# Shifting the PVE Paradigm

## A Think Piece on Human Insecurity, Political Violence, and New Directions for Preventing Violent Extremism

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For the past 17 years, the international security policy community has been transfixed on articulating a global agenda to effectively prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism. According to the Global Terrorism Index, deaths attributed to terrorist attacks in 2016 were a staggering eight times higher than the number recorded in 2000.[1] As casualty rates began to skyrocket in 2012, the field was embracing a new paradigm that promised to stem the seemingly exponential growth of terrorist groups over the previous decade. This agenda, commonly referred to as preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), focuses on addressing the underlying conditions that drive, or push, individuals to radicalize and those factors that induce, or pull, them to join violent extremist groups.

Under the rubric of P/CVE, international organizations, governments, and foreign assistance providers began developing an expansive menu of initiatives with a range of governmental and nongovernmental partners. The focus of these interventions ranged from countering "extremist narratives" to strengthening "social resilience" to providing individualized support to curtail "radicalization that leads to violent extremism." Although not intended to replace the hard, militarized approaches to fighting terrorism that characterized the early years of the "global war on terror," many international organizations have come to view P/CVE as a more holistic approach in preemptively dissuading individuals from adopting extremist beliefs.

Yet, is a focus on preventing violent extremism the antidote to terrorism and related violence? There is little reason to think so. Like previous counterterrorism paradigms that underpinned international policy from the years leading up to and since the global war on terror, common approaches to P/CVE are premised on the prevalence and exceptionalism of violent extremism as a unique form of violent conduct distinguished by the presumed importance of ideological factors deemed to facilitate the radicalization process in driving individuals and groups to commit violence. Like past formulations of the counterterrorism agenda, this insistence on centering ideology in framing terrorism as a new typology of violence tends to require observers to suspend consideration of the context, relationships, history, and past violence and victimhood out of which violent extremism emerges, thus often precluding any serious investigation into the causes and potential solutions to violence.

With its every iteration, the international community's attempts to establish a coherent framework to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism have proven largely ineffectual or counterproductive, further perpetuating cycles of violence. The time is

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1    Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), "Global Terrorism Index 2017: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism," *IEP Report*, no. 55 (November 2017), pp. 14–15, http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2017.pdf (utilizing the Global Terrorism Database of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism).

past due for a paradigm shift—one that centers its analysis of terrorism not on its exceptionalism but on its normalcy, situating it in the context of the violence mutually constituted by states and nonstates. In doing so, perhaps it may reveal a new range of possibilities and priorities for a more effective P/CVE agenda.

To lay the groundwork for this endeavor, this brief begins by considering how state conduct, particularly its role in maintaining and perpetuating power through various levels of coercion, should be understood as a significant factor in driving various forms of conflict and political violence, including violent extremism. A series of thematic vignettes on corruption, human rights abuses, and war-making will illustrate ways in which state conduct plays a central role in manifesting or escalating political violence from which violent extremism and terrorism emerge. These discussions demonstrate that sustainable, long-term gains against terrorism demand a greater political, programmatic, and financial investment on matters of governance, including serious reforms in domestic and foreign policy. Based on these lessons, the concluding section offers recommendations to policymakers and strategists on conceptual frameworks and approaches that would facilitate a shift toward more holistic and evidence-based approaches to P/CVE.

## Intersections of State Power, Political Violence, and Violent Extremism

The basic premise of social contract theory of the state holds that states and individual members of society are bound together in an unwritten but implicitly consensual agreement whereby individuals surrender some of their rights and freedoms in exchange for the security and protection of the state. In practice, however, state-society relations are wrought with tension and conflict between and among rulers and ruled.[2] These tensions commonly manifest themselves in various forms of violence by the state or dominant powers in society against marginalized and subaltern segments of the population within the governed,

employed by those in power as a means to preserve the dominance of the few over the many. The idea that state powers have been and continue to be the primary purveyors of violence in the world is not a matter of great controversy.

Although the specter of terrorism and violent extremism has cast an ugly shadow over states and communities alike, in many instances these threats and the real violence perpetrated by terrorist and violent extremist groups, at least those labeled as such by establishment media and government, pale in comparison to the threat and real violence perpetrated by states themselves. Governments, whether those of powerful or of fragile states, are not passive actors at the mercy of the morally reprehensible, one-sided violence of terrorist groups. On the contrary, they have historically been and continue to be perpetrators of substantial levels of political violence or violence emerging from contests over power within and between individuals, groups, and entities in a political community. It is against this backdrop that further political violence, including nonstate terrorism, emerges and escalates. Naturally, governments are not the primary driver of political violence in all cases. The causes of conflict and organized violence are complex and must be analyzed in the specific context in which they emerge. No single factor or combination of factors will necessarily result in political violence in all instances.

Nevertheless, over the past several decades, a wealth of empirical research has provided insights into trends and general theories regarding factors that increase the risk of political violence. In that regard, there is substantial evidence that violence committed by sovereign states in the form of injustice, inequity, discrimination, and oppression, that is, structural violence, or direct violence in the form of abuse by state security services, foreign invasions, and other forms of state-sanctioned or -perpetrated physical violence can serve as structural or proximate drivers of escalating political violence and conflict.[3] These dynamics apply in equal measure to those forms of political violence commonly labeled terrorism and

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2    Michel Foucault understood the exercise of hegemonic power by states and societies as inherently repressive, coercive, and violent and which he likened to Clausewitz's famous maxim in reverse: "Politics is the continuation of war by other means." Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003).

