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Countering Violent Extremism

Applying the Public Health Model

October 2016

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Countering violent extremism (CVE) has become an increasingly important pillar of national security policy in the United States and was even highlighted in the 2015 National Security Strategy as "more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield".[1] However, CVE is an evolving concept for both policymakers and practitioners alike.[2] Part of Georgetown University's Center for Security Studies, the National Security Critical Issues Task Force (NSCITF) produced this report to provide a comprehensive framework to better conceptualize and implement of CVE. The NSCITF's framework for CVE is based on the public health model, which categorizes prevention into primary, secondary, and tertiary activities.[3] Using the public health model for CVE, the United States Government (USG) and its partners would be better able to define the CVE mission, assign responsibilities for its implementation, and engage effectively in combined action for its execution.

Summary of Key Findings

1. CVE has an unclear definition, mission, and leadership structure (see page 7).
2. Violent extremism shares risk factors with other social ills, enabling the use of pre-existing capabilities and resources in its prevention (see page 8).
3. A multi-sector and non-discriminatory approach enables a holistic strategy using multiple capabilities (see page 10).
4. Success remains difficult to quantify; the lack of meaningful metrics to evaluate CVE initiatives complicates evidence-based program design and funding decisions (see page 11).

[1] The White House, "2015 National Security Strategy," (2015).
[2] See key finding #1.
[3] For public health model, see Green, L. A., et al., "Ecology of medical care," (2001): 5.

The Public Health Model for CVE

The NSCITF selected the public health model framework for CVE because the model emphasizes proactive engagement to evaluate, address, and mitigate the wide-ranging dynamics of violent extremism. As it relates to CVE, the public health model defines strategies and activities using a framework of primary, secondary and tertiary approaches (see page 19):

> **Primary Prevention** is a broad approach directed toward society as a whole. Success at this level mitigates the root causes of extremist behavior by addressing social grievances that can drive populations to violent extremism. Activities of primary prevention include education, health services, social engagement, cultural awareness, and personal development programs.
>
> **Secondary Prevention** focuses on individuals and groups identified as at-risk for violent extremism. Success at this level stops any radicalization progression and reduces the potential for future radicalization. Activities of secondary prevention include intervention, community engagement, and counter-messaging.
>
> **Tertiary Prevention** is a targeted approach directed toward radicalized individuals or groups who are actively planning attacks or recruiting for a violent extremist cause. Success at this level prevents violence and neutralizes the individual or group's ability to carry out violence. Activities of tertiary prevention include disengagement, de-radicalization, isolation, and redirection.

Recommendations

1. Adopt the public health model to define, analyze, and implement CVE (see page 21).
2. Identify and communicate a clear CVE leadership structure (see page 21).
3. Define the roles and responsibilities of government agencies and partners with respect to CVE programs (see page 22).
4. Prioritize and make strategic choices on CVE resources and capabilities (see page 22).

II. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The NSCITF developed its findings and recommendations through substantive research on existing CVE literature, applied programs, and interviews with experts. Existing literature surveyed included open-source academic, policy, and media reports on CVE, along with strategic plans from USG agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and foreign government studies. The NSCITF researched formal program evaluations and literature on past and current CVE initiatives in over 18 countries, including the United States. The NSCITF also interviewed over 25 policymakers, experts, and program implementers to understand the current perceptions, practices, and challenges in CVE.

The NSCITF examined current CVE practice and policy to understand the CVE mission, its evaluation metrics, and perceptions of violent radicalization. The NSCITF began by examining the various definitions, concepts, and missions as described by policymakers and practitioners. Further, the NSCITF surveyed the causal factors for individuals' radicalization and examined community responses to CVE programs. Additionally, the NSCITF surveyed evaluation metrics currently used by practitioners and policymakers. Beyond traditional CVE frameworks, the NSCITF also surveyed various public health programs to understand if similar activities could apply to CVE.

Several organizations and individuals were also critical to the success of the project. The NSCITF relied on work by other organizations in the field such as the University of Maryland National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, George Washington University's Program on Extremism, the Department of State's Hedayah Center, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Fordham Law Center on National Security, and Georgetown University's previous work on Lone Wolf Terrorism (see bibliography on page 26). The NSCITF also owes a debt of gratitude to the staff of the *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, specifically Editor-in-Chief Robert Morgan Byrne-Diakun, for editing the manuscript of this report.

III. CVE BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

Although the United States' National Security Strategy (NSS) has only recently focused on CVE, European programs and international law established the groundwork for modern CVE in the late 20th century. An early example was the European EXIT program in Norway, Sweden, and Germany during the 1980s that focused on community and law enforcement efforts to dissuade or disengage right wing violent extremists.[4] Likewise, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe was the first international body to recognize that "tackling root causes of terrorism" was critical in the wake of 9/11, when the United State's response primarily focused on conventional counterterrorism.[5] The United Kingdom created one of the first national-level CVE programs to counter homegrown violent extremism in 2006, with a specific emphasis on Islamic extremism.[6] Although the United States has extensive experience with violent radicals from the Weather Underground to modern Islamic Terrorism, there have been few unified national efforts to counter violent extremism.

In the last five years, however, the USG has sought to unify domestic CVE approaches into an overarching national policy. The first modern U.S. CVE programs began in the mid-2000s with ad-hoc approaches like the Montgomery County Model, an inter-faith NGO-led program, that sought to develop a community-based approach to intervention and de-radicalization.[7] In 2011, the White House drew national policy attention to these incipient efforts by releasing a strategy document focused on empowering local communities to prevent violent extremism.[8] Two years later, the United States established three nationally sponsored pilot programs to test community-based CVE efforts in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. In 2015, the White House drew international attention to CVE with a summit of international leaders to build awareness of CVE, counter extremist narratives, and emphasize community-led efforts. However, US strategy on CVE remains embryonic, despite its inclusion in the 2015 NSS and the foundation of a joint CVE Task Force in early 2016.[9]

[4] Demant, Froukje, et al., "Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalization," (2008).
[5] OSCE, "Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization," (2014).
[6] Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom, "The Prevent Strategy," (2011).
[7] Evans et. al., "Evaluation of a Multi-Faceted, U.S. Community Based, Muslim-Led CVE Program," (2016).
[8] The White House, "Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners," (2011).
[9] Department of Homeland Security, "Countering Violent Extremism Task Force," (2016).

