DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND COUNTER-EXTREMISM:
A GUIDE TO PROGRAMMING

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AQ	Al-Qaeda
CE	Counter-extremism
CSO	Civil society organization
DA	Development assistance
D/G	Democracy and governance
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IED	Improvised explosive device
IRA	Irish Republican Army
NGO	Non-governmental organization
TSJ	Transnational Salafi Jihadism or transnational Salafi Jihadist
TSJs	Transnational Salafi Jihadists
TSCTP	Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VE	Violent extremism or violent extremist
VEs	Violent extremists
VIE	Violent Islamist extremism or violent Islamist extremist
VIEs	Violent Islamist extremists

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Approach:

Drawing on the February 2009 *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Islamist Extremism*, this new publication on *Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism* discusses the implications for practitioners pursuing development objectives in the context of counter-extremism (CE). Because programming must reflect the distinctive features of the specific environment in which a particular group involved in Violent Extremism (VE) operates, this publication does not create a universal formula for designing and implementing programs that address CE. Instead it recommends a process that considers key questions and areas of inquiry to inform programming choices. The document specifies six steps to follow to identify key drivers and to assess how those drivers interact with each other. It also lays out twelve broad programming principles and a menu of development assistance (DA) interventions to help development practitioners respond to socioeconomic, political, and cultural drivers of violent extremism.

The report is organized into five sections. Part One lays out a six step process to identify key drivers and summarizes socioeconomic, political and cultural drivers of VE. Part Two outlines the twelve core CE programming principles. Parts Three through Five provide a list of illustrative options for addressing socioeconomic drivers, political drivers, and cultural drivers, respectively.

Part One:

Part One identifies the three conditions necessary for effective CE programming: a solid understanding of the factors that generate and sustain VE; identification of the primary challenge being confronted; and determination of the populations, areas and institutions that appear to be particularly vulnerable to VE. In order to meet these conditions, six steps to the programming process are given along with a set of questions designed to lead the practitioner through an analytical process.

- Step One: determine the characteristics of the VE phenomenon in the specific setting being analyzed.
- Step Two: assess whether prevention or mitigation is the main task and whether recruitment, community support, or an enabling environment that permits VE groups to operate are the most pressing concerns.
- Step Three: identify which populations, geographical areas, and/or institutions are particularly vulnerable and why.
- Step Four: ascertain those social processes and group dynamics that are critical to facilitating or undermining recruitment and/or community support.
- Step Five: determine the key political, socioeconomic and cultural drivers at work and assess their salience after reviewing the analysis in Steps One through Four.
- Step Six: prioritize drivers and target locations; determine DA and strategic communications interventions. To help with this step, a Threat Assessment Matrix is given as a template for the practitioner to identify the type of drivers of extremism

The authors identify three different categories of drivers of violent extremism: socioeconomic, political and cultural. The drivers briefly described and separated by category are as follows:

Socioeconomic Drivers:

1. Perceptions of social exclusion and marginality

   This perception may be particularly prevalent among peri-urban/slum youth and in environments where family structures have eroded, normal social controls no longer check behavior, and youth have too much time on their hands. A sense of anomie and isolation may result. VE groups may

exploit this isolation by offering an escape, a sense of purpose and inclusion in a collective movement.

2. Social networks and group dynamics

   Social networks are an important factor in radicalization and recruitment. Individuals may drift into VE groups with friends or as a result of the influence of relatives, neighbors or a charismatic local preacher.

3. Societal discrimination

   Real or perceived discrimination towards an individual or community (or both) in a broad sense can be a driver for VE. In places where Muslims are a small minority, soci-economic and/or political discrimination may be perceived as linked to disrespect for Islam and Muslims, provoking radicalization.

4. Frustrated expectations and relative deprivation

   Relative depravation and frustrated expectations are powerful drivers of VE activity among youth given improvements in education, especially at the secondary and university levels. Youth with greater amounts of education are likely to feel that they deserve better life outcomes than their societies can deliver. They generally cannot obtain the sorts of jobs they feel they deserve; they recognize the nepotism impedes access to jobs. Young males may lack the economic resources to marry and are generally denied a voice in traditional societies.

5. Unmet social and economic needs

   Deprivation of socioeconomic needs—especially when combined with other factors such as widespread corruption and lack of security and justice—may be a factor exploited by VE groups, which may offer wages or services. It is not poverty, however, but the acute form of social exclusion by the government and society that elicits support for VE.

6. Greed or the proliferation of illegal economic activities

   VE organizations' illegal activities offer lucrative economic opportunities for those who seek a ready income. Networks operating VE and illegal economic activities have a mutually beneficial relationship—providing each other with revenue, experience in concealment, and ideology to legitimize illegal behavior. Prisons are a popular venue for VE recruitment.

Political Drivers:

1. Denial of political rights and civil liberties

   The lack of political rights and civil liberties, and closed, unresponsive political systems, can instill a belief that violence is the only means for political change. Civil liberties and political rights also may represent a critical—but not representative—link between economic development and vulnerability to VE.

2. Harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights

   Justice is a critical value in Islam. Cruel, degrading treatment (including torture) to an individual at the hands of the police or security forces can lead to a desire for revenge. The harsher and more widespread the brutality, the greater the spur to VE activities and the more support VE may garner from the local communities.

3. Foreign occupation

   Countries subject to foreign military occupation are at risk of insurgency and rights abuses. Support for VE activities may derive from individuals seeking to redeem disgrace to their person and their community.

4. Political and/or military encroachment

   Large-scale political or military intrusion into internal affairs can act as a unifying element, with the community resorting to violence to redeem individual and collective honor. In communities with a historically high degree of autonomy and self-regulation, strong resistance is likely.

5. Endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites

   This driver prompts civic disengagement and political apathy at the least and can foster a profound sense of moral outrage as is the case in Afghanistan. The more corrupt the environment, the easier it is for VE groups to establish themselves as a righteous alternative and to lash out at immoral governing elites.

6. Poorly governed or ungoverned areas

   These areas are isolated, low population density regions that constitute safe havens where VE organizations can establish themselves with little hindrance, and even garner support from communities ignored by the government. It should be understood that VE groups might gravitate toward 'states of limited strength'—as opposed to failed or even failing states—where they can have the infrastructure necessary to develop their network and carry out operations.

7. Local conflicts

   Local conflicts of sufficient scale can create chaos, incapacitate government institutions, and result in a power vacuum to be exploited by VE organizations. VE groups will try to co-opt one side in a conflict and will try to impose their transnational agenda on purely local dynamics. In one recent example, the Afghan Taliban (whose agenda has been local) now call for an Islamic Caliphate.

8. State support

   Host governments and foreign states—or groups/individuals within— have often supported VE movements, only to later lose control over them. Examples include the Egyptian government supporting radical Islamists against the Nasserites and Pakistan governments supporting various Islamist groups against India and Afghanistan.

9. Discredited governments and missing or co-opted legal oppositions

   When a regime is entirely discredited, and there is no viable opposition, those who wish to oppose the government and bring about reform will be pushed outside normal political channels and may support VE groups.

10. Intimidation or coercion by VE groups

    Where governments cannot provide security and protection for its citizens, VE groups use intimidation and coercion to force support for their movement.

11. Perception that the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies and peoples

    Populations may accept VE propaganda that the global political and economic system discriminates against the Muslim world, which can mesh with personal or communal feelings of discrimination.

Cultural Drivers:

1. Islam under siege

   A strong correlation exists between VE success and the perception the West is attacking Islam and Muslims. Individuals who experience repression and humiliation in their daily life may be more susceptible to highly politicized and emotional images of fellow Muslims suffering in other countries. This overlaps and reinforces political driver number 11.

2. Broader cultural threats

   The population may perceive a broader cultural threat – to traditions, customs, values, and sense of collective/individual honor and dignity.

3. "Proactive" religious agendas

   Groups promoting these agenda will try to impose their version of Islam, jihad, etc. on the local population, weakening traditional and more moderate and tolerant religious structures and practices. This may set the stage for VE.

Part Two:

After diagnosing the different types of drivers of violent extremism, it is crucial to assess responses. Part Two highlights twelve core principles for programming development assistance to counter VE. Designed to prevent potentially misguided decisions, these principles help a practitioner to consider specific activities or types of interventions that one may not have considered initially. The programming principles fall under two categories: extremism risk assessment and strategy development, and program and project design and adaptation.

The first three principles address risk assessment and strategy development when programming to address CE. Rule 1 suggests developing a strategy after an adequate understanding of local conditions and dynamics has been acquired. Rule 2 is to disaggregate the threat and prioritize strategy elements accordingly. Rule 3 requires that one systematically identify and tap into those features of local society that may protect it against VE in developing a strategy.

The remaining rules specifically address program and project design and adaptation. Rule 4 challenges the program designer to think holistically: to design all activities to fit the overarching CE strategy; integrate interventions across sectoral areas; look for complementary and mutually reinforcing impacts; and coordinate among key stakeholders. Rule 5 recommends that assistance be directed to at-risk groups and communities, and calls for prioritizing interventions and maintaining a sense of modesty in projecting likely results. Rule 6 argues that it is best to anchor development program implementation in partnerships.

Rule 7 reminds practitioners to convey respect for indigenous religious and cultural norms and tradition. Rule 8 ensures that development interventions are designed to produce CE benefits or impacts, and that the CE benefits are significant enough to merit the interventions. Rule 9 emphasizes effective communication and requires that a plan be formulated early and as a core element of the CE development strategy. Rule 10 considers the potential unintended consequences of particular interventions before making any final decision about programming. Rule 11 balances the advantages of continuity and consistency against the need for flexibility. Finally, Rule 12 addresses high VE risk environments by challenging the practitioner to consider the trade-offs that may exist between CE objectives and strategy elements and DA approaches. In summary, the rules highlighted are dynamic and should be considered both while a CE strategy is being developed and after tentative decisions have been reached.

Part Three:

Parts Three through Five consist of illustrative DA responses to the different VE drivers. Part Three specifically focuses on socioeconomic drivers and offers different ways to address the five different socioeconomic drivers, placing a particular emphasis on the role of youth. The paper provides six suggestions for how to respond to both social exclusion and marginality and counter the effects of social networks and group dynamics that tempt youth to become involved with VE organizations or activities. To respond to societal discrimination, two main suggestions are given: identifying existing areas of societal discrimination and lessening the likelihood that groups facing discrimination will find solace in VE organizations. Frustrated expectations and deprivation are a common problem particularly among more educated youth. To respond to the vulnerabilities of this societal group there are four suggestions:

developing job readiness training, creating better transitions from school to work, increasing youth employment, and improving opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Unmet social and economic needs can be addressed by traditional development activities aimed at improving social and economic conditions among vulnerable populations; focusing on job creation and improving access to basic services; improving service-delivery and strengthening relevant government institutions; and interrupting the flow of resources to religious organizations that condone, support, or are engaged in VE activities. Finally, to respond to greed or illegal economic activities, criminal justice reform must be made a priority as well as anti money –laundering laws, stronger accounting skills, and improved policing programs that rely heavily on collaboration among the public, private and NGO sectors. In addition the greed of VE groups should be highlighted in awareness campaigns to vulnerable populations.

Part Four:

Responding to eleven different political drivers is the focus of Part Four. The paper offers six suggestions for how to address a situation where political rights and civil liberties are denied to citizens. To respond to harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights, the authors suggest DA interventions that emphasize preventing or curbing gross human rights violations and indiscriminate repression. Although the authors do not offer a means to address foreign occupation, they provide three suggestions when addressing political and/or military encroachment. Five suggestions are given to address endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites and three are given to address poorly governed or ungoverned areas. Local conflicts should be addressed only when they heighten the risk of being exploited by transnational VEs or if there is a risk of them becoming a source of VE. The authors provide four suggestions for dealing with local conflicts, beginning with the suggestion to develop the ability to determine the extent to which conflicts pose a significant VE threat. To address state support for extremist groups, discredited governments and missing or co-opted legal oppositions, and intimidation or coercion by VE groups, the authors provide suggestions that involve DA, diplomatic efforts, and security efforts. Finally, although it is difficult to counter the perception that the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies and peoples, the following steps can be taken to build trust: support efforts to address large-scale poverty and marginality, support indigenous voices in a counter-narrative, and disseminate information about the accomplishments of Muslim individuals, organizations, and countries on the international stage.

Part Five:

Although cultural drivers are usually viewed as the most difficult to influence through DA, there are some principles that can be used to address them effectively. Maintain a high level of respect for Islam as well as indigenous customs, religious figures and cultural leaders; remember that interventions may be viewed as a form of cultural intrusion; and engage credible indigenous cultural authority figures in development assistant efforts are some suggested ways to address cultural drivers. In addition, maintaining an awareness of the cultural drivers while tackling socioeconomic and political conditions that reinforce VE discourses is also important.