3    For example, James D. Fearon, "Governance and Civil War Onset," *World Development Report 2011 Background Paper*, 31 August 2011, http://web .worldbank.org/archive/website01306/web/pdf/wdr%20background%20paper_fearon_0.pdf; Oskar N.T. Thoms and James Ron, "Do Human Rights Cause Internal Conflict?" *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (3 August 2007): 674–705.

violent extremism.[4] The World Bank, which examined the nexus of conflict, security, and development in 2011, confirms this analysis, noting that "[i]nvasion, occupation, political repression, and the curtailment of human rights and civil liberties form much of the rationale that terrorist organizations give for their attacks. Much of the empirical literature validates the relevance of these factors."[5]

Variously referenced as "conditions conducive,"[6] "political drivers,"[7] or "push factors"[8] in the literature on violent extremism, the direct hand or complicity of the state in the perpetration of physical and structural violence is frequently implied or can be generally inferred as a key causal mechanism behind instances of terrorism and violent extremism–labeled violence. Indeed, political statements and policy documents produced by the international counterterrorism community have long acknowledged that certain types of state conduct can fuel terrorism and other forms of political violence. In 2006, UN member states recognized human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis in the fight against terrorism in the formative *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*.[9] Even in the context of the P/CVE agenda, the UN Secretary-General's preventing violent extremism action plan stressed that not unlike other forms of political violence, "violent extremism tends to thrive in an environment characterized by poor governance … corruption and a culture of impunity for unlawful behavior engaged in by the State or its

agents. When … combined with repressive policies and practices which violate human rights and the rule of law, the potency of the lure of violent extremism tends to be heightened."[10] The 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy explicitly recognized "poverty, inequality and repression" as "underlying conditions conducive" to violent extremism[11] and the emergence of extremism at "the nexus of weak governance and widespread grievance."[12] Yet, there appears to be little momentum to prioritize the necessary programming investments and policy adjustments to meaningfully address these factors. Instead, many governments continue to narrowly conceptualize terrorism and violent extremism on the basis of an association of violence with specific radical ideas and the conduct of particular identity groups, especially singling out those associated with Islamism.

P/CVE is premised on the assumption that terrorism is a product of a psychosocial process known as "radicalization" whereby individuals come to adopt specific ideas experts believe to cause violent extremism. On the basis of this assumption, P/CVE initiatives generally focus on influencing or changing the perceptions and immediate social environment of individuals deemed vulnerable to radicalization. Terrorism and violent extremism are commonly presented as objective, evidence-based concepts, but those characterizations belie the application of those terms in practice. Instead, they are overwhelmingly employed in relation to ideologies associated with Islamism

4    For example, Caitoriona Dowd, "Grievances, Governance and Islamist Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 53, no. 4 (2015): 505–531; Muhammad Dan Suleiman, "What Makes Islamist Movements Different? A Study of Liberia's NPFL and Nigeria's Boko Haram in West Africa," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2017, doi:10.1080/09546553.2017.1351957.

5    World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*, 2011, p. 83, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS /Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf.

6    The conditions conducive to violent extremism are virtually identical to those conducive to terrorism. Faiza Patel and Amrit Singh, "The Human Rights Risks of Countering Violent Extremism Programs," Just Security, 7 April 2016, https://www.justsecurity.org/30459/human-rights-risks-countering -violent-extremism-programs/.

7    For example, see Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter, "Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism," U.S. Agency for International Development, February 2009, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadt978.pdf.

8    For example, see Magnus Ranstorp, "The Root Causes of Violent Extremism," *RAN Issue Paper*, 4 January 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites /homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf.

9    UN General Assembly, *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/60/288, 20 September 2006 (adopted 8 September 2006).

10   UN General Assembly, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/70/674, 24 December 2015, para. 27.

11   "National Security Strategy," February 2015, p. 9, http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf (United States).

12   Ibid., p. 10.

and violent conduct by those identified as Muslim to the exclusion of others.[13] The selective application of related policies and programs and their prioritization over broader and deeper human security objectives at least partially explain their relative ineffectiveness in addressing the proliferation of terrorism-related violence.

Although a wholesale critique of the violent extremism discourse is not the purpose of this brief, a growing body of work exposes the inconsistency, prejudice, and dubious scholarly integrity behind the radicalization thesis.[14] Instead of focusing on ideological content to inform and prescribe policies to address drivers of political violence, scholars and practitioners should be focusing on the ways in which individuals and groups, including states, interact with and exercise power in relation to one another. In that regard, some critical terrorism studies experts stress the need to understand "how states and social movements have mutually constituted themselves as combatants in a conflict" and have adopted violence in response to the political contexts in which they interact.[15] The dynamics of these interactions and their relation to political violence are illustrated in the thematic discussions below.

# HOW STATE CONDUCT PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN DRIVING EXTREMISM

Unfortunately, violence is a common facet of the interactions between states and populations. Given the hegemonic nature of the state and disproportionate means of exerting power held by a numerically small national elite, certain forms of violence tend to be initiated and perpetrated by the state as a means of maintaining the status quo. This dynamic contributes to and is exacerbated by an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. The following discussions will examine how three forms of state-perpetrated political violence—corruption, human rights violations, and war-making—can serve as critical factors driving wider political violence, including terrorism and violent extremism.

## Corruption

Corruption, political instability, and conflict are interrelated.[16] Corruption—the abuse of entrusted power for private gain[17]—lies at the heart of state conduct

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13   A powerful example can be found in the United States where widespread violence, including bombings and mass shootings, by individuals and groups associated with national socialist, white supremacist, and white nationalist movements against communities of color are not prioritized in any meaningful way under the P/CVE agenda despite their long-standing prevalence and the overwhelmingly disproportionate number of victims in relation to those by so-called violent extremists. See Anthony H. Cordesman, "Terrorism and Hate Crimes: Dealing With All of the Threats From Extremism," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/170705_Clean _Terrorism_Hate_Crimes.pdf?yg6otr8lgQ.MJ6lHyjO_pNkoqmXXyH8P.

14   For example, Arun Kundnani, "Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept," *Race and Class* 54, no. 2 (2012): 3–25; Donatella della Porta, "Social Movement Studies and Political Violence," Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation, September 2009, https://pure.au.dk/ws/files/32769489/H _fte_4_Donatella.pdf; Bart Schuurman and John G. Horgan, "Rationales for Terrorist Violence in Homegrown Jihadist Groups: A Case Study From the Netherlands," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 27 (March–April 2016), pp. 55–63; John Knefel, "Everything You've Been Told About Radicalization Is Wrong," *Rolling Stone*, 6 May 2013, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/everything-youve-been-told-about-radicalization-is-wrong-20130506 (quoting John Horgan).