The United State's hesitance can be attributed to several challenging issues, foremost, that CVE is difficult to define and distinguish from counterterrorism. In its research, the NSCITF found that the USG does not share a specific definition or vision for CVE.[10] While the scope of this report does not include a unified definition, the NSCITF's working definition is that CVE refers to activities that prevent individuals from radicalizing, adopting violent extremist ideologies, and engaging in terrorist activities.[11] However, this definition is not universally accepted.[12] CVE's emerging nature means that most programs are loosely defined, locally based, and understand common CVE activities in diverse ways.[13] Adding to the challenge is the fact that policy and practice inexorably link counterterrorism and CVE such as in several national programs like the UK's Channel.[14] The challenge in defining and distinguishing CVE from other activities is one of the main obstacles to establishing an effective national policy.

Another central challenge is the fact that CVE activities aim to alter the nearly unknowable in dissimilar groups and individuals. At its core, violent extremism is the beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that individuals or groups use to justify violence to achieve political goals.[15] While behaviors are observable, it is intensely difficult to identify beliefs or feelings that will cause future violent behavior.[16] Further, violent radicalization occurs in the extremes of the political spectrum, and includes both secular and religious movements.[17] In the last 30 years, violent radical groups that identified with right wing, new left, single issue and ethno-separatist ideals have all perpetrated violence in the United States.[18] Additionally, individual adherents vary widely in character. Adherents from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have come from various age, gender, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds.[19] The myriad challenges associated with recognizing a violent extremist make CVE activities challenging to calibrate, concentrate, and prioritize.

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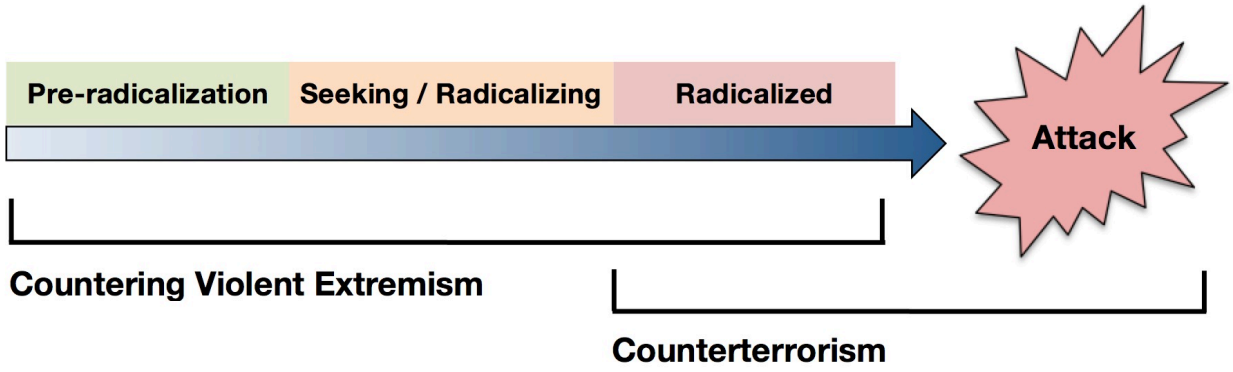
[10] See key finding #1.
[11] Mastroe, Caitlin and Susan Szmania, "Surveying CVE Metrics in Prevention, Disengagement, and Deradicalization," (2016).
[12] Department of Homeland Security, *DHS Lexicon: Terms and Definitions*, (2016).
[13] Fink, Romaniuk and Barakat, "Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism Programming," (2013).
[14] Hussain, Ghaffar, "Countering Extremism: Learning from the United Kingdom Model," (2015).
[15] McCauley & Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization," (2008).
[16] Taylor, John and Michael Horgan, "A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Processes," (2006).
[17] Bruce Hoffman, interview by authors, 15 June 2016; and Gumbel, Andrew, "Domestic Terrorism Threat in the US," (2015).
[18] Gumbel, Andrew (Ibid); and Southern Poverty Law Center, "SPLC Database on US Hate Groups," (Accessed 2016).
[19] For examples, see Engel, Richard, "ISIS Files: What Leaked Documents Reveal," (2016); and Center on National Security at Fordham Law, "ISIS Cases in the United States," (2015).

Another challenge is that the process of violent radicalization has few universal indicators or attributes. While some research has attempted to develop a universal variable to aggregate radicalization indicators, the broader academic consensus is that several causal mechanisms contribute to individuals embracing political violence.[20] The NSCITF found the multi-variable model used by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to be the most compelling model for understanding radicalization. This model identifies five broad factors for radicalization: personal, group, community, sociopolitical, and ideological.[21] Further frustration, feelings of relative deprivation, and a desire to catalyze a greater movement translate radicalized sentiments to asymmetric political violence.[22] These push and pull factors combine as individuals progress through pre-radicalized, seeking, and radicalized phases prior to an attack or the provision of material support to a violent extremist group (see Figure 1). Post-radicalization, some individuals may also pass through disengagement and de-radicalization phases if they transition away from the group. CVE activities are concerned with each one of these phases, despite the challenges inherent in this space.[23]

Figure 1: CVE as related to counterterrorism and radicalization phases



[20] For discussion, see King, Michael and Donald Taylor, "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists," (2011); Silber, M.D. and A. Bhatt, "Radicalization in the West," (2007); and McCauley & Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization," (2008).
[21] Patel, Faiza, "Rethinking Radicalization," (*2011)*; and Kumar, Ramakrishna, *Islamist Terrorism and Militancy in Indonesia*, (2014).
[22] For examples, see Gurr, Ted, *Why Men Rebel*, (1970): 3-21; and Gaventa, John, *Power and Powerlessness*, (1980): 3-32.
[23] Mastroe, Caitlin and Susan Szmania, "Surveying CVE Metrics in Prevention, Disengagement, and Deradicalization," (2016).