Conclusion:

In summary, this document should be considered a "navigation chart" that draws attention to key questions and areas of inquiry that should inform programming choices; it offers guidance on how to identify the most salient drivers; and it provides illustrative types of interventions to address those drivers. By capturing most of the "dos and don'ts" of CE programming, and by drawing attention to the unique challenges, trade-offs, and dangers associated with programming, this paper contributes to the quality of decision-making in this area and acts as a guide to development practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

This document builds on the February 2009 *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Islamist Extremism* (hereafter referred to as "the Drivers' Guide") which examines the factors that generate and sustain Violent Extremism (VE) in countries with predominantly Muslim populations.[1] It focuses particularly on development assistance (DA) approaches to prevent or mitigate known drivers associated with VE. Both documents draw on and benefited from a series of country-level VE risk assessments (Mauritania, Kenya, Mali, Chad and Niger), briefings and workshops with academics as well as United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Defense and State Department headquarters and field personnel. Both documents draw on examples from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia; examples from the latter two regions are more numerous given the sometimes explosive growth of violent extremism in those regions, the extent to which the phenomenon has been studied there, and the potential of these examples to help us understand common VE trajectories.

The present document on DA and counter-extremism (CE) does not offer a "one-size fits all" approach to CE programming. Instead, it is premised on the assumption that programming must reflect the distinctive features of the specific environment in which a particular VE group or movement operates. To be sure, many such movements present similarities in their characteristics and the dynamics that sustain them; they often are influenced by the same regional or global forces as well. Nonetheless, they also are shaped by local grievances and problems, and by idiosyncratic historical legacies and cultural attributes. Programming must reflect that situation, and avoid "off-the-shelf" or "cookie-cutter" approaches.

Consequently, this document should be approached more as a "navigation chart" than as a "cookbook." It does not provide a single formula for programming, but instead draws attention to key questions and areas of inquiry that should inform programming choices; it offers guidance on how to identify the most salient drivers; and it provides illustrative types of interventions to address those drivers. **Part One** walks the analyst through a process that is intended to pinpoint those drivers that are especially relevant to the VE groups or movements being studied. Multiple drivers may be present in any given environment and may work in concert. Those already familiar with the drivers can skip pp. 11-32, which summarize the drivers from the original Drivers' Guide, and go directly to page 33. **Part Two** offers general programming principles. It highlights twelve core principles for programming at the nexus of DA and CE. **Part Three** provides a menu of illustrative options for addressing some key socioeconomic drivers, while **Parts Four and Five** conduct the same type of analysis for, respectively, political and cultural drivers.

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[1] *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*, produced for USAID/Africa Bureau by MSI, February 2009.

PART ONE – UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM AND IDENTIFYING KEY DRIVERS

INTRODUCTION

1. Effective CE programming must meet the following four conditions:

    a. It should build on a solid understanding of the factors that generate and sustain VE in the particular setting being analyzed. It may be critical to disaggregate regions for analysis since not all areas of a given country may be equally susceptible to risk. These drivers will include the structural conditions, grievances and problems that feed into VE, as well as the social processes and group dynamics that facilitate recruitment, involvement in, or support for VE activities.

    b. It must reflect the nature of the primary challenge: is it mitigation of an existing, on-going VE phenomenon or is it prevention? Is the critical problem one of active recruitment into VE groups? Is it, instead, tacit or explicit community support for those groups? Is it the existence of a broader enabling environment that permits VE groups to organize and operate? Or is it all of these?

    c. It must prioritize populations, geographical areas, and/or institutions that appear to be particularly vulnerable to VE.

    d. It must accompany DA with a robust communications and outreach effort.

2. This document suggests that, in order to meet those conditions, the programming process should go through six steps, each of which entails focusing on a particular set of questions. The first four steps should help point the analyst toward the most salient political, socioeconomic, and cultural drivers at work. The nature of these drivers is finalized in Step Five, which, in turn, paves the way for the identification of interventions aimed at alleviating the impact of each category of drivers. With this in mind, the six steps described below consist of the following:

    Step One: Determine the overarching characteristics of the VE phenomenon in the specific setting being analyzed.

    Step Two: Assess whether the primary task is one of prevention or mitigation. Determine whether recruitment, community support, or an enabling environment is the most pressing concern.

    Step Three: Identify which populations, geographical areas, and/or institutions are particularly vulnerable and why.

    Step Four: Ascertain those social processes and group dynamics that are critical to facilitating, undermining or protecting against recruitment to and/or community support for VE.

    Step Five: In reviewing the analysis in steps 1-4, determine the key political, socioeconomic and cultural drivers at work and assess their salience and how they interact.

    Step Six: Prioritize drivers and target locations; determine DA and strategic communications interventions.

Step One: Determine the characteristics of the VE phenomenon in the specific setting being analyzed.

1. How serious is the threat posed by VE, and how does it manifest itself? How has it evolved in the past few years? Is VE becoming a greater and more pressing concern? If so, how fast, and which basic forces account for this trend?

2. Is the threat emerging from specific organizations, groups or movements, or is it far more diffuse and amorphous (e.g., it may be carried out by "lone wolves" who seek or claim affiliation with a particular organization or movement, but act mostly on their own)?

3. If the threat emanates from particular organizations and groups, what is known about them?

   a. How many are operative, and who are they?

   b. What is their respective level of activity and effectiveness?

   c. What kinds of actions do they undertake? Do they only engage in violence, or do they also provide services?

   d. What is the size of their membership, and do their members present any recurrent characteristics (e.g., in terms of class, sectarian or regional affiliations)?

   e. How much grassroots support do they appear to enjoy? Are they embedded in local society, or largely disconnected from it? If they benefit from meaningful community support, does that backing stem from their use of intimidation or coercion tactics? Does it reflect, instead, genuinely shared grievances and goals with the population at large? Or is it a product of those groups' more or less cynical ability to identify with, and effectively "co-opt" or "hijack," popular local causes?

   f. Do VE organizations operate openly or clandestinely? Do they consist of small cells of like-minded individuals who are active underground, or on the fringes of society, or do they involve larger constituencies that are not afraid of making themselves visible in the public square?

   g. What links, if any, exist among these organizations? Do they coordinate in the planning and/or implementation of activities, or do they operate mostly in isolation from one another? Do they have similar, overlapping, or conflicting agendas? What are these agendas, and are they primarily local or global?

   h. Are any of the groups in question tied to transnational VE organizations? If so, what is the nature of those links (e.g., do concrete organizational connections exist, or do local groups merely identify with, and support, the general philosophy and stated objectives of transnational movements)?

   i. What messages or themes do VE groups disseminate? How well do those themes resonate with the population and with which segments of the population do they have the most appeal? What channels do they use to communicate?

Being able to answer these questions is important to gauging the extent to which the VE phenomena at hand are amenable to programming, and to determining what the content of programming should be. For instance, it may be much more difficult to deter recruitment to militant ethno-nationalist organizations with strong local agendas (e.g., Hamas, Hezbollah) than to genuinely transnational movements driven by an overriding global agenda. That is because the former organizations often enjoy widespread popular support, are deeply embedded in the societies in which they are active, and are driven by what is widely perceived in those societies as vital issues related to collective identity, community welfare, and/or national liberation. Transnational movements, by contrast, typically lack that solid base of support and legitimacy, and their ties to the local population are often tenuous. Indeed, they sometimes can come to be viewed as alien and even

parasitic elements that prey on, manipulate, or otherwise harm the wellbeing of those locals whose cause they have publicly espoused.[2]

In many instances, especially where the risk is muted and VE activity is low, data will be scarce. Open source materials will be more plentiful in high risk environments where VE has been extensively studied but may be limited, imprecise and/or inaccurate in low risk environments. Analysts should not over-extrapolate from limited evidence. Intelligence community or closed-source estimates and analyses will be worth consulting for those with clearances to access them; if partners are developing or refining CE project designs, USAID staff will need to ensure that the implications of classified data are fed into these efforts. Existing data may however turn out to be more useful for the view they provide from 30,000 feet; it is the view from 5,000 feet that is required for robust DA programming. Attempts to understand the environment in a limited geographic area or among a distinct population or set of institutions may require direct data collection. Where there is negligible VE risk, no data about VE activity will be available, and programmers will need to analyze the range of possible drivers without any clues as to which might ultimately generate VE risk. An important part of any analysis should also address factors promoting social resilience to VE; it is generally easier to build on societal strengths than mitigate weaknesses.

The sensitivity of data collection on VE will vary across countries and regions. In a pilot assessment in Mauritania in 2008, for example, the research team felt able to ask openly about the phenomenon. In Kenya, by contrast, the topic was sensitive and questioning was indirect and constrained, given the tendency of the Muslim population to believe that the US Government (USG) was interested in them only because of its concern about extremism. There may be countries where open exploration is dangerous. In some environments, where VE is harshly suppressed or intimidation from VE organizations a possibility, informants will be reluctant to share knowledge. In the more sensitive environments, then, programmers may end up with partial and/or unreliable data; as programs unfold, implementers will need to make a consistent effort to improve their understanding of the situation and adapt their activities accordingly.

> **Learning by Doing in Niger**
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> A clear case of "learning by doing" emerges in Niger where a 2005 risk assessment identified the Wahhabi-influenced Izala movement as a potential vehicle for the spread of extremist ideas, suggesting that the new USAID Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Project (TSTCP) ought to attempt to address the grievances of informal sector businessmen associated with the movement; assessment updates in 2007 and early 2009 as well as practical experience on the ground suggested that the movement was now peaceful and that CE resources could be better invested elsewhere. More recently, however, the movement's rapid expansion as well as its reputation for honest and upright behavior, along with its provision of services, has caused renewed concern. VE phenomena can be expected to change over time and in some environments to change rapidly; mechanisms for monitoring the phenomena will need to be developed.

Step Two: Assess whether prevention or mitigation, or recruitment, community support, or an enabling environment are the most pressing concerns.

1. The analyst must determine early on whether the main challenge which programming is intended to address is the reduction of an existing, serious or rapidly growing VE problem (mitigation), or whether it is the pre-emption of a looming, but as-of-yet unrealized or limited danger (prevention). The types of interventions called for are likely to differ accordingly.

2. Along similar lines, the following questions should be asked prior to making programming decisions, since different answers to them likely will point to different drivers, and, therefore, suggest different policy responses.

   a. Is the primary concern <u>recruitment</u> – i.e., too many individuals are joining, drifting toward, being pushed into, or feeling the lure of VE organizations and/or activities?

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[2] For elaboration, see the Drivers' Guide.

b. Is it, instead, the existence or emergence of a complicit society: community support (direct or indirect, explicit or tacit, willing or coerced) for VE groups? VE groups may attract few recruits, but if the population around them shares some of their views and goals, or if it provides various forms of assistance to them out of fear, they may pose a more formidable threat than groups with larger memberships, but smaller community support. A complicit society makes it much easier for VE groups to hide and operate, and harder for the authorities to track down. A sympathetic or frightened society may provide such assistance as information, shelter, food, or transportation.

c. Or is the primary challenge even broader? Specifically, does it revolve around the existence of an enabling environment? That environment may or may not include the presence of a complicit society, but it likely will entail several of the following (and often inter-related) features: inadequate law-enforcement mechanisms; bad governance; fragile and illegitimate state institutions; pervasive corruption; large-scale alienation of the population from the government and the political system in general; widespread anger at political and economic elites; cynicism toward the electoral process; and the presence of safe havens or poorly governed spaces. These factors are "enabling" in that they contribute to the overall capabilities of VE groups, and facilitate their ability to carry out attacks. An enabling environment can also produce a complicit society if conditions worsen or are manipulated.

To be sure, the three concerns examined above – recruitment, a complicit society, and an enabling environment – are not mutually exclusive. For instance, the presence of a complicit society creates an environment that at least partially enables VE groups. By the same token, a complicit society usually facilitates recruitment, while an environment may be enabling, in part, because it provides a large pool of alienated, angry youth who constitute potential recruits for VE movements. Still, for analytical as well as programming purposes, it is important to try to prioritize among these three concerns, and determine which one(s) are most relevant to the particular case at hand. As mentioned earlier, different concerns will point to the significance of different drivers.

In countries/regions where VE, and particularly indigenous VE, activity is very low or negligible, but many elements of an enabling environment are present, it is likely to be very difficult to pinpoint which elements of that environment put society most at risk. This will be guess-work, since little evidence will be available, but drivers can still be prioritized in terms of the severity of their impact on the population (in terms of both reality and perception). In such cases, it could also be worth a look at how VE risk has unfolded in neighboring countries (if in fact there are relevant examples upon which to draw).

Step Three: Identify which populations, geographical areas, and/or institutions are particularly vulnerable and why.