15   Arun Kundnani, *A Decade Lost: Rethinking Radicalization and Extremism* (London: Claystone, 2015), p. 24. See Arun Kundnani, *The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror* (London: Verso, 2014); Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

16   See, inter alia, Sofia Wickberg, "Review of Literature on the Link Between Corruption, Poverty and Conflict, and Evidence of the Impact of Corruption on Donor Interventions," *U4 Expert Answer*, no. 357 (21 December 2012), https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/Review_of _literature_on_the_link_between_corruption__poverty_and_conflict__and_evidence_of_the_impact_of_corruption_on_donor_interventions_2013 .pdf.

17   Transparency International (TI), "What Is Corruption?" n.d., https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption#define (accessed 16 June 2018).

that can play a role in fueling political violence, including terrorism and violent extremism. Systems of corruption manifest themselves in numerous ways, from petty bribes demanded by local officials for access to public goods and services[18] to the grand corruption of patronage-based kleptocracies maintained for the benefit of a ruling clique[19] to the technically legal, "pay to play" style of governance where policy-making prerogatives are abused by an ultrawealthy elite for personal power and gain.[20] Operating at various levels, corruption or perceptions of it can fuel public grievances, undermine public perceptions of state legitimacy, erode public institutions and social resilience, undermine development, deepen socioeconomic inequality, and create obstacles to meaningful political participation.[21] The international security community has a history of dismissing corruption in favor of overarching security priorities, but there has been a growing recognition of the risks posed by severe corruption for engendering political instability and conflict, as well as violent extremism.[22]

Corruption can create "inherently unstable states that—even if they have the appearance of stability and wealth—run the long-term risk of conflict."[23] By absconding with public revenue or abusing public office for personal gain, corrupt leaders and governments gradually hollow out institutions of public welfare. Underfunded, poorly staffed, and owing their positions to political patrons, mid- and low-level public servants may instead turn to petty bribes to make ends meet or turn to rent seeking as a means for maintaining their privileged position within-patrimonial networks. Rather than functioning as a check on abuses of power and as impartial servants of

justice before the law, the courts and security services of corrupt regimes are frequently employed to safeguard the hegemony of the ruling elite, preserve economic and social inequities, and silence sources of opposition or dissent from the population writ large. Corrupt officials can abuse public budget allocations, siphoning money from much-needed development and infrastructure projects intended for economically deprived communities. Instead, they might dispense public contracts to fraudulent bidders in exchange for illicit returns or grant special dispensations to wealthy industrialists in exchange for their financial support during reelection campaigns. National financial institutions and industry regulators and private and state-owned enterprises may be manipulated by kleptocratic regimes to generate, plunder, and conceal illicit streams of revenue.[24] Left unchecked and unaccountable, ultrawealthy elites in the upper echelons of corrupt networks amass fortunes of ostentatious wealth while communities linger in economic stagnation or descend deeper into poverty.

The impact of severe corruption on the lives of ordinary people should come as no surprise: more precarious access to health care, education, living wage–paying jobs, security, and justice for certain communities; the anxiety and indignity that festers among those struggling to provide for themselves and their families and to live meaningful and fulfilling lives; and few means or avenues for ordinary people to constructively aspire to peaceful political change. The consequences are all the more severe among economically and socially disadvantaged and marginalized populations.

18  See Transparency International-Kenya, "The East African Bribery Index 2017," 2017, p. 4, https://tikenya.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/East-African-Bribery-Index-EABI-2017-1-1.pdf (police services in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda).

19  See Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2015) (Egypt and Tunisia under the governments of Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, respectively).

20  See TI, "Corruption in the USA: The Difference a Year Makes," 12 December 2017, https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_in_the_usa_the_difference_a_year_makes.

21  Alina Rocha Menocal and Nils Taxell, "Why Corruption Matters: Understanding Causes, Effects and How to Address Them," UK Department for International Development (DFID), January 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/406346/corruption-evidence-paper-why-corruption-matters.pdf; World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*, p. 6.

22  Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) Working Group on Corruption and Security, "Corruption: The Unrecognized Threat to International Security," June 2014, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/corruption_and_security.pdf.

23  Karolina MacLachlan et al., "The Fifth Column: Understanding the Relationship Between Corruption and Conflict," Transparency International UK, July 2017, p. 2, http://ti-defence.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The_Fifth_Column_Web.pdf.

24  For example, see International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, "The Panama Papers: Giant Leak of Offshore Financial Records Exposes Global Array of Crime and Corruption," 3 April 2016, https://www.icij.org/investigations/panama-papers/20160403-panama-papers-global-overview/; Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Equatorial Guinea: President's Son Convicted of Laundering Millions," 29 October 2017, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/29/equatorial-guinea-presidents-son-convicted-laundering-millions.

Widespread corruption and impunity are not just symptoms of a government's failure to fulfill its end of a social contract with the public. They cannot be reduced to an unfortunate but inevitable by-product of "fragile," "weak," or "poor" governance, as so often depicted in the parlance of international development. When examined objectively, governments functioning within systems of corruption must be understood as a deliberately organized form of structural violence against the communities that ostensibly entrusted them with the power to govern. As was powerfully demonstrated in the wave of political protests and regime changes that rocked the Middle East and North Africa in 2010–2012, when these contradictions are exposed in the consciousness of the public, the response can be explosive.[25] It is no coincidence that corruption and conflict frequently occur together.[26] The lowest-scoring countries on the annual Corruption Perceptions Index overwhelmingly tend to be among the least peaceful countries rated on the Global Peace Index.[27] In 2014 the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Working Group on Corruption and Security identified 51 security incidents strongly associated with widespread governmental corruption in 44 countries since 2008, ranging from sudden regime changes and coups to insurgencies and civil war.[28] Although the list was not comprehensive, the role that certain forms of severe corruption play in fomenting and exacerbating conflict cannot be ignored.