IV. KEY FINDINGS

1. CVE Has an Unclear Definition, Mission, and Leadership Structure

CVE has an unclear definition, mission, and leadership structure. First, there is no consensus on how to define the CVE mission in the USG (see Figure 2). For instance, the DHS CVE policy focuses on mitigating or preventing terrorist activities, while the Department of State focuses on alleviating root causes. The NSCITF's research into the term CVE and its mission uncovered no single, authoritative definition that encompassed all of its facets. A common definition would allow for better communication between different organizations and individuals. The lack of a cohesive definition causes counterproductive programs and unclear results.[24]

Without a coherent mission to provide direction, no USG agency can properly take ownership of CVE activities. The absence of organization can result in confusion, poor coordination, a failure to share ideas, and slow decision-making.[25] The Obama Administration sought to provide greater national policy leadership by creating the CVE Task Force in January 2016, but an inadequate structure will likely limit its effectiveness. While DHS administers the task force, DoJ jointly shares the leadership role; the two agencies rotate as the lead for the CVE Task Force on an annual basis.[26] In addition to differing opinions on CVE's definition, alternating leadership hampers effective action. Several studies of private sector companies demonstrate that long-term leadership enables innovative approaches and sustainable strategies.[27]

[24] McCants, William, and Clint Watts, "US Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism," (2012).
[25] Corkindale, Gill, "The Importance of Organizational Design and Structure," (2011).
[26] Department of Homeland Security, "Countering Violent Extremism Task Force," (2016).
[27] Wesser, Maxwell, "The Most Innovative Companies Have Long-Term Leadership," (2014).

Figure 2: Various USG Agency Descriptions of CVE[28] [29] [30] [31]

Organization	Description of CVE
Department of Homeland Security	Approach to mitigating or preventing potential terrorist activity; emphasizes the strength of local communities via engagement with a broad range of partners to gain a better understanding of the behaviors, tactics, and other indicators associated with terrorist activity.
Department of Justice	A realm of policy, programs, and interventions designed to prevent individuals from engaging in violence associated with radical political, social, cultural, and religious ideologies and groups
Department of State	Conducting proactive actions to address the conditions that enable violent extremist recruitment and radicalization
The White House	The preventative aspects of counterterrorism as well as interventions to undermine the attraction of extremist movements and ideologies that seek to promote violence; efforts address the root causes of extremism through community engagement
US Agency for International Development	Proactive actions to address the conditions that enable violent extremist recruitment and radicalization

2. Violent Extremism Shares Causes and Risk Factors with Other Social Ills

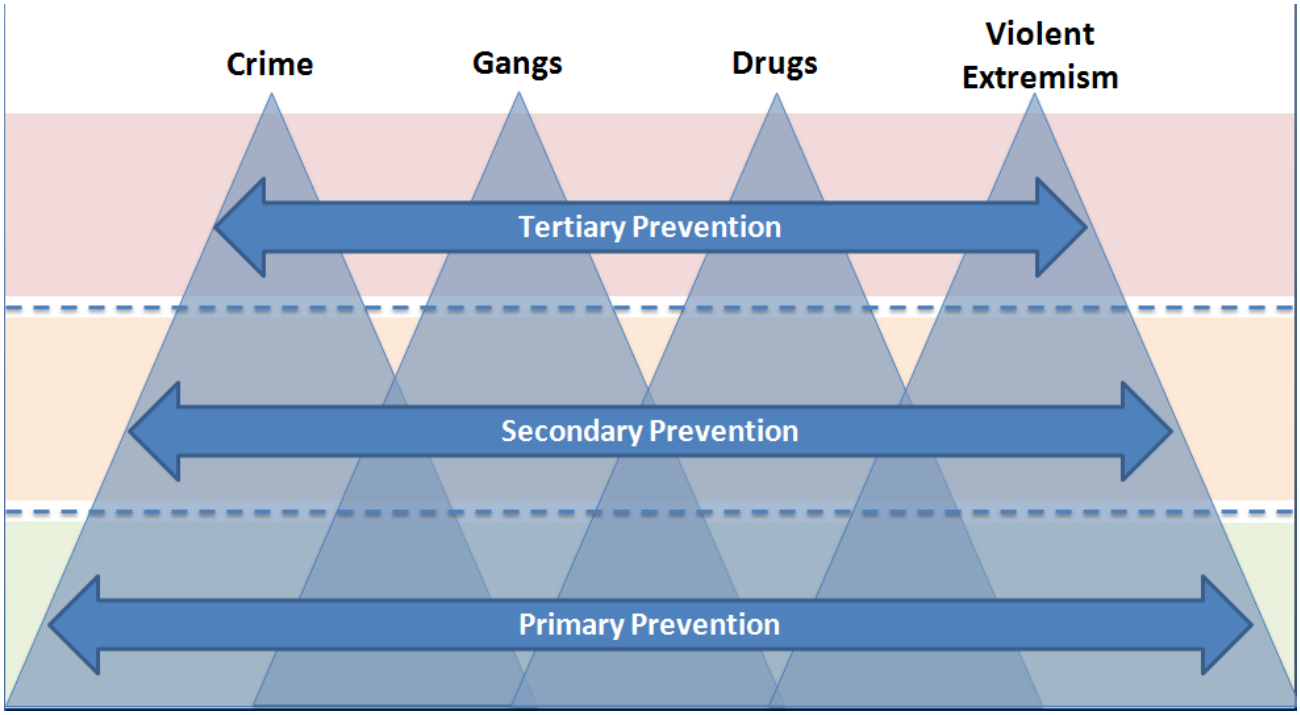
Violent extremism shares risk factors with other social ills, enabling the use of pre-existing capabilities and resources. While individuals embrace political violence for a variety of reasons, complex social issues, such as economic inequality or racial discrimination, increase risk factors for violent extremism.[32] Several radicalization models highlight the relative deprivation between an individual's aspirations and capabilities as significant to violent radicalization.[33] While macro-level factors in society are not the sole reason for feelings of relative deprivation, even individuals who do not directly experience them can have a sympathetic reaction or use the circumstance as justification for violence.[34] For instance, Muslim youth in Europe often describe themselves as victims of prejudice in the workplace and in society.[35] These attitudes are rooted in reality; a 2006 study by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights found that minorities and immigrants experienced greater levels of unemployment, representation in the least desirable