1. As discussed in the Drivers' Guide, it is important to determine early on whether certain populations appear to be especially vulnerable to VE – i.e., whether at-risk populations tend to share a similar "profile." The characteristics around which such a profile may be developed include gender, age, location, geographical origins, education, profession, socioeconomic status, ethnic or religious affiliation, and shared "trajectories" or "paths" toward VE.

a. The existence of a distinctive profile should not be taken for granted. In many instances, the populations attracted to VE will vary widely in their basic socioeconomic, educational and other attributes. Similarly, in countries where extremist groups are not particularly active or are just emerging, there likely will be too few VEs to make profiling a meaningful exercise; it will be important, in such cases, not to generalize from too small a sample. Still, where ample data do exist, and where it points to a clear profile or profiles, or, at the very least, to the over-representation of certain populations among VEs, the analyst should make sure to take into account the implications of such a finding. Distinct profiles may suggest that certain drivers are

particularly salient, and that specific populations, areas, or sectors should receive disproportionate attention in programming.

b. Analysts should bear in mind that profiles may vary significantly depending on whether one is focusing on leaders, cadres, operatives, rank-and-file members, sympathizers, or populations that are particularly vulnerable to being coerced or intimidated into providing direct or indirect support for VEs. By the same token, decision-makers should remain alert to the possibility that the profile of VEs may be changing rapidly, with some populations becoming, or likely to become, a greater concern over time. Programming should reflect those trends or projections. Programmers also need to continue to collect data and refine their understanding of the evolving context, in order to target program responses more exactly.

c. Trying to determine whether certain populations are at greater risk than others should entail analysis of available biographical data on violent extremists. When in the field, analysts should interview journalists as well as independent experts and academics who track extremist groups, and/or who have experience interviewing, or collecting data about, extremists. Other potential informants may be found among government officials (especially in such ministries as home/interior, youth, and education) and law enforcement, as well as among NGO activists working with communities that are known to have experienced, or to have been the source of, VE.[3] Organizations that monitor prison conditions may generate valuable information, too.

2. As implied in the discussion above, analysts should seek to determine whether the threat is concentrated in specific <u>regions or types of areas</u> (e.g., urban, rural or peri-urban).

a. If the threat is concentrated, the key questions become: what accounts for the propensity of those areas to generate larger numbers of violent extremists, to be more susceptible to infiltration by them, or to provide an environment that is more conducive to their operations? Is it because of characteristics that are distinctive to them, or because of problems that are particularly pronounced within them? If so, which characteristics and/or which problems?[4] Is it because recruitment agents are particularly active and/or effective in those areas (and, if so, why)?

b. As is true of "at-risk populations," the identity of "at-risk areas" may be changing – sometimes quickly – over time, and the analyst should remain attune to such possible evolutions. It may be that the threat is receding in some regions, but increasing in others, and that geographical areas that had remained largely unaffected are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Programming decisions should reflect such trends.

c. From a programmatic perspective, the possible identification of certain areas as particularly risk-prone is important for two main reasons: it may point the analyst toward certain drivers (those that explain the greater vulnerability to VE), and it likely will suggest that interventions should concentrate on the areas in question.

3. For the same reasons, if certain <u>institutions</u> appear to be producing a disproportionate share of VE, if they seem to operate as "pipelines" for recruitment into VE organizations or activities, and/or if they

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[3] Some such interviews may be either difficult to line up or too dangerous (for instance, as a result of hostility to the US, logistical difficulties, or political concerns by the US Embassy). Key informant lists always should be vetted in advance of scheduling appointments.

[4] For instance, the regions or types of areas in question may be neglected or disadvantaged zones; they may harbor longstanding grievances toward the state; and/or they may feature a disproportionately high percentage of individuals who have ties to VE leaders.

serve as magnets around which VE or sympathizers gravitate, they should become a particular focus of programming.[5] There may of course be limits to USG access to such institutions.

Step Four: Ascertain those social processes and group dynamics that are critical to facilitating or undermining recruitment and/or community support.

1. Drivers of VE are not limited to such factors as grievances, greed, and opportunities or incentives for violent behavior created by governance gaps or large-scale societal problems. As discussed in the Drivers' Guide, they also include the social processes, personal relationships, and group dynamics that facilitate involvement in VE activities. These drivers, too, should be identified, since programming must seek to disrupt or mitigate their impact.

2. From this perspective, the following key questions need to be considered.

   a. Are individuals being "recruited" into VE groups? Do they, instead, try to reach out to those groups on their own initiative, before joining them or becoming loosely affiliated with them? Are individuals or entire communities, instead, merely drifting into the orbit of VE groups, or coerced or intimidated into providing direct or indirect support for them? Under any of these scenarios, what are the key processes involved?

   b. If individuals are formally recruited, does recruitment take place openly or clandestinely, and through formal or informal mechanisms? For instance, are VE operatives active in the community? If so, what techniques do they use, which messages do they convey, and which populations and/or institutions do they appear to target? If, instead, individuals are "self-recruited" – i.e., volunteer into a particular VE cause or organization, how do they do so? What role does the internet play in this process? Is there evidence that VE networks or cliques are being formed through the internet? What is the relative contribution that virtual ties, as opposed to face-to-face contacts and personal relationships, make to self-recruitment?

   c. In light of the preeminent role that peer groups and social networks have played in the formation and operations of VE groups across a variety of historical and geographical settings, the possible role of this variable must be examined systematically. For instance, is there evidence that groups of friends are being radicalized and drawn into VE activities together? Which types of personal relationships (e.g., friendship, family- or neighborhood-based ties, or interaction with peers, radical preachers, or charismatic figures active at the local level) seem to be most critical to participation in VE activities?

   d. If certain institutions or arenas appear to play a particularly prominent role in the turn of some individuals toward VE, how do radicalization and/or recruitment processes within them unfold? Similarly, how do VE organizations maintain commitment to the cause (and to the organizations themselves) on the part of their members, or of those who are loosely affiliated with them? Are certain mechanisms used, and, if so, which ones?

   e. Do violent extremists display a tendency to have gone through similar experiences (e.g., failure in school, a prolonged inability to secure a job, prior involvement in criminal activities, having been a direct victim of harsh government repression, or having a close relative who suffered from government abuse)? If so, is it possible to "map" typical trajectories, and identify "tipping points" or watersheds in the process of radicalization?

3. It often is easier (and more effective) to build programs that enhance or expand mitigating factors or aspects of societal resilience. Those institutions, actors and processes that might serve to protect the population from influence and undermine VE group prospects should be identified for possible

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[5] Relevant institutions may include universities (or specific departments within them), schools, madrasas, mosques, youth groups, and prisons.

support. One example here is the widespread existence of *fadas* or informal associations of young people in Niger. *Fadas* provide an outlet for the expression of grievances, a network for addressing needs and positive mechanism for collective action. They also provide an avenue for positive social relationships.

Step Five: In reviewing the analysis in steps 1-4, determine the key political, socioeconomic and cultural drivers at work.

Based on the analysis conducted in the Drivers' Guide, decision-makers should remain particularly attune to the socioeconomic, political and cultural drivers identified below, bearing in mind the following points.

1. These drivers do not represent an exhaustive list, but the literature on VE reveals that they often play a prominent role. The more of them at work in a given political setting, the more that context can be described as representing an "enabling" environment for VE.

2. These drivers overlap. For instance, the perception of "Islam under siege," described below as a "cultural driver," is closely related to the view (considered below as a "political driver") that the international system is unfair, that it discriminates against Muslim countries and peoples, and that Muslims (especially those located in conflict zones, such as Palestine or Chechnya) are being oppressed. Put differently, the perception of an existential cultural threat to Islam often is inextricably related to the conviction that the current international order is fundamentally hostile or unfair to Muslim societies and peoples, and that it operates as a mechanism for their oppression. Similarly, societal discrimination, as discussed below, may relate primarily to unequal access to jobs and economic opportunities, and/or it may be inextricably related to the perception that Islamic culture is systematically devalued. Within a single category of drivers, too, there can be significant overlap. Among socioeconomic drivers, for instance, prior or continued involvement in petty crime or illicit economic activities may operate as a driver of its own, or it may be largely a by-product of another driver, social exclusion. For that matter, denial of political rights and civil liberties, the first political driver highlighted below, correlates with the second such driver (particularly brutal rule that entails gross violations of human rights). After all, harsh government repression and systemic political exclusion usually go hand in hand. The eighth political driver (discredited government and absent or co-opted legal oppositions) is closely connected to the first and second political drivers – though it also captures critical dimensions that are not reflected in those two drivers.

3. Not all the drivers below will be relevant to the particular case at hand. For programming purposes, efforts should concentrate on selecting the most pertinent ones, prioritizing among them, and identifying how they relate to one another (especially in ways that reinforce each other's effects).

4. Of those drivers that have salience, identify which have been taken up by VE groups in their communications attempts to appeal to the population.

5. One factor's impact on VE largely may be a function of whether or not another factor also is at work. For instance, societal discrimination may create grievances and anger, but if political avenues through which discrimination can be addressed exist, the likelihood that it will translate into VE may be reduced significantly. Northeastern Kenya is an example of a case where historic marginalization and resentment has been alleviated by the existence of democratic channels for addressing grievances and a concerted effort by the government to provide increasing resources to the area.

   a. Similarly, a government's ability to address issues of social exclusion may be undermined by widespread corruption, which saps state capacity.

   b. Promising diplomatic initiatives or breakthroughs that reduce the gap between the Muslim world and the West may decrease the perception of an existential threat to Islam. By contrast, bloodshed in conflict zones involving Muslims may exacerbate the feeling that Islam is under

attack. Even more remote parts of the Sahel are beginning to receive highly politicized and emotional images of Muslims suffering as the hands of the West.

6. Several factors often work together, and the full impact of one generally is a function of whether others, too, are operative.

    a. For instance, the propensity of social marginality to contribute to VE is largely a function of whether or not it leads to the formation of personal relationships and networks that can operate as powerful pulls into VE activities. Individuals who feel thoroughly estranged from mainstream society may drift into VE groups not primarily because of their anger at being excluded, but because social alienation fuels certain types of personal relationships and group dynamics that, in turn, facilitate the turn to VE.

    b. Pervasive corruption undermines state capacity, and facilitates the emergence of "ungoverned," "under-governed," "misgoverned," or "poorly governed" spaces, which, in turn, may provide opportunities for VE groups. Along similar lines, failed or failing states are conducive to local conflicts that may be cop-opted or hijacked by transnational terrorist networks. It is revealing that, in an article published in June 2006, a global Jihadist strategist described Africa as fertile ground for recruitment, organization and planning precisely because of the combination of weak government, widespread corruption, and internal conflicts.[6]

In other words, if they are to pave the way for effective programming, explanations of VE should not limit themselves to highlighting a long list of individual drivers. Rather, they must zero in on the most salient ones; determine which other relevant variables tend to be, at least for the most part, side products of those key drivers; and pinpoint how those drivers relate to one another (and to less important factors) in ways that produce and sustain VE over time.

Step Six: Prioritize drivers and target locations, determine DA and strategic communications interventions.

A final step in the process is *first* to rank drivers in terms of salience and to decide on target geographic areas/populations, and *second* to match DA responses and accompanying communications plans to those drivers and locations. The table below presents one way to summarize data. It is organized by priority geographic area because assistance and outreach plans need to be tailored to the specific situation of a given area and activities should be integrated across sectors. This is not meant to suggest that a given CE program will not have a national component, or a substantial overlap in program components, or even a national communications strategy, but rather reflects the need to consider VE dynamics and drivers in specific regions of the country because these are likely to differ.[7]

As noted previously, in low risk environments, where drivers exist but there is negligible VE activity to use in prioritization, programmers may have difficulty determining in which drivers they should invest. Our current knowledge base is modest and assists only to a limited extent with such decision-making but over time knowledge will grow, enabling more refined programming choices.

Implementers should monitor changes in these drivers over time and should track new information that might shed a different light on drivers. For example, the risk level in Kenya is at this writing increasing as the Shabab in Somalia expand their activities and gain additional foreign fighters.

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[6] The article, entitled "AQ is moving to Africa," was published in the Jihadi virtual magazine *Sada al-Jihad* (Echo of Jihad) by Abu Azzam al-Ansari. See Angel Rabasa, *Radical Islam in East Africa* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2009), p. 3.

[7] It would also be possible to reorganize the table by drivers with regions as an additional column.

Annex A presents a matrix that lays out a continuum of VE threat from negligible to insurgency and specifies common characteristics for different threat levels as well as likely development responses.

THREAT ASSESSMENT MATRIX FOR COUNTRY X

Overall country VE threat: (high, medium/mixed, low or non existent)			
Summary of needed approach: (prevention, mitigation, no role because not needed, no role because counter productive or irrelevant)			
Drivers	Salience of Drivers: (high, medium or low)	Development Assistance Response	Communications & Outreach Response
Region or city or neighborhood #1 (list in order of priority risk):[8]			
Level of VE organization & activity: (high, medium, low/negligible)			
Key Political Drivers (in order of priority)			
Key Socio-economic Drivers (in order of priority)			
Key Cultural Drivers (in order of priority)			
Region or city or neighborhood #2:			
Level of VE organization & activity: (high, medium, low/negligible)			
Key Political Drivers (in order of priority)			
Key Socio-economic Drivers (in order of priority)			
Key Cultural Drivers (in order of priority)			

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[8] It might only be necessary to highlight types of areas such as peri-urban and slum areas when the risk level is widely diffused or dispersed.