Corruption and its attendant effects have a real economic impact on the lives and livelihoods of its victims, but the resulting frustration and harm in the face of routine injustices can be a powerful mobilizer. A 2015 study on youth engagement in political violence in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Somalia revealed that state-perpetrated corruption, abuse, and everyday injustice are the principal factors driving youth toward insurgency and terrorism.[29] Drawing on a wealth of examples from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, and Yemen, Transparency International in 2017 discerned how violent extremist groups unambiguously tap into local anger at governmental exploitation and predation to agitate and swell their ranks.[30] Outrage and humiliation over endemic corruption and lack of recourse lie at the heart of many people's engagement in all manners of political activism, including movements engaged in political violence.[31] Indeed, injustice and corruption are central to the motivations of many popular protest movements and revolutions, as well as militant and violent extremist groups, throughout history.[32] In such cases, religion, far from being a vehicle for radicalization, provides a mechanism for expressing moral outrage in a commonly understood framework of meaning and offers divine remedy for everyday injustices in the absence of earthly avenues of redress.[33]

25   See, inter alia, Arab Barometer, "Arab Barometer III," n.d., http://www.arabbarometer.org/content/online-data-analysis (accessed 29 April 2018); Iffat Idris, "Analysis of the Arab Spring," *GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report*, no. 1350 (8 April 2016), http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04 /HDQ1350.pdf; Elena Ianchovichina, Lili Mottaghi, and Shantayanan Devarajan, "Inequality, Uprisings, and Conflict in the Arab World," *MENA Economic Monitor*, October 2015, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/303441467992017147/pdf/99989-REVISED-Box393220B-OUO-9 -MEM-Fall-2015-FINAL-Oct-13-2015.pdf.

26   A 2015 report stated that "[c]orruption is the only explanatory variable used in every model which shows consistent and significant correlations with a variety of key peace and violence indicators." IEP, "Peace and Corruption 2015," 2015, p. 2, http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06 /Peace-and-Corruption.pdf.

27   MacLachlan et al., "Fifth Column," p. 5.

28   CEIP Working Group on Corruption and Security, "Corruption," p. 13.

29   Mercy Corps, "Youth and Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice, and Violence," 2015, https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps _YouthConsequencesReport_2015.pdf.

30   Lt. Col. Dave Allen et al., "The Big Spin: Corruption and the Growth of Violent Extremism," Transparency International UK, February 2017, http://ti -defence.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The_Big_Spin_Web-1.pdf.

31   Sarah Chayes, "Corruption and Terrorism: The Causal Link," CEIP, 12 May 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/05/12/corruption-and -terrorism-causal-link-pub-63568.

32   Justice and Security Research Programme, Department of International Development, London School of Economics and Political Science, "Corruption, Protest, and Militancy," n.d., pp. 11–13, http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/JSRP/downloads/Corruption-Protest-Militancy .pdf (June 2015 seminar sponsored by the Justice and Security Research Programme, CEIP, and World Peace Foundation); Sarah Chayes, "Corruption: Violent Extremism, Kleptocracy, and the Dangers of Failing Governance" (testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 30 June 2016), https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/063016_Chayes_Testimony.pdf; Luke Waggoner and Eguiar Lizundia, "Is Systemic Corruption Driving Violent Extremism?" *Diplomatic Courier*, 26 May 2017, https://www.diplomaticourier.com/systemic-corruption-driving-violent-extremism/.

33   Chayes, *Thieves of State*, pp. 139–144, 156–171.

## Human Rights Abuse and Discrimination

Systems of unequal power relations are not sustained by corruption and gross inequality alone. States functioning on the basis of gross inequity often perpetuate widespread physical abuse and discrimination against their populations.[34] Such systems of abuse can flourish as much in strong, ostensibly democratic states[35] as they may in authoritarian[36] or weak and fragile states.[37] They maintain systems of structural violence, perpetuate mass incarceration, and extract forced labor from poor and marginalized communities. Some seek the complete or partial elimination of certain ethnic or religious groups from their territories and deny the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of particular groups on the basis of their identity. Many persecute and imprison journalists, activists, and human rights defenders whose work is at odds with the interests of the establishment. Extrajudicial killings, mass executions, sexual assault, torture, and other inhuman forms of treatment are employed widely and with impunity by the security services of many states. Under the banner of counterterrorism, governments have further legitimized infringements on human rights under the guise of exceptional security measures or states of emergency. States consider their monopoly on the use of force seriously, and they tend to generously apply it as their natural prerogative. Ultimately, human rights violations are key factors in the turbulent mixture that can lead to escalating forms of public protest and even political violence and terrorism.[38]

Unsurprisingly, human rights violations can fuel escalating tensions behind civil wars. An investigation into whether human rights abuses contribute to the risk of civil war found that "each step up the Political Terror Scale [PTS] associates with a 2.4 times increase in the odds of civil war onset the next year."[39] It also found that those states at the highest end of the scale are 80 times more likely to experience civil war than those at the lowest end.[40] Although repression and other human rights abuses may confer the benefits of short- to medium-term stability and safeguard the privilege and power of some corners of society embedded within the status quo, such violence, like corruption, inevitably undermines the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the public, fuels popular grievances, compromises the integrity of public institutions, deepens socioeconomic and political marginalization, prevents peaceful political participation, and deters peaceful efforts at collective problem solving. Under these circumstances, the risk of conflict has the potential to increase exponentially. In the face of public outrage and opposition to ongoing abuse or public mobilization to defend itself against abuse, the state's preference for employing more violence to stifle dissent rather than subject itself to a modicum of accountability can exacerbate the potential for conflict even further.[41]

When individuals and communities suffer violence, repression, and injustice at the hands of their governments and at the same time are denied any legitimate avenue of recourse, they may determine that violence

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34    See Andrea Huber, "Corruption Is a Significant Factor in Human Rights Violations in Many Criminal Justice Systems," Penal Reform International, 27 October 2014, https://www.penalreform.org/blog/corruption-significant-factor-human-rights-violations-many-criminal/.

35    UN General Assembly, *Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on Its Mission to the United States of America*, A/HRC/33/61/Add.2, 18 August 2016; Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012); Mark Jay, "Policing the Poor in Detroit," *Monthly Review* 68, no. 8 (1 January 2017).

36    UN News, "UN Experts Decry Saudi Arabia's Use of Anti-Terror Laws Against Peaceful Activists," 2 January 2018, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58373#.WleBTainGUk; HRW, "World Report 2017," 2017, pp. 510–518, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2017-web.pdf (Saudi Arabia).

37    Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016," n.d., https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265512.pdf (Somalia).

