious, ethnic, issue-specific, neighborhood, or other local community groups. Community-wide organizations, law enforcement organizations, local, state, and federal government offices, and others can work with these issue- and community-specific groups to impact target populations. Consider, for example, Ka Joog, a Somali-American nonprofit focused on providing “community-based, culturally specific programs and services to Somali youth and their family.”<sup>84</sup> Ka Joog operates in Minnesota, where the community has struggled to contend with radicalization within the Somali-American community first related to

the al-Qaeda branch al-Shabab and later to the Islamic State. At the other end of the violent extremist spectrum is Life After Hate, a group founded by former members of American violent far-right extremist movements that assists individuals trying to leave far-right extremist groups and helps community, educational, and civic organizations grapple with the causes of intolerance and racism.<sup>85</sup>

Research underscores the strength of a layered approach. The University of Maryland’s START program created a 1,500-person data set on Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS). Among the findings of this National Institute of Justice–funded research project is this: “Programs that place an undue focus on particular communities are likely to be counterproductive by exasperating [sic] feelings of collective victimization. Successful programs, on the other hand, will be tailored to specific ideological groups and sub-groups, and will address the underlying psychological and emotional vulnerabilities that make individuals open to extremist narratives.”<sup>86</sup>

The third level is where government interacts with community organizations. For any of these programs to succeed, the federal government must engage in ongoing outreach and engagement efforts to build trust, maintain open lines of communication, and educate and raise awareness of the ever-changing nature of violent extremist threats and the ways international events (such as the war in Syria) shape the extremist ideologies and terrorist propaganda available online, no matter how strong U.S. border security. The Community Awareness Briefings, which were instituted in 2011, were an effort to do just this, but they were so security- and terrorism-centric that the effort sometimes alienated local partners. The federal government can also play an important role in supporting local P/CVE efforts—from coordinating and synchronizing the many federal programs across the government that are P/CVE-relevant or specific to setting standards of excellence for interventions and sharing best practices—but those efforts are ultimately best organized and operated at the local level. Ultimately, the governmental footprint for effective P/CVE public-private partnerships is best situated within local and state government agencies—the more local, the better. Mayors know their cities best, and governors can coordinate efforts and help facilitate funding for programs across their states. Mayors and governors should therefore

focus on four key areas identified by practitioners in a University of Maryland study: (1) convene and facilitate a collective vision among community-based organizations, (2) provide structure and enable communities to communicate and learn from one another, (3) scale up innovations, and (4) evaluate local programs, report back to stakeholders on what works, and provide guidance.<sup>87</sup>

But there is more the federal government can and should do to promote effective P/CVE efforts nationwide, especially in the online space. A Program on Extremism study “identified some 300 American and/or U.S.-based ISIS sympathizers active on social media, spreading propaganda, and interacting with like-minded individuals.”<sup>88</sup> The federal government should play a facilitating role in the creation of private- and academic-sector efforts to counter extremists’ online propaganda and communications, something that has received significant U.S. government attention abroad but less so at home. Ideas for best practices for public-private partnerships in the P/CVE space already exist and should be built upon and implemented in the technology space in particular.<sup>89</sup>

The private and nonprofit sectors have important roles to play in the wider P/CVE space as well. In particular, there is a role for technology companies to contend with extremists’ online propaganda and communications. But it is also in the private sector’s interest to provide financial support to P/CVE efforts, such as to nonprofits like BRAVE that engage in building community resilience as well as performing interventions.<sup>90</sup>

To their credit, social media and technology companies have attempted to counter the terrorist propaganda often disseminated on their networks by, for example, voluntarily deleting content published by terrorist groups or shutting down accounts that threaten or promote terrorism. This response was, to some extent, the result of a barrage of public pressure on companies like Facebook, Twitter, and Google from political leaders and national security officials in the United States and abroad. Companies in other industries—whether oil and gas, textiles, or hospitality—however, have yet to join a whole-of-society response, preferring to stay clear of challenges linked to security, particularly terrorism.

More attention should be paid to mobilizing pri-

ate-sector support for the effort to build communities resilient to the spread of violent extremism. Businesses could direct much more of their corporate social responsibility projects at marginalized communities targeted by terrorist recruiters. They can join with government donors in funding community-led programs that offer alternatives, whether educational, vocational, cultural, or other types; where funds aren’t available, they can offer training, mentoring, or branding expertise to grassroots organizations in at-risk communities that are implementing P/CVE programs and can serve as agents of positive change in their community. For example, in Minneapolis, the U.S. Attorney’s office has been able to bring together private-sector companies such as Cargill, Mall of America, and other local businesses to provide funding for Somali youth-empowerment programs, and hold job fairs led by the Transportation Security Administration and Customs and Border Protection geared toward the Somali community and job skills mentoring.<sup>91</sup> Internationally, multilateral actors such as the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) are trying to secure greater private-sector interest in and support for P/CVE efforts. Such efforts are desperately needed domestically within the United States as well. Once established, such groups should hire peers from within the business community to spur investment in P/CVE efforts.