[28] Department of Homeland Security, *DHS Lexicon: Terms and Definitions*, (2016).
[29] Weine, Stevan and William Braniff, "Report on the National Summit on Empowering Communities," (2015).
[30] The White House, "Fact Sheet: The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism," (2015).
[31] The Department of State and USAID, "Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism," (2016).
[32] Horgan, John, "From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes," (2008).
[33] Bjørgo, Tore, "Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality, and Ways Forward," (2005).
[34] Denoeux, Guilain and Lynn Carter, "Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism," (2009): 63-67.
[35] Stern, Jessica, "Mind Over Martyr: How to Deradicalize Islamist Extremists," (2010).

jobs, and received disproportionately low wages.[36] While structural social issues can simply increase gang participation, criminal activity, and drug abuse, in some cases these causes can be motivations for violent radicalization.[37]

Since violent extremism shares some risk factors with other social ills, opportunities exist to use pre-existing capabilities and resources. Violent extremism originates in part from basic human needs and well-established prevention programs that target other social ills can be effective for CVE efforts.[38] For example, working to reduce unemployment will modify the risk for participation in both gangs and violent extremist organizations in a particular community.[39] While such cause and effect relationships require scrutiny, the similarity in causal factors between violent extremism and other social ills suggests existing social prevention work influences CVE.[40] The primary and secondary levels of prevention across these social ills have overlapping and mutually reinforcing prevention methods that can limit the impact of violent extremism. The tertiary prevention methods diverge as the social ills become more acute (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Other social ills as related to public health model for CVE



[36] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Report on Racism and Xenophobia," (2007).
[37] World Health Organization, "Global Status Report on Violence Prevention," (2014); Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Violence in the Community," *(*1998); and Laila Alwala,, interview by the authors, July 11, 2016.
[38] Horgan, John, Paul Gill, et al., "A Comparative Analysis of Violent Behavior and Radicalization," (2016).
[39] Branz, Barbara, "Europe's Muslim Youth: An Inquiry Into the Politics of Discrimination," (2007).
[40] Laila Alwala, interview by authors, July 11, 2016.

3. A Multi-Sector and Non-Discriminatory Approach is Necessary

A collaborative, multi-sector approach to CVE enables a holistic strategy that uses multiple capabilities to counter violent extremism from different approaches. As no single cause has been proven to drive violent extremist behavior, effective CVE approaches must account for numerous risk factors, such as poverty, low education, and social exclusion.[41] For example, the Luta Pela Paz (Fight for Peace) program in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil utilizes a multi-sector approach that addresses and alleviates causes for extremist violence. The program serves as a vehicle for prevention measures such as education, social events, job training, and job placement services. Importantly, Luta Pela Paz thrives on multi-sector support from the community, government, and local businesses.

The program's holistic approach has had a positive effect.[42] Formerly at-risk for gang-involvement, participants are graduating secondary school, taking jobs, and contributing positively to the community. Despite differences between gang participation and violent extremism, Luta Pela Paz's multi-sector approach demonstrates an approach that can be applied almost directly to CVE. Communities with high risk factors for radicalization will benefit greatly from the social network, conflict resolution, physical activity, and educational opportunities afforded by similar programs.

CVE efforts must be non-discriminatory; programs directed at specific communities and populations can increase an individual's inclination to turn to radical ideologies by reinforcing an insider-outsider mentality.[43] In many cases, extremists conceptualize their violence as a means to address grievances against the government, society, or a competing worldview.[44] As such, discriminatory approaches can increase the risk for radicalization for at-risk individuals.[45] Additionally, discriminatory approaches can miss real threats that do not fit a standard profile. Shannon Conley, a young white woman and recent convert to Islam, was arrested after attempting to join ISIL in Syria.[46] Since US CVE efforts often focus primarily on Muslim communities, individuals like Shannon Conley are often overlooked.

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[41] Shader, Michael, "Risk Factors for Deliquency," (2004).
[42] Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, "From the Field," (2007).
[43] Mandel, David R., "Radicalization What Does it Mean?" (2009).
[44] Bandura, Albert, "The Origins and Consequences of Moral Disengagement," (2004): 121.
[45] Gurr, Ted, *Why Men Rebel*, (1970).
[46] Morrison, Aaron, "Islamic State Recruit Shannon Conley," (2015).

The World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE) in Montgomery County, Maryland is another example of a successful multi-sector, non-discriminatory approach. WORDE developed a community-based initiative known as Build Resistance Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE). The model seeks to engage a broad range of community stakeholders; provide education about violent extremism; connect vulnerable individuals with necessary resources; and establish a framework for successful crisis intervention.[47] A broad network of individuals and organizations participate in BRAVE, regardless of their race, gender, and religious backgrounds. An empirical program evaluation found that the BRAVE model has a positive effect on 12 of 14 CVE-related indicators in individuals and reduced some barriers to intervention among peer groups and the community.[48]

4. Success is Difficult to Quantify

It remains difficult to correlate inputs with outputs to demonstrate the success of CVE programs to policymakers. As CVE focuses on prevention, success is a "non-event." Also, most prevention methods are only loosely tied to CVE because the primary and secondary levels of prevention affect other social programs along with CVE.[49] Without meaningful data or metrics, it is difficult to justify funding and political support for CVE.