38    Charles Tilly, "From Mobilization to Revolution," *CSRO Working Paper*, no. 156 (March 1977), https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/50931/156.pdf; Nicholas Rost, "Human Rights Violations, Weak States, and Civil War," *Human Rights Review* 12, no. 4 (December 2011): 417–440; DFID, "Building Peaceful States and Societies: A DFID Practice Paper," 2010, pp. 21–23, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/con75.pdf.

39    Fearon, "Governance and Civil War Onset," p. 22. The PTS is a widely referenced data set that measures levels of state-perpetrated political violence and terror in a particular year based on a five-level scale. For more information, see Political Terror Scale, "The Political Terror Scale," n.d., http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/ (accessed 29 April 2018).

40    Fearon, "Governance and Civil War Onset," p. 22.

41    Thoms and Ron, "Do Human Rights Cause Internal Conflict?" p. 695; Alexei Anisin, "Violence Begets Violence: Why States Should Not Lethally Repress Popular Protest," *International Journal of Human Rights* 20, no. 7 (2016).

is one of the few tools at their disposal to free themselves from their oppressive situation. This is particularly the case in contexts where groups are targeted by governmental agents for abuse on the basis of ethnicity, language, religion, and other forms of identity.[42] Persecution of minority and marginalized groups often coinciding with the various consequences of gross economic inequality and sociopolitical exclusion are central underlying factors in many of the world's conflicts.[43] Furthermore, conflict tends to materialize and harden identity-based divisions in society, sowing the seeds for future discrimination and conflict. This dynamic was recently demonstrated by the rise in sectarianism that followed the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its subsequent de-Baathification agenda, which would ultimately prove a pivotal factor in the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).[44]

For nearly two decades, the global counterterrorism agenda itself has served as a vehicle for states to perpetrate human rights abuses against their populations. In response to the devastation witnessed in the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, the international community under the leadership of the United States committed itself to increasingly expansive military and civilian-led measures intended to "combat terrorism in all its forms." These efforts have given rise to a sprawling global proliferation of antiterrorism laws that provide authorities exceptional powers to circumvent human rights safeguards in the arrest, detention, investigation, and prosecution of individuals suspected of terrorism-related crimes.[45]

These laws and the agenda that drives them have been used by a number of states as another means of justification to rationalize legally and discursively, among other things, the persecution and criminalization of minority groups, the criminalization of public dissent and political opposition, the silencing of journalists and human rights defenders, the expansion of restrictions and scrutiny on civil society organizations, and the censoring of public and religious discourse.[46] Alongside these measures was the expanded power to surveil and gather intelligence on suspected violent extremists and ostensibly vulnerable communities. In the West, coinciding with the growing social prevalence and increasing intensity of xenophobia and Islamophobia following 9/11 and the "immigration crisis," these measures are overwhelmingly deployed against Muslim-identified immigrant and minority communities, at times in sweepingly broad nets and increasingly alongside P/CVE programs aimed at addressing the presumed psychosocial drivers of violent extremism.[47] In the backdrop of these activities and the dizzying expansion of related military interventions has been the prolonged and high-profile employment of torture and due process violations perpetrated most notably by the United States in its Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prison facilities against detainees suspected of terrorism-related activity.[48] Not only have these measures failed spectacularly in curbing terrorism and violent extremism over the past 17 years, this conduct may be further driving the very violence states portend to be countering. Abuses perpetrated by states under the guise of

42   Thoms and Ron, "Do Human Rights Cause Internal Conflict?" p. 692.

43   Clive Baldwin, Chris Chapman, and Zoë Gray, "Minority Rights: The Key to Conflict Prevention," Minority Rights Group International, May 2007, http://www.conflictrecovery.org/bin/mrg-humanrights-jun2007.pdf.

44   See Kari Jorgensen Diener and Beza Tesfaye, "Investing in Iraq's Peace: How Good Governance Can Diminish Support for Violent Extremism," Mercy Corps, December 2015, https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Investing%20in%20Iraqs%20Peace_Final%20Report.pdf.

45   See HRW, "In the Name of Security: Counterterrorism Laws Worldwide Since September 11," June 2012, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/global0612ForUpload_1.pdf; Eminent Jurists Panel on Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, "Assessing Damage, Urging Action," International Commission of Jurists, 2009, http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/specialmeetings/2011/docs/icj/icj-2009-ejp-report.pdf.

46   See Arun Kundnani and Ben Hayes, "The Globalisation of Countering Violent Extremism Policies: Undermining Human Rights, Instrumentalising Civil Society," Transnational Institute, February 2018, https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/the_globalisation_of_countering_violent_extremism_policies.pdf; American Bar Association Center for Human Rights, "Persecuting Human Rights Defenders in the Name of Counterterrorism," n.d., https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/human_rights/counterterrorism_human_rights_advocacy.authcheckdam.pdf; UN General Assembly, "Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression: Note by the Secretary-General," A/71/373, 6 September 2016 (transmitting the report of the Special Rapporteur).

47   For example, see Matt Apuzo and Joseph Goldstein, "New York Drops Unit That Spied on Muslims," *New York Times*, 15 April 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/16/nyregion/police-unit-that-spied-on-muslims-is-disbanded.html (New York Police Department's now-defunct Demographics Unit). In general, see Kundnani, *Muslims Are Coming!*

48   HRW, "Getting Away With Torture: The Bush Administration and Mistreatment of Detainees," July 2011, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/us0711webwcover_1.pdf.

countering terrorism are not lost on violent extremist groups, who use such examples as fodder for their messaging in recruitment campaigns.[49]

The question is, Are efforts against terrorism better served by countering the narrative that state conduct is discriminatory, oppressive, and abusive or countering discriminatory, oppressive, and abusive state conduct? The second option is the obvious choice. That high levels of government-perpetrated human rights abuses strongly correlate with terrorist activity is well documented. The 2016 Global Terrorism Index revealed that around 93 percent of all terrorist attacks between 1989 and 2014 occurred in countries with "extensive political terror."[50] When examining the dynamics of violent extremism in Africa in 2017, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) found that "a sense of grievance towards, and limited confidence in, government is … associated with the highest incidence of recruitment to violent extremism."[51] Surveying former members of terrorist groups on the primary tipping point that motivated them to voluntarily join, UNDP further found that 71 percent of respondents identified the actions of governments, including state-perpetrated violence, as the most prominent factor.[52] In other words, state conduct "appears to be the primary factor finally pushing individuals into violent extremism in Africa."[53] Similar conclusions have been drawn when analyzing Islamist violence in Kenya, Mali, and Nigeria, indicating that the sudden intensification of otherwise long-standing discrimination by the state; high levels of economic, political, and social grievances; prior violence between the state and the community; and limited peaceful avenues for change all but guarantee that some will respond to this violence with violence as their strategy for countering state repression.[54]