The philanthropic community has an important role to play here as well, though the most effective approach would be to encourage philanthropic support for preventive programs and initiatives.

An example of an existing initiative that would benefit from private-sector and philanthropic support is the Strong Cities Network, a global coalition of cities looking to develop and share innovative approaches to countering violent extremism. The network has plans to launch a local innovation fund aimed at jump-starting public-private partnerships that provide positive alternatives for vulnerable young people in key cities around the world. Creating these types of networks for local-level government and community service and nonprofit organizations exponentially enhances the capabilities of each individual entity and of the overall network.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## I CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. Adopt the term P/CVE—representing the full spectrum of activities aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism—and recognize P/CVE as a critical tool that is not part of, but is a necessary complement to, counterterrorism efforts. Officials at all levels of government should embrace and employ P/CVE for the important public safety, public health, and violence prevention tool it is, and fund P/CVE efforts accordingly through independent funding streams each for programs aimed at preventing (public safety and health) and countering (law enforcement) violent extremism.
- 1.2. Define CVE so that it is clear what is CVE-relevant and what is CVE-specific. To date, CVE has been so broadly defined that it can include everything from building playgrounds in “at risk” neighborhoods, to running localized intervention programs for people drawn to violent extremist ideologies, to rehabilitating people convicted of terrorism charges or returning foreign terrorist fighters. If CVE is everything, it is nothing.
- 1.3. Identify violent extremist ideologies—from jihadism to white supremacy to leftist-inspired ethnocentrism and more—as key drivers of extremist radicalization and mobilization to violence, while acknowledging that both push factors (local grievance, trauma, identity crisis, personal problems) and pull factors (kinship, radical ideology, and narratives) play roles in radicalization and mobilization and that their relative importance will vary from case to case. Address both ideological and nonideological drivers of radicalization.
- 1.4. Place P/CVE within the larger context of building community resilience against violent extremism. Balance the good-governance and security sides of P/CVE to create space for a whole-of-society P/CVE strategy that allows for the commonsense application of a public-health-style model to community-led prevention while maintaining strong connective tissue between law enforcement and community service organizations when it comes to interventions.

## II. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Break down the full spectrum of efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism efforts (P/CVE) into three distinct categories, addressing (1) prevention, (2) intervention, and (3) rehabilitation/reintegration, and apply a three-tiered model based on a public-health-style approach to P/CVE efforts. The aim here is to (1) prevent exposure in the first place, (2) look for preclinical signs of infection (radicalization), and (3) deal with exposure if and when it happens.
  - a. At the front end, efforts to build resilience within communities against extremism would be categorized as *preventing* violent extremism. This would include a wide array of programs and initiatives that are clearly CVE-relevant but are not CVE-specific. In particular, it would include the first two levels of a public-health-style model—levels focusing on the preventive space and on communities.
  - b. In the broad middle, CVE-specific efforts to counter radicalization and recruitment would focus on intervention programs to deal with individuals who have started down a path to radicalization. Here, the focus is on individuals.
  - c. At the back end lies another important P/CVE-specific area: rehabilitation and reintegration programs for individuals who were radicalized and are now in or have just been released from prison or for individuals returning from participation in militant conflicts abroad (e.g., in Syria, Iraq) and reentering society.
  - d. Of course, efforts to prevent and counter extremism in the homeland cannot be fully separated from what

is occurring overseas. Defeating foreign terrorist groups and bankrupting their ideology is a powerful component to stemming the appeal these groups will have to potential recruits, whether they are abroad or within the United States.