SOCIOECONOMIC DRIVERS

1. Social exclusion and marginality.

1. Field research suggests that high levels of social fragmentation and marginality are push factors for VE. That is particularly true for youth, especially first- and second-generation city dwellers in peri-urban areas. Across the Muslim world, one significant variable linking social exclusion to VE has been the failure of the post-colonial state to integrate into mainstream society first- and second-generation migrants to the city, to establish its legitimacy and moral authority with regard to those populations, inspire a modicum of respect among them, and deter illegal behavior by them. As a result, many youth with fragile ties to modern society have slipped through its cracks, felt abandoned by it, and, in some cases, turned against it.

2. Social isolation and alienation may operate as a powerful driver not so much directly (because individuals explicitly and consciously resent their marginalization), but indirectly.

   - For instance, the personal relationships and group dynamics that are forged, or solidify, in response to social exclusion may be critical forces behind the formation of violent cliques, or behind the ability to VE movements to recruit (see the driver below). Social atomization may feed into the quest for new communities, virtual or physical. Individuals thoroughly disconnected from their immediate environment may look for "ideological soul-mates" in internet chat rooms or on websites. Those virtual spaces, in turn, may become the primary medium through which socially alienated individuals are exposed to violent discourses, and are provided with a conceptual framework that allows them to account, and seek redress, for their alienation.

   - The impact of social isolation also may be felt through the search for adventure, glory or fame that it may promote, especially among alienated youth looking to emulate perceived "heroes" or "icons" of resistance against oppression. Where extremist groups and violence are celebrated and where they are seen as just responses to occupation or repression, this logic may become particularly relevant. Marginality also translates into restless young people having too much time on their hands, and the resulting boredom can benefit VE organizations. Global Jihadist movements have shown themselves able to exploit the attraction of angry youth to risky behavior that provide an escape from dreary lives. The idleness and unemployment (or underemployment) associated with marginality also may make youth far more receptive to the salaries and other material benefits which violent organizations often provide. It may lead to involvement in smuggling, trafficking, or extortion network that are tied to VE networks, or that facilitate entry into them. As discussed further below, prior or continued involvement in petty crime or illegal activities has proven to be a significant risk factor associated with marginality.

   - Social isolation and alienation also may trigger a search for identity, meaning and purpose, which can lead to increased religiosity; that quest, in turn, can open the door to joining violent religious extremist organizations. Of course, only a fraction of those experiencing a spiritual or religious awakening will become susceptible to VE rhetoric – but some will, as has been well documented with regard to the Tablighi movement.[9]

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[9] In Western Europe, for instance, many of the second-generation immigrants (or converts) who gravitate toward AQ-type or AQ-affiliated groups began doing so after becoming "born-again Muslims." Their non-violent phase was relatively brief, and paved the way to an embrace of views emphasizing the need for violent action. The London-based *Hizb ut-Tahir* pietist movement represents a case in point. Through its *al-Muhajirun* network, that movement is known to have acted as a conduit for the recruitment of born-again Muslims into violent extremist endeavors. See for instance Qintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising* (Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) and Olivier Roy, *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East* (New York: Columbian University Press) 2008.

- The path from marginality to VE may pass through other phenomena typically associated with social exclusion: the breakdown of the family, the rise in juvenile delinquency, the decline or disappearance of earlier arenas for positive social interaction among youth, and the overall weakening of checks on deviant behavior. Across the Muslim world, the massive and haphazard urbanization of the past 40 years has shattered centuries-old mechanisms of social control. Youth susceptibility to the lures of VE organizations increases where family-, tribal-, clan- and ethnic-based structures that used to constrain anti-social behavior have frayed or disappeared; where parenting is poor, where the state has shown itself unable to create alternative mechanisms of social regulation; and where former avenues of sociability have faded away. Recent pilot VE risk assessments in Morocco, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa have found this to be the case. In some instances, youth are migrating to cities on their own and are disconnected from family and community life. This is compounded by the fact that traditional cultures in Africa often did not provide a decision-making role or voice to youth (including to those who had reached their early 30s). The negative side effects of such trends may be compounded by youth's exposure to highly politicized, emotional images and discourses coming from the outside, as well as to the black-and-white, bland and austere Salafi Islam imported from the Gulf states. Combined, these developments can represent a major force behind rising VE of the Salafi Jihadi type.[10] The high levels of crime, insecurity, and drug addiction often associated with social marginality also have created a "market niche" for Salafi Jihadi groups that enforce a strict moral order.

2. Social networks and group dynamics.

Pre-existing personal relationships can play a powerful role in recruitment to VE groups. Friends may form or join an extremist clique or cell together (i.e., as a collective act). Together, they may drift progressively into the orbit of radical ideas, and become increasingly insulated from mainstream society. A single individual may be pulled into a radical organization through a prior friendship with, or family ties to, one or several other members of that organization. The desire to follow in the footsteps of a friend or relative, too, has proven to be a powerful force in drawing alienated youth into the global jihad. Alternatively, propinquity to a radical mosque may give friends a place to hang out, and the presence of a charismatic, radical preacher in the mosque or neighborhood may provide a focus for the group, a model to emulate, as well as access to a discourse that legitimizes violence. Strong within-group bonds then typically are critical to sustaining membership, motivation and commitment.

The importance of this factor is not meant to suggest that social networks will put youth at risk of extremism or are predictably malignant. The programming section of this paper in fact recommends the establishment of constructive, moderate social groups to displace the attraction of less benign relationships.

3. Societal discrimination

1. Real or perceived discrimination, especially in the labor market and with regard to educational opportunities, may prompt or facilitate a turn to VE. Social stigmatization and negative stereotyping of entire communities (actual or perceived), or the bullying and teasing of individual members of those communities, may be significant radicalizing forces as well. "Discrimination," therefore, must be understood broadly. It can involve being exposed to prejudice, inequities, or bigotry, and it may be felt at the individual or the community-wide levels, or both. In societies where Muslims live as minorities, the perception of being personally slighted can easily escalate into, and merge with, a belief that one's community and Muslims in general are vilified or oppressed in today's world. Where

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[10] See, for instance, two recent USAID assessments conducted in, respectively, northeastern Kenya and Mauritania: "Garissa Youth Assessment" (November 2008) and "Mauritania Pilot – CT and Development" (June 2008).

the perception of systemic discrimination against Muslims combines with other drivers (for instance, frustrated expectations and peer influences), it may become a particularly salient push factor.

2. Alleged or actual societal discrimination has fueled the radicalization of young Muslims in Western Europe. It also can be a significant force among Muslim minorities in Africa and Asia. As noted above, the sense of being socially and/or economically discriminated against may be inextricably bound with the feeling that Islam as a religion and culture, and Muslims as a community, are not given proper respect – that they, instead, are looked down upon, derided, or demonized.

3. Anecdotal evidence points to a related variable at work among young Muslims studying in the West.[11] Some of these achievement-oriented youth, who may be uprooted from family and other support networks for the first time in their lives, are thoroughly (and, over time, increasingly) culturally alienated from their environment. They may apprehend this alienation as an indication of rejection by the surrounding society, and/or as a manifestation of fundamental dysfunctions within that society (thus paving the way for the embrace of ideologies that justify the use of violence against it). Several forces may combine to make it easier for VE viewpoints to gain traction among these vulnerable, "transplanted" populations: perceived discrimination, social isolation, resentment at not "fitting in," a sense of personal and collective inadequacy, frustration at the prospect of not being able to bridge certain cultural gaps, a feeling of insecurity and being adrift, the conclusion that one never will be able to integrate, and anger at the perceived victimization of fellow Muslims around the globe. These phenomena may promote a search for companionship and new support networks; a tendency to form or drift into radical groups (see above), or to look for membership in an "imagined *umma*" (or community) on the internet;[12] and a vulnerability to the rhetoric of VE ideologues who can provide socially atomized and alienated youth with a new frame of reference.

4. Subordinate social groups or clans may find Wahhabi/Salafi ideology useful for the purposes of mounting claims for equality. This has happened in northern Yemen and northern Mali.

4. Frustrated expectations and relative deprivation

1. Historical trends, as well as more recent ones, suggest that frustrated expectations for economic improvement and social mobility are a far more frequent source of VE than mere economic deprivation. More often than not, discontent arises not so much from the system's failure to deliver, but from its inability to keep up with expectations – especially those of the educated, upwardly mobile and achievement-oriented elites that emerge through modernization, economic development, and globalization. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that relative deprivation and frustrated expectations – for economic benefits, political power, and/or social status – can be important drivers of VE. That may be particularly true with respect to youth whose expectations cannot be satisfied due to sluggish economies; educational curricula that are not consistent with the needs of the labor market and the global economy; as well as pervasive corruption, cronyism, and nepotism. The disruptive impact of such frustrated expectations often is exacerbated by the personal alienation, loss of traditional support networks, and sense of cultural estrangement that often result from processes of displacement (as in the case of youth relocating to large cities or the West to pursue advanced studies).

2. Those most likely to experience relative deprivation on a significant scale include university students and graduates with grim economic prospects; youth who attended or completed high school; and youth who, coming from disadvantaged or modest economic backgrounds, lack the social connections that often remain critical to economic and political success in developing countries. The

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[11] See for instance Terry McDermott on Mohammed Atta and Lawrence Wright on Sayyid Qutb. Terry McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers: The 9/11 Hijackers – Who They Were, Why They Did it* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), and Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

[12] See Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (Columbia University Press, 2004).

anger created by the sense of having been denied (by ruling elites as well as by society at large) a fair opportunity to build a decent future may affect middle-class and under-privileged youth alike. After all, most youth in developing countries have acquired more education, and have far broader horizons, than their parents. As a result, they have built up higher expectations, and relative deprivation may be more widespread among them than was true in earlier eras.

3. A relatively sudden and massive expansion of higher-education opportunities frequently precedes surges in VE activity. The rapid and spectacular growth of higher education in Western Europe and North America during the 1960s fits this pattern, as the examples of West Germany and Italy most vividly demonstrate. But the same process has been at work across the developing world, including among Muslim countries, in the past four decades. In Egypt, for instance, the tremendous expansion of university education during the 1960s and 1970s contributed to emergence of radical, violent Islamist groups that, after all, first appeared and organized on university campuses. Similar patterns have played themselves across the Islamic world – from Pakistan to the West Bank and Gaza, and from Saudi Arabia to northern Nigeria, where universities have been hotbeds of VE thought.[13]

5. Unmet social and economic needs

1. As discussed in the Drivers' Guide, it is important not to overstate the extent to which issues of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate service delivery by the government drive VE. Some VE groups (e.g., Hamas, Hezbollah) have been able to garner support, at least in part, because of their ability to provide services. For many other violent organizations, however, this variable has not played a significant role.[14] Moreover, if unmet needs were, on their own, a decisive driver of VE, then VE movements should enjoy far more grassroots support than they do across Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Still, as the Drivers' Guide also underscored, problems stemming from a government's failure to satisfy basic social and economic needs can come into play, both directly and indirectly. For one, unmet needs may provide opportunities for VE organizations (or charities linked to them) to recruit volunteers by offering salaries and benefits.

   • There is evidence that global Jihadists have viewed East Africa as a potentially fertile ground for recruitment precisely for those reasons.[15] In Somalia, following the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, al-Ittihad al-Islami initially was able to gain ground because of the jobs and services it provided to impoverished individuals left with few other options for making ends meet. Similar factors appear to have played a role in the rise of the Shabab ("the lads"), the violent group of young Somali fighters who first emerged as the armed wing of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006. Members of the Shabab are provided with a monthly salary; they are fed, receive medical care, and their families are partially provided for if they are killed. The Shabab even are rumored to benefit by charging a protection fee (a small percentage of the ransoms earned) from the pirates who operate out of the central Somali port of Haradheere.[16] In addition, there are recent allegations that the Shabab have asked pirates to ferry arms and al-Qaeda (AQ) fighters across the Red Sea.[17] As the Shabab's

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[13] For a detailed discussion of the dynamics that underlie the relationship between the expansion of higher education and surges in VE activity, see the Drivers' Guide.

[14] On the Taliban in Pakistan, see for instance Sarah Ladbury and Maliha Hussein, "Developing the Evidence Base for Hypotheses on Extremism and Radicalisation in Pakistan" (Study commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), April 2008).

[15] See Angel Rabasa, *Radical Islam in East Africa* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2009), 3.

[16] See "Somalia's Islamists: The Rise of the Shahab," *The Economist*, December 20, 2008.