## Militarism, War-Making and 'Collateral Damage'

There are no forms of organized violence more destructive, brutal, and extreme than those perpetrated by the military forces of contemporary states. From Libya to Somalia, Yemen to Syria, and Iraq to Afghanistan, whole populations have been traumatized by more than a century of conflict stemming from colonialism, the clientelism of the Cold War and the neoliberal order that emerged in its wake, and the new era of perpetual global war on terrorism.[55] Just as daily experiences of routine corruption and human rights abuses pass with little notice or recognition outside the lived experience of the victims and their communities, so too has the conduct of states engaged in and supporting internecine wars, invasions, and occupations. Yet, military adventures waged by powerful states or states armed and sponsored by powerful states cause untold misery and suffering far beyond the direct casualties on the battlefield. Mass civilian killings and conflict-related dislocation, famine, and disease are extensive in contemporary conflicts. Physicians for Social Responsibility estimates that 1.3 million people have been killed in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan during the first 12 years of the global war on terrorism, a vast majority of which can be attributed to the actions of the U.S.-led coalition.[56] The death toll is not inclusive of the innocent lives and livelihoods destroyed in the expanded U.S.-led global war on terrorism—drone

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49   For example, see Thérèse Postel, "How Guantanamo Bay's Existence Helps Al-Qaeda Recruit More Terrorists," *Atlantic*, 12 April 2013. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/how-guantanamo-bays-existence-helps-al-qaeda-recruit-more-terrorists/274956/.

50   IEP, "Global Terrorism Index 2016: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism," *IEP Report*, no. 43 (November 2016), p. 72, http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf (drawing on the quantitative data sets compiled by PTS and the Global Terrorism Database).

51   UN Development Programme, *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, 2017, http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf.

52   Ibid., p. 73.

53   Ibid. See Siobhan O'Neil and Kato van Broeckhoven, eds., "Cradled by Conflict: Child Involvement With Armed Groups in Contemporary Conflict," UN University, n.d., p. 17, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Cradled_by_Conflict.pdf.

54   Dowd, "Grievances, Governance and Islamist Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa," p. 523.

55   See, inter alia, Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007); Andrew Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History* (New York: Random House, 2016); Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars: The World Is a Battlefield* (New York: Nation Books, 2013).

56   Physicians for Social Responsibility, "Body Count: Casualty Figures After 10 Years of the 'War on Terror,'" March 2015, p. 15, https://www.psr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/body-count.pdf.

wars and assassination programs in East Africa, the Sahel, Yemen, and elsewhere[57]—those of the wars against ISIL in Syria and Iraq over the past five years, or those of the U.S.-supported, Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.[58]

In his critique of the responsibility to protect doctrine in the context of the history of Western colonialism in the Middle East, academic Mojtaba Mahdavi writes, "Western intervention in the region during the Cold War and … in the post-Cold War/post-9/11 era fostered and cultivated the root causes of violent extremism in the region [by] prioritizing stability over democracy, and geopolitics over human rights."[59] Unlike corruption and human rights abuses, there is very little convincing necessary to draw connections between war-making and the furtherance of violent conflict. War and mass state-perpetrated killings are themselves factors precipitating, indicative of, and assuming conditions of violence and conflict. Yet, it is important to consider the ways that war-making by powerful states often exacerbates conditions of conflict and gives rise to future conflict.

Against the backdrop of Western subjugation and the political and economic subordination and exploitation of communities in Africa and the greater Middle East leading up to and following the First World War, the example of the global war on terrorism provides ample evidence that armed interventions by or with the support of powerful states have precipitated and exacerbated further political violence.[60] Recalling that conflict is never the result of any single factor and each must be examined in the complexity of local context, patterns of proximate causal factors can nevertheless be observed. In the final years of the Cold War, U.S. support to the Afghan insurgency against the invasion of the Soviet Union would give birth to al-Qaida. The U.S. invasion of Iraq under manufactured pretexts in 2003 directly precipitated the rise of al-Qaida in Iraq and subsequent Iraqi civil war.[61] The U.S.-supported Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006 directly precipitated the rise of al-Shabaab, sowing the seeds for more than a decade of political violence.[62] NATO air strikes that aided the toppling of Muammar Qadhafi in 2011 precipitated the rise of ISIL in Libya.[63] The U.S.-led coalition's installation of corrupt and ineffectual governments in Afghanistan and Iraq following its initial invasions fueled the ongoing Taliban insurgency and the rise of ISIL, respectively.[64] The list could go on. Far from any ostensible objective of stability and peace, state-perpetrated war-making has tended to reproduce the very violence, instability, and extremism against which it purports to be waging war.

Although state perpetrators frequently refer to their victims—that is, in the rare instances they are acknowledged as such[65]—as "collateral damage," the term does nothing to palliate or disguise the carnage wrought by the military adventures of powerful states. When civilian lives and livelihoods are destroyed by the wonton and indiscriminate violence of state military action, it leaves in its wake rightfully aggrieved family members, friends, and communities. The mounting number of civilian deaths plays directly

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57   Scahill, *Dirty Wars*.

58   More than 10,000 have been killed, including at least 5,000 civilians, by U.S.-supported, Saudi-led coalition bombings. As a result of the Saudi blockade and systematic targeting of Yemen's public infrastructure, more than 1 million Yemenis are afflicted with cholera, and millions are facing famine. Sophia Akram, "It's Time to Get Real About the Death Toll in Yemen," *New Arab*, 29 December 2017, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/12/29/its-time-to-get-real-about-yemens-death-toll.

59   Mojtaba Mahdavi, "A Postcolonial Critique of the Responsibility to Protect in the Middle East," *Perceptions* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 13.