- 2.2 Recognize that radicalization occurs within communities, and shape P/CVE programs so that they are community-driven and tailored to each community's particular needs. Not all communities will have the same risk factors, nor will they have the same resources at their disposal. It is important to enable local actors to develop local, contextual responses to local grievances or other push factors. The federal government role should be to support state and local P/CVE efforts with funding, networking, training, research, and evaluation and metrics tools.
- 2.3 Strike a healthier balance between security-based and other community-wide efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, especially in the preventive space. Such efforts are most successful when they address the full spectrum of challenges and needs facing a community or an individual. Desecurizing such efforts also facilitates the integration of nonsecurity, service-oriented agencies at all levels of government and their community service organization partners.
- 2.4 Leverage the upstream P/CVE work already being done in communities across the country to address a wide array of issues, from anti-bullying and harassment programs in schools to anti-drug and anti-gang programs run through community centers, and more. An area for growth in this space would be to incorporate P/CVE language into the resources offered through 211/311 local service telephone numbers. This could be done at a national level with national crisis text lines as well, and in either case could direct inquiries to local vetted and trained agencies or programs within a local P/CVE network.
- 2.5 Build trust between communities, community service organizations, and law enforcement. Local partners are put in untenable positions if they are seen as participating in something the community perceives as cover for government surveillance programs. The key is developing trusting relationships between the parties so that intervention programs can still function with the necessary connective tissue to law enforcement.
- 2.6 Recognize that local service providers and community organizations are best positioned to spot radicalization in its earliest phases. But the professionals who run intervention programs need clear guidance on the legal threshold for a "duty to warn." To date, guidance differs from state to state, severely undermining the ability of public health and other professionals to work in this space and creating unnecessary tension with law enforcement officials. Professionals also need guidance on what types of activities are fully permissible and what types may approach a violation of the material support statute.
- 2.7 Contest extremist narratives. When extremist speech articulates a threat of imminent violence, law enforcement authorities should take appropriate action. Short of such an imminent threat, however, extremist speech should not be banned but contested. Given the Establishment Clause and other First Amendment considerations, silencing objectionable views or arresting their proponents is anathema to American democracy. In contrast, debate is a cornerstone of the American project. Without banning violent extremist views, responsible leadership demands debating them.
- 2.8 Treat Americans of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds as full-fledged partners on the panoply of issues, foreign and domestic, with which the whole of American society is concerned, not solely on those related to CVE. In particular, given the rise of Islamophobia in the United States, U.S. government agencies should be especially sensitive to the need for interaction with Muslim American communities. Such interaction should be broad-based and reflect the diversity of these communities.
- 2.9 Develop alternatives to prosecution of low-level offenders such as youth who planned to travel abroad to fight in a conflict zone but did not go, or those who went and quickly reconsidered and returned. Disengagement programs would focus on the post-crime context and take place as part of an alternative to prosecution (e.g.,

diversion) or an alternative to incarceration (e.g., probation) and would involve intensive counseling and judicial supervision. Such disengagement programs should never offer blanket amnesty and should be subject to close metric and evaluation review to make sure they really work. Alternative disposition programs would have to be court-ordered and subject to some type of parole structure, and would be especially useful in the case of reintegration of “formers” or “terrorist dropouts” whose personal stories could prove very powerful in P/CVE programs. But such programs should be coordinated at the federal level so that prosecution and sentencing guidelines remain consistent across the country.

- 2.10 Develop full-fledged rehabilitation and reintegration programs for individuals who have been radicalized but are reentering society. While the United States may not face the same level of threat from returning foreign terrorist fighters as its European allies do, there is an urgent need to develop P/CVE programs within the U.S. prison system, especially given the high number of individuals convicted of terrorism-related offenses who are due to be released from prison within the next few years.
- 2.11 Efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism are drastically underfunded across the board. Funding streams need to be created so that the provision of resources is commensurate with the nature of the threat. Funding streams need to be organized across stakeholder agencies at the federal level, and private-sector and philanthropic funding sources should be encouraged and developed for the many types of activities and programs across the full range of the P/CVE spectrum.
- 2.12 Expand cross-disciplinary research that leverages social scientists in academia, as well as government resources such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lessons can be drawn from across the spectrum of violent extremist ideologies to consider cross-application. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), housed within the Department of Justice and thus represented in the interagency CVE Task Force, has already begun work in this area. The NIJ and others should continue to push for innovative research that, for example, defines community resilience factors and develops risk assessment tools to provide better information to communities developing such programs.
- 2.13 Metrics and evaluation are needed to support an evidence-based approach, from examining the nature of the threat to identifying what works. However, it should be done in a focused and coordinated manner so as to not overwhelm the limited number of nascent CVE programs. For example, two evaluations of WORDE underscore the value of the community-led public safety model.<sup>92</sup> Independent scientific evaluation will also be foundational to the development of reintegration and alternative disposition programs in the United States. As more CVE programs are rolled out, there will be mistakes, but stakeholders need to learn from them. Evaluations are important both for ongoing programs—to provide a feedback loop—and to shape new initiatives.