[17] For one article suggesting connections, see http://centralasiaonline.com/en/articles/090416_examination_nws.

power has grown, they have been given some credit by local populations for improving security.[18]

- In Pakistan, the salaries paid to militants have helped Jihadi groups recruit and retain members.[19] In Afghanistan, too, Taliban leaders have taken advantage of the lack of economic opportunities. They have offered monetary rewards for specific "services," such as attacking a convoy or placing an IED (Improvised Explosive Device). Meanwhile, the decline of the agricultural economy has made it more difficult to restrain the multi-million-dollar opium crop business that funds the insurgency.[20] When soldiers are paid less than the Taliban, it is not hard to understand why many impoverished youth would join the latter as opposed to the army. Similar phenomena were observed in post-2003 Iraq, where, between 2004 and 2006, several reports pointed to the existence of a pool of "insurgents-for-hire" – young men pushed by desperate economic conditions into volunteering to join the insurgency.[21]

2. Unmet social and economic needs can matter not so much because of the material deprivation they entail, but because lack of access to food, shelter and basic care may be interpreted as an indication of total abandonment by the state, by political and economic elites, and by society in general. In other words, extreme deprivation (particularly in the face of obvious disparities in wealth) may feed into a broader crisis of legitimacy and moral authority by the state and the existing sociopolitical order in general. The perception that governmental, political and economic elites – indeed, society at large – have abdicated any sense of commitment or responsibility toward the most disadvantaged segments of the population may help explain the resort to indiscriminate forms of violence toward not only state officials, but civilians as well. What is critical here is not so much the material grievances that social marginality produces, but the far more dangerous message that acute forms of social exclusion may convey to those who are its victims: state and society alike have turned their back and given up on you.

   Those considerations may help explain the pull exercised by *takfiri* doctrine on populations subjected to severe social exclusion. Embrace of this extremist ideology of rejection of state and society alike simply may mirror the rejection felt by those who espouse it. For instance, the perceived indifference of state officials, and of society at large, toward the cruel fate of those living in sordid, peri-urban areas -– indeed, the perception that both state and society have been complicit in allowing that situation to persist – may lead some of those affected by that state of affairs to view violence as a form of "reciprocal brutality." The inhumanity that gravely marginalized constituencies may exhibit through indiscriminate attacks may be viewed as a response (unjustifiable as it may be) to the degrading conditions they have had to endure. Their callous disregard for human life may be understood as a reaction to the ruthlessness that, they feel, has been shown toward them. Treated as social outcasts, they, in turn, look upon both state and society as pariahs. *Takfiri* thought provides a uniquely appropriate vehicle to articulate, justify, and give "ideological depth" to such an outlook.[22]

3. As suggested above, when unmet social and economic needs operate as a significant driver of VE, they rarely do so alone; instead, they typically interact with other factors, the most important of

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[18] This particularly concerns the removal of illegal checkpoints set up by bandits. *Somalia:: To Move Beyond the Failed State*, ICG report No 147, 23 December 2008, 14. Also, interviewees interviewed by Mary Hope Schwoebel and Lynn Carter in Kenya in November 2009 in Kenya credited the Shabab with improving cross-border security along the Kenya/Somalia border at Mandera.

[19] See Jessica Stern, 285.

[20] See David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85.

[21] See for instance Amit R. Paley, "Iraqis Joining Insurgency Less for Cause than for Cash," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2007, p. A01.

[22] See Selma Belaala, "Morocco: Slums Breed Jihad," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2004.

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which must be identified. Among those factors, two often loom large: widespread corruption and the inability of the state to provide for security and access to justice. These factors combined with socioeconomic deprivation often provide opportunities for VE organizations to expand their influence. Pakistan in 2009 provides a case in point. In the Swat Valley in particular, the Taliban tapped into the economic frustrations of landless tenants, took advantage of the resentment created by a corrupt justice system, and benefited a state unable to deliver security and provide effective protection against the Taliban's intimidation and coercion tactics.[23] The example of Pakistan and many other countries also suggests that, while unemployment or under-employment by themselves do not trigger VE, they can make young men, in particular, far more vulnerable to the lure of involvement in illicit activities that, in turn, open the door to VE, as discussed further below.

6. Greed, or the proliferation of illegal economic activities.

1. As discussed above, where large-scale poverty and lack of economic opportunities prevail, VE groups may provide impoverished populations with most of the few sources of income they can readily access. It is not surprising, in those conditions, that economic considerations sometimes play a key role in explaining recruitment and community support for VE organizations. But, at least for some individuals, greed – as opposed to merely the need to make ends meet – may be a factor as well. Support for VE organizations may stem from the lucrative economic opportunities (e.g., drug smuggling, trafficking, or extortion) that those organizations control; individuals may view joining or supporting VE organizations as a way of gaining access to those economic opportunities.

2. Illicit economic activities also may represent an important driver of VE because they provide resources that accrue to VE organizations, and without which those organizations could not sustain their activities. In Colombia, for example, since the 1980s the drug trade has been instrumental to the effectiveness and resilience of both guerrilla organizations and a variety of paramilitary groups. Similarly, in Afghanistan, the multimillion-dollar opium crop represents the Taliban's main source of funds. In Spring 2009, American military commanders estimated that the $300 million a year that the movement reaped from the opium trade was sufficient to sustain all of its military operations in the southern part of the country for an entire year.[24]

3. Involvement in illicit activities sometimes predates – and can pave the way for –involvement with VE groups. The Drivers' Guide discussed in some detail several different possible paths from criminality to VE:

   • In some cases, greed-motivated behavior can create a convergence of interests with VE organizations (including being able to circumvent state institutions and avoid detection by the security forces). Thus, tactical alliances can be forged between criminal and VE networks (as with Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb smuggling in the Sahel);[25] over time, efforts to coordinate operations may give rise to ideological affinities as well.

   • In other instances, embracing intolerant and violent views may become a means of justifying (to oneself as well as to others) continued involvement in criminal activities, perhaps especially if those activities generate revenues necessary for pursuing religious objectives.[26]

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[23] See for instance Jane Perlez and Pir Zubair Shah, "Taliban Enlist an Army of Pakistan's Have-Nots." *The New York Times*, April 17, 2009, p. A1, A12.

[24] See Dexter Filkins, "U.S. Sets Fight In the Poppies to Stop Taliban," *The New York Times*, April 29, 2009, p. A.1.

[25] See the Drivers' Guide for illustrations.

[26] For instance, a USAID extremism assessment conducted in Mauritania in May 2008 revealed that self-appointed preachers were known to have issued *fatwas* to the effect that dealing in drugs is not only permissible (as long as it does not involve Muslims consuming the drugs), but that it even should be encouraged when the profits are used to support jihad. Several analysts on the ground argued that such moral validation of criminal behavior represents an important source of the appeal of radical preachers to idle youth involved in drug dealing. These youth, it was pointed out, often are eager to have their behavior

- Conversely, turning to a particularly strict interpretation of Islam may be viewed as a way to make up for a life of crime, redeem oneself in the eyes of God, and save one's soul.[27]
- VE ideologies can provide legitimacy from criminal activities. For example, an Imam in Niger issued a fatwa declaring that drug smuggling did not violate Islamic precepts as long as the drugs were not sold to Muslim users and the profits were used to benefit jihad.[28]
- Finally, criminality also may lead to VE through jail-induced radicalization, indoctrination, or exposure to recruitment mechanisms. There is, in that regard, significant empirical evidence pointing to the role which prisons have played as incubators for Salafi Jihadism.[29]

POLITICAL DRIVERS

1. Denial of political rights and civil liberties.

1. Empirical evidence suggests that the countries from which terrorists stem are characterized, first and foremost, by severe restrictions on civil liberties and political rights.[30] Both logically and empirically, it typically is difficult to disentangle political rights and civil liberties from each other. For one, progress in one area tends to correlate and facilitate advances in the other.

   - Civil liberties include freedom of expression, association, movement, and the press; freedom of, and from, religion; the right to due process; protections for individuals against the unwarranted use of state power; and protection for minorities against the potential encroachment on their fundamental rights that may result from majority rule.
   - Political rights refer to the existence of rules and mechanisms (e.g., free and fair elections) that enable individuals and communities to affect governmental decision-making, and to participate in political processes more generally.

   Controlling for other variables, the more a political system restricts civil liberties, the more is it unresponsive to citizens' demands, and the more it constricts opportunities for open, broad-based political participation, the more vulnerable to VE it seems to be. Exclusionary regimes that violate civil liberties easily can feed the belief that violence represents the only viable option for bringing about genuine political change. Civil liberties and political rights also may represent the critical link between economic development and vulnerability to VE. Since wealthier countries display a greater propensity to protect their residents' civil liberties and political freedoms, higher levels of economic development may reduce vulnerability to VE primarily by helping countries sustain civil liberties and political rights.[31]

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legitimated by figures viewed as carrying moral authority. Anecdotal evidence suggests that similar religious rationalizations of criminal behavior play a role in other settings as well. See Guilain Denoeux and Zeric Smith, "Mauritania Pilot – CT and Development," prepared for USAID/Africa Bureau, June 2008.

[27] Such considerations appear to have played a key role for at least one of the masterminds of the March 2004 bombings in Madrid. See for instance Andrea Elliott, "Where Boys Grow Up to Be Jihadis," *The New York Times*, November 25, 2007.

[28] Sheldon Gellar (with Angela Martin), "Niger Extremism Risk Assessment," MSI for USAID, March 2009.

[29] In both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, brutal and humiliating treatment in jail fueled AQ recruiting. Among European and American converts to radical Islam, Richard Reid (the "shoe bomber") in the UK, Jose Padilla in the US, and José Emilion Suárez Trashorras (the Spaniard who supplied the explosives used in the 2004 Madrid bombings) all came to embrace violent extremist agendas while incarcerated (previously, they had been petty criminals with no apparent interest or involvement in radical political or religious causes). And in Morocco, the wave of arrests that followed the May 2003 Casablanca suicide bombings turned some Moroccan detention centers into channels for VE recruitment and organizing.

[30] See for instance Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 8.

[31] See Alan B. Krueger, *op. cit.* Krueger (p. 7) is quick to add the important caveat that "there are many examples of countries with low living standards that provide their citizens with civil liberties and political rights, and enough examples of rich countries (like Saudi Arabia) that restrict civil liberties and political rights, to make it clear that raising living standards is not by itself

2. Harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights

1. Governments that routinely victimize their citizens and engage in indiscriminate repression seem particularly prone to generating VE. Cruel, degrading treatment at the hands of the police or the security forces, or being closely connected to someone who suffered from such treatment, are significant risk factors. Subjection to torture can feed a burning desire for revenge. Indeed, an examination of the profile of some of the key ideologues and many of the activists in violent Islamist extremist movements suggests that torture was a significant factor in their radicalization.[32]

2. Repeated victimization of citizens by the state, or sustained exposure to state-instigated or state-sanctioned brutality and bloodshed, may fuel a predisposition to view (and, in some cases, even celebrate) violence as a rightful and even necessary mechanism for achieving political goals. That may be particularly true where particular histories suggest that violence often "pays off." Research by Freedom House also suggests that regimes that are particularly brutal and arbitrary not only generate more terrorists, but that the terrorists they engender tend to be more lethal than their counterparts from less repressive states.[33]

3. Exposure to harsh and indiscriminate government repression not only can push individuals into VE organizations, but it also enhances the likelihood of broader community support for, and complicity with, those organizations – as examples from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to Hamas suggest. Direct exposure to repression at home also may enhance susceptibility to, and empathy for, the suffering of Muslims elsewhere. The more intense victimization at home, the more the perceived callous disregard for Muslim lives around the globe is likely to resonate on a deep, personal level.

4. Harsh repression at home can push into the transnational arena VEs whose agendas originally were driven by local concerns and dynamics. For instance, having failed to defeat the "near enemy" (their own governments), radical Islamists redirected their energies into confronting the "far-away enemy" (the US government). They did so, in part, because of their assessment of the US's key role in propping up authoritarian regimes at home. After all, the anger of Ayman al-Zawahiri (and that of his associates in Islamic Jihad) originally was focused on the Egyptian government; it was only subsequently that Zawahiri and many of his colleagues assumed leading roles in the Transnational Salafi Jihadist (TSJ) movement. More broadly, it is no coincidence that many of the operatives that came to provide the core of the AQ network originated from particularly repressive and exclusionary political environments (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, post-1992 Algeria). More recently, Saudi violent extremists have been pushed out of Saudi Arabia and joined AQ in Yemen, while some Pakistan extremists, increasingly under pressure at home, are reported to have joined the Shabab in Somalia.[34]

3. Foreign occupation

1. The previous two variables – denial of political rights and civil liberties, and harsh government repression – frequently occur concurrently. In practice, they often are difficult to disentangle from one another: by definition, repressive regimes deny political rights and civil liberties, while governments that violate political rights and civil liberties often are particularly oppressive and abusive of human rights. Nowhere are those connections in greater evidence than in countries that

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sufficient for reducing the risks of terrorism." Respect for political rights and civil liberties on the one hand, and decreased vulnerability to VE on the other, do not fully correlate for a variety of reasons: terrorist groups can exploit protections of civil liberties for purposes of recruitment, indoctrination and political organization; free and fair elections will not deter from violence groups that know full well that their agendas would never receive the support of a significant portion of the electorate; and where extremist movements enjoy a degree of grassroots support, fragile coalition governments may display a tenuous commitment to fighting them.