60   See Jordan Street and Murray Ackman, "Counter-Terrorism: Who Will Act on Evidence in 2018?" Saferworld, 16 January 2018, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/752-counter-terrorism-who-will-act-on-evidence-in-2018.

61   Garikai Chengu, "America Created Al-Qaeda and the ISIS Terror Group," Global Research, 19 September 2014, https://www.globalresearch.org/america-created-al-qaeda-and-the-isis-terror-group/5402881.

62   International Crisis Group (ICG), "Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?" *Africa Report*, no. 116 (10 August 2006), p. i, https://www.crisisgroup.org/file/2620/download?token=P_GZexxy.

63   Jon Lee Anderson, "ISIS Rises in Libya," *New Yorker*, 4 August 2015, https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/isis-rises-in-libya.

64   See Hesta Groenewald, "'Hammering the Bread and the Nail': Lessons From Counter-Terror, Stabilisation, and Statebuilding in Afghanistan," Saferworld, January 2016, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/hammering-the-bread-and-the-nail.pdf; Diener and Tesfaye, "Investing in Iraq's Peace."

65   See Azmat Khan and Anand Gopa, "The Uncounted," *New York Times Magazine*, 16 November 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/16/magazine/uncounted-civilian-casualties-iraq-airstrikes.html.

into the hands of those who present themselves as the only means of protection against the war-making of powerful states.[66] Even without the prodding and propaganda of recruiters, many will inevitably take up arms for revenge, retribution, or defense on their own. The story of Mohammed Daoud Sharabuddin is illustrative of this point.[67] Daoud was an ethnic Dari police commander who along with his family and community was closely allied with the U.S.-led coalition against the Taliban and the Haqqani network in Patkia province, Afghanistan. On the night of 12 February 2010, he and six members of his family were murdered, with several others abducted, in a nighttime assault by U.S. Special Forces. Realizing they may have made a mistake, the soldiers allegedly used their field knifes to remove the bullets from the dead in an attempt to cover up their role in the massacre. The Pentagon would later acknowledge that Daoud's house was targeted in error and that the units involved did not follow standard procedure in conducting the operation, eventually issuing a formal apology to Daoud's family. Daoud's father refused to accept the apology from the United States, declaring that "Americans themselves are [the] terrorists. Americans are our enemies. They bring terror and destruction."[68] The U.S. apology was also of little consolation to Daoud's brother, Mohammed Zahir, one of those abducted during the raid, who admitted, "I wanted to wear a suicide jacket and blow myself up among the Americans. … I wanted jihad [holy war] against the Americans."[69] Despite the allusion to the theological concept of *jihad* ("spiritual struggle," or in this case the physical connotation of holy war), Zahir's sentiment can hardly be argued to be the product of a "process of radicalization to violent extremism." Rather, his expressed intention is a direct response to state-perpetrated violence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

If terrorism is the product of a conflict mutually constituted by states and nonstates, then the relational aspect of this violence requires an investigation into "the ways in which … states themselves became radicalized—as much as Islamist political movements—both becoming more willing to use violence in a wider range of contexts."[70] Yet, what would the global P/CVE agenda look like if the violent conduct of governments was understood as an equally or potentially more powerful factor in driving membership to terrorist groups than the subjective appeal of select radical ideologies in terrorist narratives propaganda? Such an agenda at the very least would suggest a need to prioritize an investigation into the ideological presuppositions that perpetuate governmental violence against individuals, small groups, and communities currently the focus of the mainstream P/CVE agenda and, better still, the policies and actions that meaningfully alter that conduct. Counternarratives that attempt to palliate or obscure the violent conduct of states do not alleviate the suffering of those who suffer or render unjust conduct just in the eyes of the aggrieved. If the international community is serious about addressing conditions conducive to violence and human insecurity, states must begin by addressing their own roles in perpetrating violence. This understanding is essential for charting a new course away from the recycled counterterrorism strategies of the past decade and toward a more effective response.

Although not discounting the utility of appropriately tailored, evidence-based tools for effective intervention to prevent and respond to individual acts of violence,[71] the trajectory and growth of the international

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66    See Tom Pettinger, "What Is the Impact of Foreign Military Intervention on Radicalization?" *Journal for Deradicalization* 1, no. 5 (Winter 2015/2016).

67    Scahill, *Dirty Wars*, pp. 334–346.

68    Ibid., p. 346.

69    Ibid., p. 339.

70    Kundnani, *Muslims Are Coming!* p. 104.

71    See Peter Romaniuk, "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned From the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism," Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2015, http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Does-CVE-Work_2015.pdf.

counterterrorism and P/CVE industries and policy agendas have largely proven a failure in addressing rising levels of political violence. Instead of puzzling over the psychosocial pathways to violent extremism and innovative messaging to counter extremist narratives, P/CVE practitioners and states should engage in an objective examination of the mutually constitutive nature of state and nonstate violence. Indeed, human rights, people-focused justice and security, equitable economic development, accountable institutions, and good governance are widely recognized as essential for sustainable gains against violent conflict and terrorism.[72] Gains will only be possible, however, when governments are willing to examine, account for, and alter their conduct in meaningful ways. The following policy recommendations may help facilitate a process to reorient the existing P/CVE agenda and to develop a more effective approach to prevention.

## 1. Deexceptionalize the counterterrorism and P/CVE agendas.

The insistence on treating terrorism and violent extremism as unique and exceptional forms of violence has undermined the formulation and adoption of effective policy and programming responses to proliferating political violence in recent decades. This has largely defined the international agenda on counterterrorism and P/CVE. Yet, mainstream understandings of terrorism and violent extremism are deeply intertwined with powerful state interests. Any serious effort requires a sea change in how ruling elites and institutions view terrorism and violent extremism. It falls to international civil society and community organizations, academia, and the media to work alongside more open-minded mid- and senior-level policymakers and bureaucrats at the national level and in international organizations to continue to challenge and advocate alternatives to the hegemonic discourses behind the exceptionalization of domestic and global counterterrorism and P/CVE agendas.

## 2. Fund the undertaking and dissemination of research to identify and present alternatives to mainstream counterterrorism and P/CVE agendas.