### III..STRUCTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The creation of an interagency CVE Task Force to manage and integrate a whole-of-government CVE strategy was a step in the right direction. To reflect that its mission includes efforts under the headings of both *preventing* and *countering* violent extremism, the task force should be renamed the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Task Force (P/CVE Task Force).
- 3.2 The task force, however, has struggled to draw in service-oriented stakeholder departments to the shared P/CVE mission. For some, DHS/DOJ shared leadership of the task force created the appearance of an overly security-focused approach to P/CVE, something departments like Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education (ED) have feared would taint their programs if they became full participants in P/CVE efforts. To address this imbalance, the task force leadership structure should be reconfigured so that its director position rotates between DHS and DOJ personnel and its deputy director position rotates between HHS and ED. Both HHS and ED already engage in violence-prevention programming within their respective fields,<sup>93</sup> and making this structural change would help create a truly whole-of-government approach

across the spectrum of programming, including good governance, social cohesion and integration, public safety, violence prevention, and counterterrorism.

- 3.3 While the current task force director also heads the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) and reports directly to the secretary of Homeland Security, the position does not clearly align against the standard internal structures of partner departments and agencies. Rectifying this imbalance would give the task force and OCP stronger standing to synchronize P/CVE programs across the interagency and draw on CVE-related authorities and budgets among all P/CVE stakeholders. To date, the task force has found it particularly difficult to convince service-oriented departments to be full partners in this space. Internally, DHS/OCP is the office best suited to lead and coordinate all P/CVE efforts within the department but requires more formal stature to do so effectively. To address this imbalance, the DHS/OCP and task force director should be made an assistant secretary–rank position, and the deputy director a deputy assistant secretary–rank position.
- 3.4 To promote a community-centric national CVE strategy, and to give state and local authorities a more direct voice in the development of CVE programming, the CVE Task Force should build on a model it has already successfully implemented in a couple of cases and forward-deploy federal officials from task force stakeholder agencies to communities across the country. Already, the task force has a representative in Denver (seated within the U.S. Attorney’s office) and in Los Angeles (originally seated in the mayor’s office and now in a local DHS office). Other federal departments have implemented similar programs, including the State Department, which stations a foreign service officer in the mayor’s office in Houston. The DHS’s Protective Security Advisor Program, which has personnel serving in seventy-three districts in all fifty states and Puerto Rico, could serve as a model.<sup>94</sup> Local and state representatives should be included on the task force itself in Washington DC as well.
- 3.5 Create state and local government P/CVE advisory councils working with and through existing bodies such as the Criminal and Social Justice Program of the United States Conference of Mayors,<sup>95</sup> the Homeland Security and Public Safety Division of the National Governors Association,<sup>96</sup> and groups such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Association of Chiefs of Police, and the National Sheriffs’ Association.
- 3.6 Create national prevention and intervention networks that local and state authorities and community service organizations can plug into. These should leverage existing national-level organizations already working in this space such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and National Child Traumatic Stress Network.<sup>97</sup> Such a network should include national-level associations of universities, colleges, and secondary schools, as well as associations representing clinical social workers and mental health professionals.
- 3.7 Leverage local and state emergency management resources to help build local capacity to deal with HVE radicalization threats. In particular, compile in-state resource lists of vetted and trained local and state government entities, community service organizations, private resources (e.g., volunteer psychologists and clinical social workers), and community leaders to be able to come together and provide intervention services as needed in communities where size or budgetary constraints hinder the creation of a permanent body to provide such services.
- 3.8 Establish interagency fly teams modeled after the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), to provide training and information,<sup>98</sup> and FBI Fly Teams, to respond to high-priority cases in communities too small to build a capability of their own.<sup>99</sup> This way, when a crisis happens in a community that does not have CVE capability (e.g., someone traveled abroad and is now recruiting others), a multidisciplinary team of specially trained clinical social workers, psychologists, religious and community leaders, and law enforcement personnel can help local officials and community service organizations build their own local network to deal with this problem.

## STUDY GROUP MEMBERS

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**RAND BEERS** is a visiting professor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College and a former senior advisor to President Barack Obama. Previously, he served as acting secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, a position to which he was appointed in September 2013 after serving as acting deputy secretary. From June 2009 until May 2013, Beers led the efforts of the DHS's National Protection and Programs Directorate to reduce risks to physical, cyber, and communications infrastructures. Previously, he co-led the DHS transition team for the incoming Obama administration. Prior to the 2008 election, Beers was president of the National Security Network, through which experts seek to foster discussion of progressive national security ideas around the country, and an adjunct lecturer at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. In addition to serving as deputy Homeland Security advisor in the previous administration, Beers served on the National Security Council Staff under the prior four presidents, as director for counterterrorism and counternarcotics (1988–92), director for peacekeeping (1993–95), special assistant to the president and senior director for intelligence programs (1995–98), and special assistant to the president and senior director for combating terrorism (2002–3). In 2003–4, he was national security advisor for John Kerry's presidential campaign. Beers began his professional career as a Marine Corps officer and infantry company commander in Vietnam (1964–68). He entered the foreign service in 1971 and transferred to the civil service in 1983. He served most of his career in the Department of State, including as deputy assistant secretary of state for regional affairs in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, focusing on the Middle East and Persian Gulf (1992–93). He was also assistant secretary of state for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs (1998–2002).