Despite the difficulties associated with quantifying CVE outcomes, NSCITF interviews and panel discussions repeatedly echoed the need for evidence-based approaches to CVE programming.[50] Measures of success are also critical for securing taxpayer funding and the necessary resources for program development or implementation.[51] This consideration is especially time-sensitive as community organizations are already 're-branding' current development work as CVE without tailoring programs to achieve positive CVE outcomes.[52] While many primary prevention strategies are general purpose, simply changing language in grant requests for existing programs is unlikely to produce effective efforts. NSCITF interviews with CVE practitioners also revealed concerns over unclear definitions of the CVE mission and

[47] Manger, Thomas and Hedieh Mirahmadi, "The Montgomery County Model," (2013).
[48] Evans, William P., et. al., "Evaluation of a Multi-Faceted, US Community Based, Muslim-Led CVE Program," (2016).
[49] Ryan Greer, interview by authors, July 12, 2016; and Bruce Hoffman, interview by authors, 15 June 2016.
[50] Ryan Greer, interview by the authors, July 12, 2016; and Amy Pope, interview with authors, June 24, 2016.
[51] Mastroe, Caitlin and Susan Szmania, "Surveying CVE Metrics in Prevention, Disengagement, and Deradicalization," (2016).
[52] See key finding #1.

associated activities because it could result in misspent resources. As an example, a practitioner in a prominent international development organization was concerned that as interest and funding for CVE increases, the international development community will simply rebrand on-going projects to fit the CVE mission.[53]

As evidenced by other social development fields that share causal factors with CVE, systematic empirical studies can uncover meaningful metrics to enable incremental program improvements.[54] Successful programs that seek to alleviate other social violence issues have been implemented, researched, and improved.[55] Practitioners and policymakers alike will benefit from clearly identifying best practices social health metrics, applying those principles in CVE pilot programs, and then scaling successful practices from pilot programs to broader CVE efforts. CVE stakeholders should gradually institutionalize and expand upon lessons learned from other social health programs as a public health approach is adopted for CVE.

[53] Hal Ferguson, interview by authors, June 25, 2016.
[54] See key finding #2.
[55] Mastroe, Caitlin and Susan Szmania, "Surveying CVE Metrics in Prevention, Disengagement, and Deradicalization," (2016): 4-12.

V. PUBLIC HEALTH MODEL FRAMEWORK FOR CVE

Framing CVE programs within the public health prevention model is a useful structure for evaluating and addressing the wide-ranging dynamics of violent extremism.[56] This model is a proven and proactive approach in the health sector than can be applied to violent extremism to clarify the mission and evaluate methods throughout the radicalization process.[57] The primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention within the public health model categorize the programs and services employed to prevent violent extremism and mitigate its impact on a community, while also treating the victims and perpetrators to mitigate the problem comprehensively.

Normally, healthcare professionals apply the public health model to prevent and mitigate medical issues. For example, primary prevention for heart disease includes education about healthy eating habits; encouraging regular exercise; and discouraging smoking for the general populace. Secondary prevention identifies at-risk individuals with high blood pressure, family history, and previous strokes or heart attacks for stricter diet and exercise programs combined with medication. For individuals diagnosed with heart disease, tertiary prevention implements tailored cardiac or stroke rehabilitation programs to manage associated long-term health issues.[58]

Similar to the public health model, the NSCITF model defines strategies using a framework of primary, secondary and tertiary approaches. It seeks to address the radicalization process progressively with joint programs that organize multiple efforts in time and space. The model is most concerned with the radicalization factors highlighted by the NCTC/FBI model.[59] This framework also supports clarifying the CVE mission and leadership through synchronization while using a multi-sector and non-discriminatory approach to include more stakeholders.[60] When de-conflicting by mission and purpose as proscribed in the public health model, increasing the number of stakeholders can be done without obscuring the central purpose.[61] Much as in the traditional public health model, overall success is reduction in the

[56] See key finding #2 and key finding #3.
[57] Weine, Stevan and David Eisenman, "How Public Health Can Improve Intitiatves to Counter Violent Extremism," (2016).
[58] Institute for Work and Health, "What Researchers Mean By Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Prevention," (2016).
[59] Patel, Faiza, "Rethinking Radicalization," (2011); and Ramakrishna, Kumar, *Islamist Terror and Militancy in Indonesia*, (2014).
[60] See key finding #1 and key finding #3.
[61] Rainey, Hal and Paula Steinbauer, "Developing Element of a Theory of Effective Government Organizations," (1999).

number of incidents rather than eliminating the disease.[62] Reducing the magnitude of the problem with success in primary and secondary prevention reduces the risk and resource burden from counterterrorism approaches. For example, after local officials in Aarhus, Denmark implemented a CVE program, the number of foreign fighters dropped from 34 in 2012 to one in 2015.[63]

CVE Primary Prevention

CVE primary prevention is a broad approach directed toward society as a whole. Activities in primary prevention include education, health services, social engagement, cultural awareness, and personal development programs that seek to address sociopolitical, group, and community factors for violent radicalization.[64] This level of prevention is effective because its holistic approach has a low risk of stigmatizing communities since it avoids targeting specific groups of people.[65] Success at this level mitigates the root causes of violent extremism before groups or individuals become at-risk often through implementing programs that address basic human needs (see Figure 4).

Examples of primary preventions tools for CVE:

- *Education*: Critical thinking courses, extracurricular programs, scholarships, ethics and civic engagement courses.
- *Health services*: Mental healthcare, improved access to care, and affordable healthcare options.
- *Social engagement*: Democracy-building, local governance initiatives, and criminal justice reform.
- *Cultural awareness*: Sensitivity training, interfaith dialogues, and cross-cultural engagement.
- *Personal development*: Job training, counseling services, and language skill development.

[62] Center for Disease Control, "The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention," (2016).
[63] Agerschou, Toke, "Preventing Radicalization and Discrimination in Aarhas," (2014); and Rosin, Hannah, "How a Danish Town Helped Young Muslims Turn Away from ISIS," (2016).
[64] See Section III.
[65] Weine, Stevan and David Eisenman, "How Public Health Can Improve Intitiatves to Counter Violent Extremism," (2016).

CVE Secondary Prevention

CVE secondary prevention is a focused approach directed toward individuals and groups identified as at-risk for violent extremism. Activities in secondary prevention include intervention, community engagement, and counter-messaging programs. Typically, individuals and groups in this category have exposure to extremist ideologies or radical social networks.[66] At-risk individuals may be in the searching phase in the radicalization continuum and can exhibit noticeable behavioral changes.[67] Bystanders with close personal connections to the individual—often family, friends, or teachers—are those most likely to notice relevant changes in the individual's behavior; observation and reporting from these bystanders remains critical.[68] Law enforcement agencies can most sustainably access critical bystander observations by creating partnerships that build trust in communities while limiting intrusive searches for radicalization indications.[69] These partnerships can increase community resilience and potentially build community-led intervention forces that include law enforcement.[70] Bystander education and access to trained specialists also increases the chances for success at this level.[71] Success at the secondary level stops the radicalization progression and reduces future radicalization potential (see Figure 4).