Informing and persuading policymakers to move beyond deeply entrenched understandings of terrorism and violent extremism requires not only evidence-based arguments but also the endorsement of influential champions to legitimize the research in otherwise insular and exclusive policy circles, as well as credible messengers that articulate these findings in ways that speak to their interests.

As states have generally proven reluctant to allocate many resources to question the rationale and consistency of their own counterterrorism and P/CVE agendas,[73] it falls to concerned charitable foundations and philanthropic and academic institutions to fund and help disseminate lessons learned from the work being done to challenge the mainstream P/CVE agenda.

A growing body of empirical and policy research produced by civil society organizations and social scientists is already calling into question the prevailing assumptions that underpin the mainstream P/CVE agenda. A network, knowledge hub, or consortia of like-minded organizations and academics can leverage their respective strengths, develop strategic priorities, share resources, collect and share lessons learned, and identify funding opportunities to more effectively advocate policy change.

## 3. Demand greater state accountability for peace, human rights, and anticorruption goals.

War-making, human rights abuses, and systemic corruption are manifestations of violence by

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72  See David Keen and Larry Attree, "Dilemmas of Counter-Terror, Stabilisation, and Statebuilding," Saferworld, January 2015, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/875-dilemmas-of-counter-terror-stabilisation-and-statebuilding; Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and Martin Scheinin, "Centralizing Human Rights in the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy," Just Security, 16 March 2018, https://www.justsecurity.org/53583/centralizing-human-rights-global-counter-terrorism-strategy/.

73  See Derek M.D. Silva, "'Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept,' Revisited," *Race and Class* 59, no. 4 (2018): 34–53.

governments against the public, driving further violence and conflict. As state resources are increasingly being earmarked to address growing violence and conflict under the rubric of largely ineffectual counterterrorism and P/CVE agendas, civil society, the media, and the private sector, where possible, must bear the burden of questioning the validity of broken policies and demand accountability from member states. At the national level, where such organizing is not subject to state repression, unions of concerned human rights defenders, community members, journalists, academics, and other civil society representatives can play a powerful role in educating the public about its rights and the actions of its government at home and abroad and building coalitions for accountable governance, for example, by demanding robust whistleblower protections for public servants, private sector contractors, and journalists exposing human rights abuses and corruption to the public.

International organizations such as the United Nations have served as influential forums for articulating global norms and fostering shared international commitments to peace, human rights, and anticorruption goals. Despite their best intentions, these organizations have also played a considerable role in legitimizing the exceptionalization of terrorism and counterterrorism agendas. The United Nations and other international organizations need to begin reigning in their ever-expanding counterterrorism regimes and repurpose the expertise, political capital, and financial resources toward broader and more meaningful international governance, development, and peace and security goals.

For their part, member states that have long viewed themselves as champions of the international human rights agenda must decide whether this support is merely lip service to liberal sentiment to be abandoned as the political winds change or is of principles that transcend politics that must be defended in practice irrespective of ever-evolving political interests.

## 4. Prioritize human security over vague notions of "resilience to violent extremism."

The objectives of countering violent extremism are better achieved when policy, institutional, and program interventions encompass diverse and interconnected forms of violence and oppression, including structural and physical violence perpetrated by state actors to the detriment of human security. Violence reduction interventions that arbitrarily and selectively target violent extremism are disingenuous when they ignore the corruption, human rights abuses, conflict, and other forms of violence to which communities are subjected. When terrorism and violent extremism are de-exceptionalized and deprioritized, many communities are deeply impacted by diverse forms of violence and insecurity. Policy and programming interventions to reduce this insecurity should not be undertaken in communities on the basis of their presumed vulnerability to violent extremism but on the basis of and in accordance with their human security needs. Community-based programs are also less likely to be or be perceived as discriminatory when delivered without the prejudices inherent in a mainstream P/CVE agenda that deems community members at risk of committing acts of violence on the basis of their identity.

## 5. Protect and expand avenues for ordinary people to pursue and achieve political change peacefully.

A peaceful society requires mechanisms that allow all society members to hold government accountable, air and redress grievances, facilitate peace and reconciliation between and among communities and the state, and effectively achieve economic, social, and political change. Direct plebiscites, publicly funded election campaigns, independent community-based courts, and an educated public supported by a vibrant and independent civil society, media, and advocacy groups are examples of

institutional mechanisms and platforms that can foster inclusive public engagement in making change and provide a robust bulwark against governmental corruption and abuse.

## 6. Prioritize improving lives and livelihoods over countering ideas and narratives.

Shifts in international policy priorities and governmental donor funding toward the counterterrorism and P/CVE agenda for more than a decade have induced many international and nongovernmental humanitarian and good governance organizations to frame their international programming work in ways that speak to the counterterrorism and P/CVE agenda in order to remain relevant. Nevertheless, lessons from the field have demonstrated that individual circumstances and lived experiences dealing with diverse manifestations of human insecurity are often found to be far more relevant than radical ideological narratives in driving violence.[74]

The development, governance, and human rights agendas may be better placed than traditional narrative-based P/CVE interventions to achieve the preventive objectives sought under P/CVE.[75] Dismantling institutions and policies that fuel grievances and promote armed conflict, promoting and facilitating dialogue between and among parties in conflict, and supporting transformative governance reform efforts[76] are no less critical to P/CVE than any other form of political violence. Rather than redirecting critical funds toward identity-, narrative-, and ideology-based interventions, these resources would be better served in programs focusing on supporting communities working to strengthen the inclusiveness and accountability of the institutions on which they depend for their security and well-being.

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74  For example, see Mercy Corps, "Peace and Conflict," n.d., https://www.mercycorps.org/research/peace-and-conflict (accessed 6 May 2018); Saferworld, "Resources," n.d., https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/search?search=1&theme[]=Counterterrorism (accessed 6 May 2018) (counterterrorism topics).

75  See Saferworld, "Overview: Lessons on Counter-Terror and Countering Violent Extremism," July 2017, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources /publications/1131-overview-lessons-on-counter-terror-and-countering-violent-extremism; Mercy Corps, "Youth and Consequences."

76  Keen and Attree, "Dilemmas of Counter-Terror, Stabilisation, and Statebuilding," pp. 41–46.

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