**ADNAN KIFAYAT** is head of Global Security Ventures for the Gen Next Foundation, leading its efforts to develop innovative solutions to global security challenges through a venture philanthropy model that leverages a network of entrepreneurs. Over the last sixteen years, Kifayat has held senior positions in public service, including at the White House, State Department, and Treasury Department, as well as overseas at diplomatic missions in Jerusalem and Tunis. He served as U.S. secretary of state John Kerry's acting special representative to Muslim communities, creating programs to broaden and deepen U.S. engagement with leaders in Muslim communities worldwide based on shared commitments to global security. As senior advisor to the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, he led initiatives to counter the spread of violent extremism and established the Global Strategic Engagement Center (GSEC). His work at the Treasury Department resulted in closer financial cooperation between the United States and key allies around the world. He served as alternate executive director of the African Development Bank, and twice on the National Security Council Staff, coordinating counterterrorism and economic policies in the Middle East and Africa. Prior to his public service, Kifayat created market access strategies for Cargill and designed programs for Delphi International to advance U.S. engagement on a people-to-people basis around the world. Kifayat is an advisor to the Center for Sanctions and Illicit Finance at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, an advisory member on Harvard University's Project on Countering Extremism and Online Hate, cochair of the Homeland Security Advisory Council's Working Group on Countering Violent Extremism, and a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, advising on strategies to develop the next generation of transatlantic leaders.

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**JACOB OLIDORT**, a historian of Islam and the modern Middle East, currently serves as special advisor on Middle East policy and country director for Syria at the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy in the U.S. Department of Defense. In 2015–16, Dr. Olidort was a Soref Fellow at The Washington Institute, where his work covered jihadism, Salafism, and Islamic political movements. He received his PhD in Near Eastern studies from Princeton University, where his research focused on the intersection of Islamic law, theology, and modern politics. His publications include *Inside the Caliphate’s Classroom: Textbooks, Guidance Literature, and Indoctrination Methods of the Islamic State* (Washington Institute, 2016) and *The Politics of “Quietist” Salafism* (Brookings Institution, 2015). He regularly presents on jihadism to the U.S. government, including the Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security, and his commentary has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Foreign Affairs*, among other outlets. A former Fulbright scholar (UAE), he taught at the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University and is a term member in the Council on Foreign Relations. His contributions to this report were made prior to assuming his current position in the Department of Defense, and the views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. government.

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**AARON Y. ZELIN** is the Richard Borow Fellow at The Washington Institute. He is also a PhD candidate (ABD) at King's College London, where his dissertation covers the history of the Tunisian jihadist movement. Zelin is the founder of the widely acclaimed and cited website Jihadology.net and its podcast, *JihadPod*. Zelin's research focuses on Sunni Arab jihadist groups in North Africa and Syria. He is also the author of the New America Foundation's 2013 study *The State of Global Jihad Online*, the 2014 Washington Institute study *The War between ISIS and al-Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement*, and the 2016 Washington Institute study *The Islamic State's Territorial Methodology*.

## Notes

1. Donald Trump, "Inaugural Address" (speech, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2017), CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/20/politics/trump-inaugural-address/>. For the purposes of this report, we distinguish between the terms "Islamic," which denotes the religion of Islam or its institutions, and "Islamist," which refers to someone who adheres to a radical political ideology separate from Islam as a religion.
2. For the purposes of this report, we define radical Islamist extremism to include the ideologies of takfiri jihadist groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, nationalist Islamist terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and the so-called conveyor belt groups like Hizb al-Tahrir (HT) which do not perpetrate acts of terrorism per se but help lay the groundwork for the toxic message of ISIS and other violent groups to take hold and for individuals to take action. We do not consider anti-United States or anti-West attitudes alone to constitute radicalism. The study group also distinguished between radicalization and religious piety/ devotion to Islam. The extremist ideology at issue is a distortion of Islam, and in fact, many who have been radicalized remain surprisingly ignorant about the religion, particularly as the radicalization process has accelerated in recent years. When referring to acts of terrorism by Islamist extremists we use the term Jihadist terrorism.
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