Examples of secondary prevention tools for CVE:

- *Intervention:* Mentorship, counseling, training on warning signs, mediation, and off-ramps.
- *Community Engagement*: Trust-building between communities and law enforcement, CVE education centers, CVE support hotlines, and community resilience programs.
- *Counter-messaging:* Real-time campaigns against extremist messages, nodal messaging to key influencers, and undermining the appeal of violent extremist messages.

[66] Weine, Stevan and David Eisenman, "How Public Health Can Improve Intitiatves to Counter Violent Extremism," (2016).
[67] Smith, Brent, Kelly Damphousse, and Paxton Roberts, "Pre-Incident Indicators of Terrorist Incidents," (2006).
[68] Malik, Mohammed, "I Reported Oman Mateen to the FBI," (2016); and Mazzetti, Mark, Eric Lichtbalu, and Alan Blinder, "Omar Mateen: Twice Scrutinized by the FBI, Shows Threats of Lone Terrorists," (2016).
[69] Schanzer, David, Charles Kurzman, Jessica Toliver, and Elizabeth Miller, "The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Policing Strategies," (2016).
[70] U.S-Islamic World Forum, "Annual Report: 2014," (2014).
[71] Weine, Stevan and David Eisenman, "How Public Health Can Improve Intitiatves to Counter Violent Extremism," (2016).

CVE Tertiary Prevention

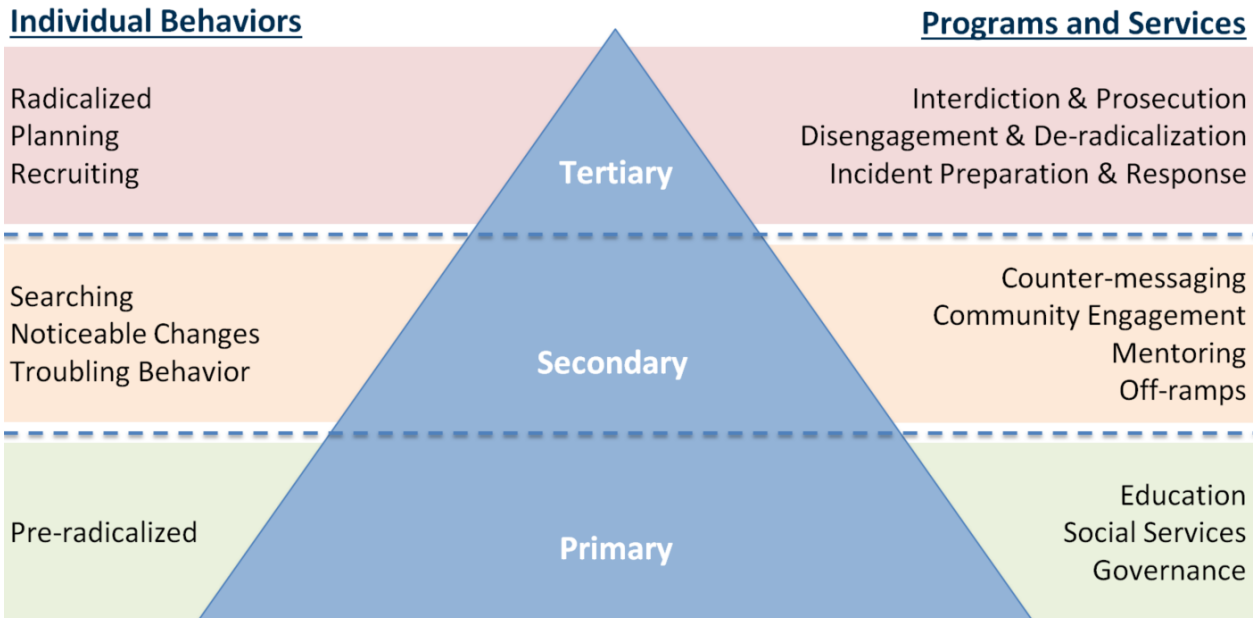
CVE tertiary prevention is a targeted approach directed toward radicalized individuals or groups who may be actively committing, planning, or recruiting for a violent extremist cause.[72] In this radicalization phase, some individuals may no longer be susceptible to CVE methods; counterterrorism approaches may be more applicable for those who have already radicalized.[73] For individuals that are susceptible to CVE, early intervention is critical to enable non-judicial approaches before the radicalized individual can commit criminal actions.[74] After the individual commits criminal acts, decision makers must balance CVE activities like disengagement and de-radicalization with the need to enforce laws. At the tertiary level, significant law enforcement, community and intelligence assets must be committed to each individual extremist to ensure success. Employing tailored resources—such as de-radicalized former extremists, psychologists, religious authorities, and skilled community members—should also aid in disengagement or support prosecution, if necessary.[75] Tertiary prevention methods are tailored specifically to CVE and include disengagement, de-radicalization, isolation, and redirection. Activities in the tertiary level are not multi-purpose and they cannot be applied to other social ills as is possible in the primary and secondary levels. Since risks and resource costs are highest at this level, emphasizing primary and secondary prevention could be more effective.[76] Success at the tertiary level prevents violence and neutralizes the individual or group's ability to carry out violence in the future (see Figure 4).

Examples of tertiary prevention tools for CVE:

- *Disengagement and De-radicalization*: Abandoning radical groups, altering extremist beliefs, emphasizing mitigation efforts, and using the threat of imprisonment as leverage to convince radicalized people to pursue de-radicalization programs.
- *Isolation and Redirection*: Exiling individuals and preventing individuals from carrying-out attacks and influencing others.