[32] See the Drivers' Guide for details.

[33] Adrian Karatnycky, "Civic Power and Electoral Politics." *Freedom House Report for 2005*, p. 9.

[34] Private communication between a Somalia expert and Lynn Carter, 6 October 2009.

are subjected to brutal military occupations. Indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that foreign military occupation – and, more generally, large-scale external political and military intrusion – represents a significant driver of VE.

2. Many scholars have emphasized the role of foreign occupation in the cocktail of factors that prompt individuals to resort to suicide bombings.[35] Based on a data set of all suicide attacks that occurred from 1980 to 2003, Robert Pape, in particular, views foreign occupation as the decisive variable. He concludes that, at least for the time period on which he focused, "every group mounting a suicide campaign … had as a major objective – or its central objective – coercing a foreign state that [had] military forces in what the terrorists [saw] as their homeland to take those forces out."[36] This largely mono-causal explanation for suicide terrorism may simplify a more complex reality, and it may be even less valid in the post-2001 era than it was in earlier periods.[37] Still, the linkage between foreign occupation and suicide terrorism deserves to be noted. A useful starting point, in this regard, is Mark Harrison's claim that "suicide terrorism has arisen in the context of injuries done to communities by expulsion, expropriation, or occupation."[38] Brutal occupations are particularly prone to engendering a determination to avenge, through violence, what is perceived as both a personal and national humiliation. Interviews with the families and friends whom suicide bombers left behind consistently suggest that the bombers viewed their final act, in part, as a dramatic form of self-sacrifice and courage, and as a way of redeeming their, and their community's, honor. As Pedahzur has noted:

> The basic urge to inflict pain on those perceived as responsible for the anguish of the aggrieved party appear in many biographies of suicide bombers throughout the world… Revenge is not limited … to cases where an individual suffers a direct loss … [It] can also be in response to the continuous suffering of the community to which the perpetrator belongs. Many suicide bombers stated that they wanted to hurt the enemy in the same way that their people had been hurt by it, and they wanted to make this enemy feel and pay for what it had done to the community.[39]

A desire to exact revenge for occupation-triggered harm to loved ones is reflected in examples ranging from Chechnya's "black widows"[40] to many Palestinians who carried out suicide attacks during the second intifada,[41] Feelings of moral obligation to kin, peers, and fellow citizens who fell as "martyrs of the resistance to the occupation" also can play a prominent role. Many groups that came to embrace VE tactics – even those that had active political or social wings, and were always more than mere terrorist organizations – were born in the context of military occupation, and their *raison d'être*, at least initially, was to resist that occupation. In the Muslim world, Hamas and

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[35] See for instance Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005); Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Ariel Merari, *Suicide Terrorism* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2005); Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Mark Harrison, "An Economist Looks at Suicide Terrorism," *World Economics*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (July-September 2006); and Mohammed Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

[36] Pape, *op. cit,* 21.

[37] See Scott Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism." *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring): 127-147.

[38] Mark Harrison, *op. cit.*, 2.

[39] Pedahzur, *op. cit.*, 142.

[40] The expression refers to female suicide bombers whose husbands or brothers died fighting for Chechnya's independence.

[41] There is much evidence that many Palestinian suicide bombers previously had been injured or arrested by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), and/or had a relative (often a brother) who had been killed by the IDF. See for instance Pedahzur, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-147; Boaz Ganor, "Suicide Terrorism: An Overview" (Herzlia, Israel: International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2000); Sean Yom and Basel Saleh, "Palestinian Suicide Bombers: A Statistical Analysis" (Unpublished paper, 2004, available at http://www.ecaar.org/Newsletter/Nov04/saleh.htm); and Robert J. Brym and Bader Araj, "Suicide Bombing as Strategy and Interaction: The Case of the Second Intifada" *Social Forces*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (2006).

Hezbollah represent prime examples of that situation. As former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak put it in July 2006, "When we entered Lebanon … there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shi'a in the south [who initially viewed the Israeli invasion as a way of ridding themselves of the overbearing PLO existence in their midst]. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah."[42] Over the years, and until Israel finally withdrew in May 2000, continued military occupation of the south further radicalized Lebanon's Shi'ite community, and provided opportunities for the development of transnational connections binding Hezbollah to other radical actors in the region.

4. Political and/or military encroachment

1. Short of full-fledged military occupation, heavy-handed, large-scale political and/or military intrusion into the internal affairs of a country, community or region can alienate the population significantly enough to draw large segments of it to resort to violence, or to provide support for organizations that do. Search-and-destroy operations, troops deployment, forceful assimilation policies by centralizing states, or efforts to reduce the autonomy, prerogatives and/or privileges long enjoyed by particular regions or districts all are apt to generate violent reactions. Communities determined to preserve a degree of self-rule (or de facto independence), and eager to uphold their traditions in the face of external encroachment, may not hesitate to resort to violence in the pursuit of that goal. That is particularly true when, in their eyes, the preservation of autonomy and indigenous customs is inextricably tied to the defense of personal and collective honor. In some cases, external interference even may act as a catalyst that unifies social entities (tribes, clans, families, ethnic groups) that, until then, had been engaged in fierce competition with one another. The call for joining in a jihad against unbelieving foreign invaders (or a state denounced as having sold out to them) can prove a powerful force in creating a broad-based coalition of disparate forces.

    Indeed, a scenario along those very lines played itself out in Iraq between 2003 and 2007, when the perceived military occupation of the country by the US (which also was viewed through religious lenses, as the occupation of Muslim land by a predominantly Christian army) was one of the main forces prompting a tactical alliance between Sunni insurgents and AQ. Similarly, analyzing the conundrum faced by coalition forces in Afghanistan in early 2009, one of the leading experts on that country insists that "the mere presence of foreign soldiers fighting a war in Afghanistan is probably the single most important factor in the resurgence of the Taliban."[43] He adds that U.S. air strikes play the key role in "keeping the spirit of jihad alive," and that the Taliban's ability to gain ground in non-Pashtun areas has been due primarily to their successful efforts to frame the war "as a jihad and a liberation war against (non-Muslim) foreign armies." [44]

2. As a rule, it is hard to overstate the extent to which some communities which historically have been able to preserve a high degree of autonomy and self-regulation (e.g., tribal communities in Yemen, Afghanistan and Pakistan) will resist, including by resorting to force, perceived incursions by forces they may view as bent on undermining their way of life. Even when such interference is driven by good intentions (e.g., the provision of health services, the expansion of literacy, the development of an infrastructure intended to facilitate economic growth, or the creation of new opportunities for women in the public sphere), it may result in a potentially violent backlash. Development programming in these particular environments, particularly when it is conducted from a CE

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[42] Newsweek, July 18, 2006, as quoted in Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33.

[43] Gilles Dorronsoro, "Focus and Exit: An Alternative Strategy for the Afghan War" (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for the International Peace, January 2009), 2.

[44] Dorronsoro, *op. cit.*, 13.

perspective, must remain aware of such possible reactions and seek to anticipate them. This response has not been evident in sub-Saharan Africa.

5. Endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites

1. Anger at corrupt government officials – and, more generally, at a political system and social order in which elites are viewed as enjoying impunity – can loom large in the mix of grievances that push individuals toward VE. That is not to say that pervasive corruption and impunity always feed VE. Instead, they may prompt civic disengagement and political apathy. The populations affected by corruption and impunity may view these phenomena as an inescapable part of life, and be resigned to them. Alternatively, individuals may be resentful of nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism, but they may reject violence as a justifiable response to those problems. Nonetheless, corruption can elicit a profound sense of moral outrage and deeply felt anger that, in turn, can provide a powerful motivation for supporting or engaging in VE. Gross corruption helps de-legitimize fragile governments, such as the ones in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and can make anti-system alternatives look more attractive.

   > **POPULAR REACTION TO CORRUPTION AND IMPUNITY IN THE SAHEL**
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   > In Mauritania, where a USAID/MSI team conducted a risk assessment in 2008, every individual interviewed by the team stressed the relevance of citizen anger at corruption and impunity. The scope and visibility of corruption in that country have both increased in the last decade, as is true of other countries as well. The divide between the "haves" and "have-nots" is ever more apparent in the major towns and cities.[1] In Niger religious leaders describe corruption as a perversion of justice (a strongly felt value among Muslims), while more secular civil society leaders see it as a weakness in governance mechanisms.[1] In Chad, where anger at corruption is also pervasive; the slang term for well connected elites, who are seen as entering politics only for personal gain, is "intouchables."

   There is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that, across the Muslim world, VE movements are able to tap into the resentment and alienation that corruption and impunity create. Significantly, VE leaders consistently emphasize such themes, while seeking to present themselves, in contrast, as embodiments of integrity and moral rectitude. Presumably, those who speak on behalf of VE agendas would not dwell so heavily on corruption-related issues if they were not aware of the resonance of those themes among those whom they seek to pull into their movements.[45]

2. That said, corruption typically operates as a driver less by pushing individuals into VE activities than by creating an enabling environment for VE groups. Communities long angered by institutionalized corruption and impunity may end up providing active or passive support for VEs. Corruption also may allow for the bribing of officials, who then may turn a blind eye to the activities of VE organizations. It may make it much easier for those organizations to establish sanctuaries, or to engage in illicit activities (smuggling, trafficking, extortion and racketeering) that enable them to recruit, organize, and fund their activities. In general, the more corrupt the environment, the easier it becomes for violent extremists to develop a foothold in the community, to infiltrate themselves in private-sector activity, and/or to develop connections to organized crime – all of which can enhance significantly their recruitment and organizing efforts.

3. Violence triggered by resentment at corruption and impunity may target individuals, institutions or constituencies viewed as embodying those problems. It may be directed at government officials blamed for their own ethical shortcomings, or for their perceived unwillingness or incapacity to

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[45] Bin Laden's appeal to young Muslims has been rooted, in large part, to the perception of him as a disinterested, upright and principled figure, willing to sacrifice the tremendous wealth into which he was born in order to defend, from caves and other hideouts, the ideals in which he believes.

confront these issues. Corruption-related violence also may express itself through various forms of "lashing out" at a society viewed as irremediably immoral, and, therefore, as complicit in the perpetuation of fundamental injustices. Indeed, religious and secular radicals alike sometimes have described violence as a way of "cleansing" a corrupt society. Alternatively, violence may be directed at forces (e.g., the West, the US) that are viewed as propping up a corrupt system and, therefore, as partly responsible for the moral decay associated with it.

6. Poorly governed or ungoverned areas

1. Ungoverned or poorly governed spaces (e.g., Pakistan's Tribal Agencies) may enable VEs to establish sanctuaries or safe havens. At the very least, they may provide room within which violent groups can operate more easily. They may offer pools of recruits, create conditions conducive to arms trafficking and smuggling, and allow for the establishment of headquarters, training camps, and communications facilities. Although VE organizations have shown that they can plan and/or orchestrate attacks in countries where the quality of governance is relatively high (e.g., France in the mid-1990s, Spain in 2004, or the UK in 2005 and 2007), their operations and freedom to maneuver there are significantly hindered by effective detection and monitoring mechanisms. That is not the case where government institutions are generally ineffective or non-functioning. Moreover, while a failed or failing state may be unable to prevent a VE organization from operating on its territory, it retains "the veneer of state sovereignty that prevents other, stronger states from taking effective countermeasures."[46]

2. Poorly governed spaces also may create passive or active support for VEs among communities that feel ignored by the government. Where no government agency is able to provide for security and the rule of law, VEs may be able to impose their own order, and they may be able to extract money, provisions or recruits from the population. From Colombia to Afghanistan, the lack of an effective government presence has allowed insurgents to establish bases. Meanwhile, even among secular Somalis who had grown tired of the warlords' excesses, the ICU's promise to deliver security was one of the main forces behind its ability to develop a grassroots following. As in Afghanistan, state failure resulted in the development of warlordism, which, in turn, paved the way for the Taliban who tapped into the quest for security and the rule of law.