[72] Weine, Stevan and David Eisenman, "How Public Health Can Improve Intitiatves to Counter Violent Extremism," (2016).
[73] Bruce Hoffman, interview by authors, June 15, 2016.
[74] Vidino, Lorenzo, and Seamus Hughes, "Countering Violent Extremism in America," (2015); Rosand, Eric, "Taking the Off-Ramp," (2016).
[75] Andrews, D.A. et al., "Does Correctional Treatment Work?" (1990); Gendreau, Paul, et al., "A Meta-Analysis of the Predictors of Adult Offender Recidivism," (1996); and Boghani, Priyanka, "De-Radicalization is Coming to America," (2016).
[76] Weine, Stevan and David Eisenman, "How Public Health Can Improve Intitiatves to Counter Violent Extremism," (2016).

Figure 4: Public health model for CVE



VI. APPLYING THE PUBLIC HEALTH MODEL TO CVE

Applying the public health model can help policymakers and implementers direct research and analysis to improve CVE programs and initiatives. The United States government is currently sponsoring three CVE pilot programs in Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis.[77] All three programs individually emphasize different levels of prevention for CVE and therefore they each have gaps that are highlighted by the public health model for CVE. Since the programs are new, no formal evaluations have yet assessed their success or failure. The model provides a framework to further study these efforts, while suggesting ways to expand programming and better synchronize multiple efforts.

Boston Framework[78]

The Boston Framework functions as a foundation to help communities identify problems and develop solutions to prevent individuals from committing violent extremist acts. Among the three pilot programs, the Boston Framework places the strongest emphasis on primary prevention. Four of the seven problems and solutions proposed by the framework are primary prevention activities. The community identified the potential isolation of youth, grievances with US foreign policy, distrust in local government, and a lack of individual cultural sensitivity as the potential risk factors for their program. Boston's primary prevention initiatives sought to address these root problems by focusing on developing personal and interpersonal skills; increasing access to mental health services; developing engagement networks through mentorship; and training law enforcement, teachers, and parents.

Though emphasized to a lesser extent, the Boston Framework encourages communities to consider secondary and tertiary prevention measures. For secondary prevention, the Boston Framework advocates community education and media engagement on violent racial and religious narratives. Finally, Boston's tertiary prevention activities emphasize disengagement through intervention and crisis management planning as well as de-radicalization through comprehensive resources and better understanding.

[77] See Section II.
[78] United States Attorney's Office, "A Framework for Prevention and Intervention Strategies," (2015).

Los Angeles Framework[79]

In contrast to the Boston Framework, which provides guidelines on CVE program implementation, the Los Angeles Framework for CVE is an action plan that focuses heavily on tertiary efforts, though it does include some secondary prevention strategies. The three pillars of the Los Angeles Framework are *Prevention*, *Intervention*, and *Interdiction*.

Most *Prevention* measures in the Los Angeles Framework are secondary CVE efforts that focus on targeting at-risk individuals and groups through community engagement. Specific secondary prevention activities include hosting public forums, town halls, interfaith events, as well as forming community advisory boards to address community needs. Few actions described in Los Angeles' *Prevention* pillar—such as plans to improve social service delivery—could be classified as primary prevention activities within the public health model for CVE.

The Los Angeles Framework has also developed tertiary prevention strategies for how to deal with individuals once they have radicalized but before they have committed violence. Los Angeles' *Intervention* pillar focuses on off-ramps—described as the process of deflecting a radicalizing individual away from violence through a full-scope application of community resources.[80] The ultimate goal of the program is to rehabilitate individuals to full social participation. Finally, the Los Angeles Framework also includes the *Interdiction* pillar, which focuses on efforts to arrest and potentially prosecute unrepentant individuals when other prevention efforts have failed.

Minneapolis Framework[81]

The Minneapolis Framework focuses specifically on countering radicalization in the Somali community. The framework identifies potential root causes of radicalization as the disaffection of youth; disconnects between youth and religious leaders; internal identity crises; community isolation; and a lack of economic opportunity. Solutions to these problems include community engagement between law enforcement and Somali Minnesotans; prevention programs targeted to at-risk Somali youth; and school and community-led intervention programs.

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[79] Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, "The Los Angeles Framework for Countering Violent Extremism," (2015).
[80] Ibid.
[81] United States Attorney's Office, "Building Community Resilience Minneapolis-St. Paul Pilot Program," (2015).

Within the framework, the majority of initiatives are secondary prevention measures aimed at building better law enforcement and community engagement. The strategy does not contain many tertiary or primary prevention efforts and focuses more narrowly on engaging at-risk populations. However, some intervention components, specifically those targeted at radicalized individuals, could overlap into tertiary prevention. While primary prevention is not the framework's focus, some measures could be considered primary prevention such as after-school activities, education scholarships, and mentoring programs.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adopt the Public Health Model for CVE to Define, Analyze and Implement CVE.

A lack of consensus on CVE's definition and activities creates a less than ideal organizing construct for the mission of countering violent extremism. The USG can clarify roles and responsibilities by adopting the public health model, leading to a more direct mission set and precise chain of command. Outside the USG, the public health model can encourage non-discriminatory support from interested parties in a way that bolsters government efforts. [82]

The model identifies who should be involved at various phases in the radicalization process and encourages the application and use of pre-existing prevention efforts. Decision makers can also utilize the model to determine where their organization fits within the CVE prevention spectrum. Once established, stakeholders reduce redundancy by redirecting resources from already-saturated CVE areas to achieve maximum efficiency.

The model would also help identify existing resources for CVE and support decision-making.[83] Analyzing and communicating the CVE problem as a public health issue also helps avoid managing incident response with exclusively law enforcement mechanisms. Once an individual or group is identified along the spectrum, decision makers can determine appropriate courses of action to prevent violent radicalization that balances risk with preserving critical assets in other prevention areas such as community support for CVE efforts.

2. Identify and Communicate a Clear Leadership for CVE.

Since CVE involves stakeholders across the USG and private sector, and is difficult to quantify, identifying leadership in various functional areas will aid in synchronizing cross-societal efforts.[84] Once identified, a shared understanding of leadership enables stakeholders to vigorously pursue strategies within their respective areas. Despite recent efforts to impose more structure on CVE at the national policy level, the NSCITF's research and interviews suggest that synchronized effort is currently lacking.[85] Within the USG and NGOs, confusion over the

[82] See key finding #3.
[83] See key finding #3.
[84] See key finding #1 and key finding #4.
[85] See Section II.

definition of CVE has led to reluctance to participate. Some NGOs are reluctant to engage in CVE due to concern over legal protections and unclear government policy.[86] Some community leaders likewise cite unclear policy and legal protections as reasons to limit involvement with CVE.[87] Adopting the public health model for CVE can alleviate some confusion, but clear leadership and policy will allow stakeholders to engage in synchronized CVE.