3. Types of areas with a potential to serve as a safe haven, or where the presence and/or effectiveness of state institutions may be so limited as to make it easier for VE groups to operate, include peri-urban slums, border regions, places mired in violent conflict or criminality (see below), and remote, isolated, or desert regions with low population density. For reasons to be developed further below, however, the political geography of safe havens should not be simplified – as it so often was in the immediate post-9/11 environment. VEs do not always need to hide in mountain caves or turbulent regions; they, instead, may prefer to operate in large, modern metropolises with a highly developed infrastructure. Virtual safe havens can be more decisive than physical ones. Meanwhile, modern society offers far more opportunities for VEs to hide than isolated regions in which militants are far more visible, and, therefore, potentially easier to target. Remote areas often are not hospitable to operatives in transnational terrorist organizations; being outsiders, these operatives may find it difficult to secure the protection of clan- or tribal-based networks that often is required to operate in those environments. The low levels of extremism risk prevailing in Sahelian countries such as Niger and Chad may be linked partly to their remoteness, low population density, and poor infrastructure. Urban areas with access to financial services and developed telecommunication and transportation

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[46] As Takayh and Gvosdev observe, "failed states retain the outward signs of sovereignty. The presumption against interference in the internal affairs of another state, enshrined in the UN Charter, remains a major impediment to cross-border action designed to eliminate terrorist networks … Failed States may be notoriously unable to control their own territory, but they remain loath to allow access to any other state to do the same." See Ray Takayh and Niokas Gvosdev, "Do Terrorist Networks Need a Home?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Summer 2002), 100.

infrastructure allow VEs to plug into global criminal markets (from money laundering to cyber crime), which will prove to be a far more complicated endeavor in secluded regions. Towns or areas that are "jumping off points" for isolated safe havens and that provide at least some of the services and accoutrements of modern life may be particularly attractive. For example, there is some sense that extremists such as Somalia's Shabab use Nairobi as a commercial and logistical hub. As one of the participants in a USIP workshop on terrorism in the Horn of Africa noted: "At least in Kenya, phone and money machines work."[47]

4. In countries such as Afghanistan and Somalia, VE groups may find their work as impeded by clan, tribal or ethnic hostilities as international NGO workers do. These divisions and conflicts make it much harder to rally Muslims under the banner of the global jihad. In short,

> …failed states are no more hospitable to terrorists than they are to any other potential inhabitants. They tend to produce citizens ill-equipped to lead or even function as a part of the worldwide jihad. They are dangerous and often require an in-depth knowledge of shifting political alliances to ensure personal survival. And they lack the basic infrastructure and logistical support necessary for planning and/or carrying out attacks.[48]

In fact, there is evidence that Bin Laden's network was well aware of that situation, and that, for instance, it saw Somalia as a hostile environment. Drawing on an extensive review of hundreds of pages of correspondence by AQ operatives in the 1990s (the "Harmony documents"), a study by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point notes:

> In Somalia, al-Qa'ida's members fell victim to many of the same challenges that plague Western interventions in the Horn. They were prone to extortion and betrayal, found themselves trapped in the middle of incomprehensible (to them) clan conflicts, faced suspicion from the indigenous population, had to overcome significant logistical constraints and were subject to the constant risk of Western military interdiction.[49]

5. Indeed, the contribution of ungoverned or poorly governed spaces to VE should not be overstated. There is no systematic, cross-regional empirical evidence to support the contention that "vulnerable spaces" (areas in which there is less government presence, and/or in which the government provides fewer services, or services of lower quality) positively correlates with support for terrorism, or with the strength of VE organizations. In fact, countries that rank particularly high in the *Failed States Index* and the *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* are not always prime concerns from the perspective of transnational VE.[50] It is true that, in the past two decades, a handful of failed or failing states (Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia) have provided sanctuaries for terrorist organizations. It is also true, however, that much of the 9/11 plot was hatched in Hamburg; furthermore, Paris in the mid-1990s, Madrid in 2004, London in July 2005, and London and Glasgow in July 2007 hardly were "ungoverned spaces." Meanwhile, the many "ungoverned spaces" found in countries ranging from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Myanmar, and from Colombia to Sri Lanka, have witnessed much violence, but they have not emerged as safe havens for transnational terrorist organizations.

6. VE organizations do not always take advantage of pre-existing, ungoverned areas. Instead, they sometimes turn adequately governed areas into ungoverned or poorly governed ones. That is, for instance, what the Armed Islamic Group did in many parts of Algeria during the 1990s, when it

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[47] Quoted in "Terrorism in the Horn of Africa," USIP Special Report, No. 113, January 2004.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, "Al-Qaida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa" (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007), iii-iv.

[50] The *Failed States Index* was developed by Foreign Policy and The Fund for Peace, and the *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* by the Brookings Institution.

cleared those areas from government forces, eliminated the ability of government institutions to operate, and simply took over.

7. The considerations discussed above suggest that VE organizations are less likely to be drawn to failed, collapsed or even failing states than to "states of limited strength" – states that are strong enough to provide "easy access to the transportation, communications, and financial infrastructure of the global economy," but that also display critical "sovereignty holes."[51] If we look at Sahelian desert areas, where Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has at least some sporadic presence, the group primarily uses those areas to hide out and recover from operations, as well as for smuggling. It does not have large training camps in these areas, nor does it have major bases from which it routinely mounts significant attacks.

8. In short, the extent to which poorly governed spaces are conducive to VE will vary from one setting to another. Everything else being equal, the lack of an effective state presence increases vulnerability to VE – but everything else is rarely equal. The exaggerated claims often made on behalf of the "ungoverned spaces" variable in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 were certainly problematic, as were many of the alleged connections between ungoverned spaces and VE. It also is hard to generalize about which exact attributes of "ungoverned spaces" explain their ability to feed VE: is it the corruption that they tend to foster? Is it the fact that they often go hand in hand with insecurity, lawlessness and unmet needs? Is it that they often encourage local conflicts? Is it that they encourage involvement by transnational terrorist networks because weak states do not control borders and territory, and cannot monitor effectively the flow of people and funds? Similarly, ungoverned spaces tend to facilitate access to certain illicit activities (e.g., drug smuggling or weapons trafficking) but not others (e.g., financial fraud). In the end, therefore, while the analyst certainly should remain attune to the possibility that the existence of vulnerable spaces will prove to be a significant driver, sweeping generalizations about the salience of this variable should be avoided, and particular attention should be paid to how the presence of ungoverned spaces interact with other variables to create vulnerability to VE.

7. Local conflicts

1. Protracted, violent local conflicts of sufficient scale[52] can create chaos, incapacitate government institutions, and result in a power vacuum that VE organizations can exploit. They may facilitate access to weapons, combat experience, and potential recruits. As they did in Afghanistan, Somalia, Bosnia and Chechnya, local conflicts also can operate as magnets for VE elsewhere. They also simply may attract volunteers who, initially, are not VEs, but join the fight merely out of a perceived duty to other Muslims whom they view as being under attack. However, over time, these volunteers may end up being radicalized by the VE operatives already involved in conflict zones. Sometimes, they also simply to radicalize one another through the personal bonds they forge while under fire. These bonds, and more generally the atmosphere of violence in which they function, progressively may pull them into the orbit of the global jihad.

2. Global Jihadists and participants in a local conflict may join efforts in what amounts to a marriage of convenience.

- Global Jihadists may attempt to expand their operations and audience by portraying themselves as the champions of one of the parties involved. They may endeavor to weave local and international agendas together. While in reality they are largely indifferent to the narrow grievances and territorial dynamics that drive local struggles, they seek to graft the jihad onto them. Certainly, in the past

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[51] Stewart Patrick, "Weak States and Global Terrorism: Fact of Fiction?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring 2006), 4.
[52] Some may be too small or insignificant to be worth manipulating.

fifteen years, transnational terrorists affiliated with AQ have engaged in such transparent attempts to co-opt local conflicts. Even though, for reasons explored in the Drivers' Guide, their efforts ultimately failed in Bosnia, Aceh, and several other conflicts zones, they at first met with some success. In Iraq, AQ was able to insert itself into an insurgency launched by former Baathists, military officers, and tribal leaders. That insurgency initially was fueled by forces that had little to do with the global jihad, but had been unleashed instead by a new balance of power among competing power blocs in Iraqi society, as well as by a series of ill-advised decisions (such as the disbanding of the Iraqi army and the banning of the Baath Party) by the Coalition Provisional Authority. In Chechnya, groups originally driven by a nationalist desire to seek independence from the Russian Federation progressively were infiltrated by radical Islamists; over time, their outlook, objectives, and behavior increasingly came to reflect those external influences.

- For their part, local actors may see a variety of benefits in hitching their bandwagon to the global jihad. Doing so, for instance, may enable them to gain access to the financial and logistical support that transnational terrorist organizations can provide; it may add legitimacy to their cause; or it may provide them with a clearer sense of direction as well as an overarching ideological framework.
- While there may be strong local conflicts in a country (e.g., agro-pastoralist conflicts in Kenya), not all will present a first-priority threat.

8. State support

1. At least in their early stages of development, many VE movements benefited from the political, logistical or financial support of host governments or foreign states seeking to harness these movements in the pursuit of domestic political objectives, or broader strategic interests. In many instances, however, government officials or state institutions that had sought to manipulate VE organizations subsequently lost control over them, and the "blowback effect" often haunted (in some cases still haunt) entire countries for decades. Variants of this scenario have unfolded in many settings, including Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Palestine (all of which are discussed in the Drivers' Guide).

2. In many relevant instances, host governments did not support VE groups per se. Instead, they nurtured broader, heterogeneous social and political movements within which radical elements were active. Over time, those radical groups and individuals frequently became increasingly autonomous and assertive. They separated themselves from the broader movement of which they initially merely were a component, and began to strike at the state – and, often, at those within society at large whom they came to define as their enemies. In Pakistan, for instance, many of the organizations that in recent years have targeted Pakistani officials, politicians and institutions were once proxies of the Pakistani government, and used by it both domestically and in the broader region.

3. Regimes, or well-placed individuals within them (e.g., ministers, senior military officers, or provincial governors), may support VE groups – or the more amorphous tendencies within which these groups are active – for one or several of the following reasons:[53]

   - Ideological affinity.
   - Connections through family ties, tribal or clan-based affiliations, or other forms of personal relationships that generate a sense of mutual obligation and commitment.
   - Efforts to counter-balance perceived domestic political threats (as in the case of the support initially provided to the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists by many Arab regimes seeking to neutralize the perceived threat posed by leftist and militant pan-Arab nationalist forces).

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[53] See the Drivers' Guide for a detailed discussion of many of the examples mentioned below.

- Attempts to use VE groups to gain influence in, or leverage over, other states or organized groups within those states (e.g., Pakistani support for militants active in Indian-held Kashmir and Afghanistan, or Iranian and Saudi involvement in Afghanistan).

9. Discredited governments and missing or co-opted legal oppositions

1. The combination of an utterly discredited government and a missing or thoroughly co-opted legal opposition appears to be particularly conducive to the development of VE. Populations that view the existing order as bankrupt, see few prospects of improving their country's or culture's standing in international affairs, and do not believe they can remedy such problems by working through peaceful, legal channels provide an audience that is particularly susceptible to the message of VE organizations.

2. "Discredited governments", here, refers to governments that have failed across the following three core areas:

   - In the social and economic sphere, they have not provided adequate economic opportunities for their citizens. They have not offered their populations the education necessary to succeed in the global marketplace. They have proven unable or unwilling (or both) to control pervasive mismanagement and corruption in the allocation of scarce public resources. And they cannot meet the needs of their populations for even basic social services.

   - In the political realm, they have displayed a propensity for repression and the capricious and arbitrary exercise of power. They have not delivered impartial justice, and have failed to ensure respect for basic political rights and civil liberties. They have not established mechanisms through which office holders can be held accountable. They have not put in place the institutions that can provide for effective and transparent administration and popular input into the decision-making process.

   - In the diplomatic, military, and international arenas, they often have suffered humiliating military defeats, their voices have not carried much weight in international fora, and, most importantly, they are viewed by their populations as having proven unable to bring an end to the victimization or demonization of Muslims around the globe. A critical driver of VE appears to be the perception that Muslim governments are impotent – specifically, that they have been unable to prevent the shedding of Muslim blood, to repeal actual or perceived foreign invasions in the cultural, political or military realms, and to ensure adequate respect for Muslim values and Islamic culture.[54] Indeed, from the perspective of radical Islamist ideologues, what is at stake is not merely the "war on Islam" – it is also the shameful inability of Muslim governments to resist that onslaught, or their implicit or explicit complicity with it. These governments are denounced as unable and/or unwilling to keep hostile forces at bay because of two congenital, intertwined flaws: they are not based on genuinely Islamic foundations, and they are led by individuals who are subservient to Western interests. As VE ideologues would have it, this combination of impotence and collusion – by governments that are Muslim in name only – lies at the root of the ills that have befallen Islam and Muslims in the modern world.