Further, having a clear leadership and accountability structure will help maintain the critical relationship between the community and law enforcement. NSCITF research indicates that the community relationship with law enforcement is a critical variable in preventing violence.[88] While law enforcement capabilities can complement CVE at all levels, overutilization can exacerbate the leading triggers for radical behavior while undermining community trust and willingness to cooperate with CVE.[89]

3. Define the Roles and Responsibilities of Government Agencies and Partners.

Defining the roles and responsibilities of government agencies and partners enables increased participation by non-government stakeholders as CVE expands. Delineating legal and policy frameworks provides space for multiple stakeholder participation. With clearly delineated lines of effort, local communities with intimate knowledge of at-risk individuals in their area can better marshal resources and pursue prevention activities. Failing to clearly define roles and responsibilities can cause redundant efforts and gaps throughout CVE. Using the public health model for CVE supports visualizing the balance between top-down synchronization at the national level, and community bottom-up refinement based on local knowledge.[90]

4. Prioritize and Make Strategic Choices About CVE Resources and Strategies

Stakeholders should use CVE activities as a strategic means to maximize the impact of scarce resources. After the attacks of 9/11, the USG increased spending on domestic

[86] Thompson, Rep. Bennie G., "FBI Shared Responsibility Committees Must Pass Privacy Test," (2016).
[87] Stern, Jessica, "Mind Over Martyr: How to Deradicalize Islamist Extremists," (2010); Currier, Cora and Murtaza Hussain, "Letters Details FBI Plan," (2016); and Hoffman, Bruce et al., "The FBI: Protecting the Homeland in the 21st Century," (2015).
[88] Bruce Hoffman, interview by authors, June 15, 2016; and Mastroe, Caitlin, "Evaluating CVE: Understanding Recent Changes," (2016).
[89] Boorstein, Michelle, "Muslim Activists Alarmed by the FBI," (2015); and Goldman, Adam, "An American Family Saved Their Son From Joining the Islamic State," (2015).
[90] Mastroe, Caitlin, "Evaluating CVE: Understanding Recent Changes," (2016).

counterterrorism by an estimated $75 billion per year.[91] With uncertain but potentially high costs and risks for a terrorist, this spending would seem to be justified.[92] However, most of this spending is associated with monitoring and preventing threats that may never come to fruition.[93] Further, the profusion of threats makes it difficult to allocate scarce resources. Former CIA Director George Tenant noted in his memoir that, "you could drive yourself crazy believing all or even half," of the thousands of threats that were cataloged on a daily basis.[94] Successfully executed CVE provides the opportunity to reduce the volume of credible threats and burden on scarce counterterrorism resources. Even if CVE only limits the number of easily dissuaded extremists, this enables stakeholders to focus greater effort on fewer cases.

While CVE's benefits will often be uncertain, there are several instances where they have had appreciable effect. Resources devoted to primary and secondary prevention methods can reduce 'push factors' towards violent extremism.[95] The Danish CVE model supplements tertiary approaches using intelligence and law enforcement with primary and secondary measures such as youth counseling, mentorship, and community outreach.[96] Aarhus' local program has treated over 330 pre-radicalized individuals and 18 returned foreign fighters, and is associated with a significant drop in Danish foreign fighters in the past few years. While the Danish program has not been formally evaluated, other secondary CVE programs like the Montgomery County Model have had a quantifiably positive effect on individual behaviors and norms.[97] Supplementing tertiary approaches with effective secondary and primary activities can be an effective means to reduce the scope of the problem.

[91] Mueller, John and Mark Stewart, "Evaluating Counterterrorism Spending," (2014).
[92] Zycher, Benjamin, "A Preliminary Benefit/Cost Framework for Counterterrorism Public Expenditures," (2003).
[93] Bjelopera, Jerome, *Countering Violent Extremism in the United States*, (2014).
[94] Tenet, George, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years At the CIA*, (2007).
[95] United States Agency for International Development, "Guide to Drivers of Violent Extremism," (2009).
[96] Hemmingsen, Ann-Sophie, "The Danish Approach to Countering and Preventing Extremists and Radicalization," (2015).
[97] Evans, William P., et. al., "Evaluation of a Multi-Faceted, US Community Based, Muslim-Led CVE Program," (2016).

APPENDIX A — TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Acronym / Term	Meaning
BRAVE	Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism CVE generally refers to policies and programs that seek to prevent individuals from radicalizing, adopting violent extremist ideologies, and engaging in terrorist activities. However, the NSCITF found no authoritative, unified definition of the term CVE in its research.
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
DoS	Department of State
EDU	Department of Education
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
MCM	Montgomery County Model
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NCTC/FBI radicalization model	Identifies five broad factors for radicalization: personal, group, community, sociopolitical, and ideological
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSS	United States National Security Strategy
NSCITF	National Security Critical Issues Task Force, part of Georgetown University' Center for Security Studies
Public health model for CVE	Divides CVE activities into *primary*, *secondary*, and *tertiary* categories based on the public health model for categorizing preventative treatment.
OSCE	Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe
Public health model for CVE Primary Prevention	A broad CVE approach directed toward society as a whole.
Public health model for CVE Secondary Prevention	A focused approach directed toward individuals and groups identified as at-risk for violent extremism.
Public health model for CVE Tertiary Prevention	A targeted approach directed toward radicalized individuals or groups who are actively committing to and recruiting for a violent extremist cause or planning an attack.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

USG	United States Government
Violent extremism	Violent extremism is the beliefs and behaviors of individuals or groups that use violence to achieve political goals. It is distinct from criminal violence, nonpolitical violence, and non-violent activity.
WORDE	World Organizations for Resource Development and Education

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