   Here, it is important to remember that individuals seek a measure of dignity, recognition and influence not only for themselves, but also for their respective countries and cultures, as well as for the communities (local and transnational) to which they belong, or with which they identify. They want their beliefs and values to be respected, and their opinions and aspirations reflected in the

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[54] In the words of leading Arab commentator Rami Khouri, "the most potent intersection of radicalizing vectors is between an Arab citizen's mistreatment by his or her own government, and seeing other Muslims assaulted, mistreated, jailed and killed in their own homes by American, Israeli, or other foreign armies." See Rami Khouri, "How to Fight Terrorists," *The Daily Star* (Beirut, Lebanon), June 16, 2008.

working of the international system. Governments that fail to satisfy those needs, that experience military defeats or political powerlessness on the international scene, and that consistently relegate their countries to a subordinate position in global political, economic and cultural affairs are bound to generate tremendous resentment, frustration, or anger, some of which may be expressed through violence.

3. The likelihood that bankrupt and illegitimate regimes will generate VE is greatly enhanced when a legal opposition viewed as providing a credible alternative to those regimes is missing. Such an opposition may be lacking because the regime will not tolerate it (or decimated it). Alternatively, it nominally might exist, but be ineffectual due to one or several of the following factors:

- It may be riddled with internal divisions and suffers from poor leadership and/or a lack of resources.
- It may be thoroughly co-opted by the regime, and so heavily manipulated by it as to lack credibility and grassroots support.
- It may operate within a set of formal and informal rules that do not allow it to exercise actual influence on decision-making processes, and to provide a mechanism for the representation of grassroots interests.

10. Intimidation or coercion by VE groups

1. Individuals and communities alike can be pushed into VE – or into supporting VE organizations – in response to fear, intimidation, or coercion. VE groups even may force communities to provide them with recruits.[55] Coercion is likely to be a particularly salient factor in areas where the government lacks substantial presence, and cannot (or will not) provide security and protection to its citizens. When extremist groups "graduate" to full-fledged insurgencies, and begin to control actual territory (as with the Taliban in Afghanistan or Pakistan), the risk increases.

2. Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan all provide recent or on-going illustrations of the extent to which social and political pressure can play an important role in allowing VE groups to project influence. In Iraq, AQ brutally executed several prominent Sunni tribal sheikhs when they reached out to US military commanders. In Afghanistan, the Taliban has assassinated dozens of provincial officials, traditional tribal leaders and moderate religious leaders – to punish them for their refusal to cooperate, to highlight the government's inability to protect even its own, and/or to decimate the competitors for power. Many more Afghans have been summarily executed for supporting the government, or for engaging in activities (e.g., educating girls) of which the Taliban strongly disapprove.

Similar examples of VE groups' reliance on coercion can be found across time-periods, cultures, and regions. In Northern Ireland, the IRA routinely intimidated moderate and uncommitted Catholics into providing either explicit or tacit support for the organization – and it did not hesitate to make an example of individuals who refused to comply, or were viewed as having betrayed the cause.[56] In

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[55] For instance, the Tamil Tigers began abducting young people when the number of volunteer fighters dropped. In the last months of the war, as Tiger fortunes declined, families under their control were "taxed" to provide sons and daughters to fight. Similarly, in Pakistan, after gaining de facto control of the Swat Valley in early 2009, the Taliban began to force many families to give up one son for training as a Taliban fighter. This practice then enabled the movement to make inroads into the neighboring Dir and Buner districts. Conversely, once in Buner and Dir, the movement began to force young people there to travel to the Swat Valley for military training.

[56] One such individual, Eamon Collins, wrote what is probably the best book on the inner workings of the IRA, and the outlook of many of its most dedicated militants. Collins recanted, became an informer, and rose to fame following the publication of his book and several interviews and articles in the press. In January 1999, he was beaten to death (in what the coroner described as one of the most gruesome and brutal murders to which he ever had been exposed), presumably by one or several of his former "colleagues in arms." Collins' testimony against Thomas Murphy was widely alleged to have been a primary cause of his assassination. See Eamon Collins (with Mick McGovern), *Killing Rage* (Granta Books, 1998).

Rwanda, it is impossible to explain the large-scale participation of Hutu peasants in the 1994 genocide without taking into account the realization by many of them that the refusal to join in the orgy of violence would almost automatically mean death at the hands of Hutu extremists. Peer pressure also played an instrumental role in the violence in East Timor in 1999. Many of the Catholic youth who participated in the carnage orchestrated by the local militias tied to the Indonesian military and security services were often pulled into those militias, and then into the massacres they perpetrated, as a result of pressure and intimidation.[57]

3. Coercion and intimidation tactics are typically used in combination with other approaches. Thus, it would be misleading to think of VE movements as being able to expand their influence either by securing the consent and support of populations, or by bullying them. Instead, a degree of pressure can go hand in hand with the delivery of certain services, the provision of economic spoils or employment opportunities, and/or the ability to secure a measure of legitimacy by identifying oneself with popular causes. For instance, in early 2009 the Taliban were able to solidify their hold over Pakistan's Swat Valley by relying on a mixture of economic incentives, the exploitation of class divisions, more effective government – and, yes, also, the imposition of a particularly strict "Islamic order" that reflected their promise to deliver swift and consistent "justice."

11. Perception that the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies and peoples.

Perceived global injustices in general, and, more specifically, the belief that the international economic and political system discriminates against Muslims societies and peoples, and facilitates their subjugation or victimization, has fueled the flames of VE across the Muslim world. Particularly when they are consistent with one's personal experience of oppression and inequity, such perceptions provide a bottomless pool of passions and emotions into which VE movements can tap. Salafi Jihadism rightly has been described as a "glocal" phenomenon: one in which global and local grievances mesh, mutually reinforce one another, and are presented as the two sides of a single reality. Even where local grievances prevail, they may be viewed as merely local manifestations of greater global dysfunctions. Similarly, while local struggles may be driven primarily by local dynamics, the actors in them may feel that a global momentum sustain their efforts – which can prove to be tremendously empowering, and works as a very powerful motivation and source of resilience in the face of adversity.

This driver is closely linked to the first cultural driver (discussed in the following section), the sense that Islam is under attack. The two reinforce each other and help produce a siege mentality.

CULTURAL DRIVERS

1. Islam under siege.

1. The most salient cultural driver is the feeling that Islam and Muslims are under systematic attack (especially by the West, and by the US in particular); that they are being denigrated, vilified and demonized; that they face orchestrated campaigns to marginalize them, oppress them, or subdue them; and that on-going political struggles in various parts of the globe reflect a much broader epic, being waged at the level of the planet as a whole, the stake of which is nothing less than the survival of the faith.

2. Empirical research has shown that such perceptions correlate very strongly with support for, or involvement in, VE endeavors. For instance, analyzing data from the Pew Institute 2002 Global Attitudes Survey in fourteen countries with predominantly Muslim populations or large Muslim

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[57] See David Kilcullen, *op. cit.*, 201

minorities in Africa, Southwest, South and Southeast Asia, Christine Fair and Bryan Shepherd conclude that "those who believe that Islam is under threat are much more likely to support terrorism than those who do not share this view. While the intensity of this feeling varied across the states in question, there were no statistically significant exceptions."[58] Relying on the same as well as additional empirical data, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita notes it is not so much the overall perception of a threat to Islam, but, rather, the more specific belief the threat emanates in particular from the United States, and more broadly from the West, that correlates with support for terrorism in Muslim countries.[59] Along similar lines, a recent study commissioned by the UK Department for International Development concludes that "the perceived threat to Islam is the [underline in the text] ostensive factor underlying radicalization in Pakistan." The report adds that "the threat is not only from the West: Islam is also seen to be under attack from within – from Muslims who have strayed from the 'true path' (i.e., are a different sect) or have betrayed their religion by siding with the West."[60]

3. The feeling that Islam is under attack may trump political and socioeconomic variables that often receive far more attention in explanations of VE. For instance, interviews with Pakistani militants who went to fight in Afghanistan reveal that, typically, they did not make the journey because they were dissatisfied with a lack of political or economic opportunities. They went, instead, out of a perceived sense of solidarity toward other Muslims whom they thought were being oppressed. They wanted to "do good" for their co-religionists, and believed that standing up for Islam more generally was a religious obligation.[61] They also tended to be particularly strict in their interpretation of religious dogma (often denouncing their own family members for their "un-Islamic" practices), and were heavily influenced by Jihadi propaganda.

4. The perception of an existential threat to Islam is closely related to the conviction (discussed above as a political driver) that the oppression and victimization of Muslims is built into the current international system. It also tends to be fueled by the powerful historical legacies associated with colonialism, as well as by other past manifestations of foreign interference, manipulation and oppression. More generally, and as is true of other drivers, the view that Islam is in danger typically is fueled by other factors that must be identified. It is not only an independent variable, but a dependent one as well. It may reflect, for instance, past or on-going governmental efforts to fuel the flames of religious sectarianism for political advantage.[62] It may be encouraged by foreign influences, charismatic preachers, institutions that operate as hotbeds of VE, propaganda in school textbooks, as well as readily accessible information (or disinformation) sources. In short, it does not develop in a vacuum, but owes much of its resonance to the resources and skills of those who encourage it, and to the particular conditions experienced by those who are vulnerable to it.

2. Broader cultural threats

1. While the belief that Islam is under attack represents the most significant cultural driver of VE in countries with predominantly Muslim populations, broader perceptions of grave threats to customs and values – and to the sense of personal and collective honor associated with those values – can play a decisive role as well. The belief that one's "home," "space" or "turf" is being subjected to a cultural invasion – especially in sensitive areas such as gender roles and education – can be a

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[58] Christine Fair and Bryan Shepherd, "Research Note: Who Supports Terrorism? Insights from Fourteen Muslim Countries," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 2, December/January 2006.

[59] Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, "Correlates of Public Support for Terrorism in the Muslim World," United States Institute of Peace, Working Paper, May 17, 2007.

[60] Ladbury and Hussein, *op. cit.*

[61] See Sohail Abbas, *Probing the Jihadi Mindset* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2007).

[62] On Pakistan, see Ladbury and Hussein, *op. cit.*, 11-12.

powerful motivation for engaging in violent behavior. Communities may resort to violence, or support the violence of some of their members, because they view it as a necessary means of preventing a loss of control over their cultural future, or because they seek to prevent their assimilation or incorporation into someone else's cultural sphere. In such instances, what is involved is not so much the defense of religion per se, but the effort to affirm broader cultural boundaries (many of which are intertwined with religion, can be expressed in a religious idiom, or can be defended through means for which religion can provide a justification).

2. As an illustration of the point above, Pashtun tribes in Pakistan may commit violence, or support those who do, not only or not so much because they view Islam as being in danger, but, instead, because they believe that their centuries-old tribal code of honor is being threatened by external encroachment. Pashtun solidarity also may prompt some to volunteer across the Durand Line (the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan) because they view other Pashtuns as being under attack.

3. There is nothing new about tradition's ability to facilitate mobilization into violent movements. Under normal circumstances, traditions may operate as a force for the perpetuation of the status quo. But history demonstrates that when individuals and communities alike perceive their deeply felt values, and the customs that always have guided their daily lives, to be undermined by rapid social change and/or encroachment by outside forces, they sometimes react violently. The very desire to protect a status quo that is being upset triggers violence, as deeply conservative individuals and communities turn into "reactionary radicals."[63] In such instances, tradition can become a powerful basis for violence not only because it provides an incentive for mobilization, but because the networks of trust, interdependence, reciprocal debts, and common interests that sustain tradition, and through which it expresses itself, can provide a powerful organizational basis for insurgency. Put differently, deeply rooted values and beliefs matter not only because the desire to preserve them, and to maintain distinctiveness from outsiders, can create a potent incentive for resorting to violence, but also because traditions are embedded in networks of social relations and lines of communication that facilitate mobilization (including by eliminating or reducing many standard obstacles to it, such as the free-rider problem).

3. "Proactive" religious agendas

1. "Proactive," here, refers to a situation in which religious motivations are decisive, but are not described accurately as primarily defensive in nature. Instead, they stem from such considerations as a perceived obligation to carry out God's command; a commitment, rooted in strongly-held religious beliefs, to destroy a system that is viewed as fundamentally evil or ungodly; or a fundamental hostility toward post-enlightenment values and Western-style modernity.

2. Instead of reacting to a cultural "invasion," or to other actors intruding in their "cultural space," those motivated by "proactive religious agendas" are initiating a fight that is hard to describe as being imposed on them, and they seek to force their own vision of society on others. They are not – at least not primarily, and certainly not exclusively –defending their "cultural territory" against encroachment by outsiders; instead, they are intent on expanding that territory by force. Put differently, theirs is not a case of backlash against alien forces intruding into their "cultural turf," but a violent intrusion into the cultural territory of others. From a cultural or religious perspective, they do not merely aspire to be left alone, but seek to restructure the religious or cultural territory of others in order to make it conform to their own views of how society ought to be organized and run its affairs. They are not playing defense, but offense. They do not merely react to the cultural claims that others are making (explicitly or implicitly) on them, but are out to remake others' cultural landscape.

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[63] Craig Jackson Calhoun, "The Radicalism of Tradition: Community Strength or Venerable Disguise and Borrowed Language?" *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 88, No. 5 (March 1983), 886-914.

3. The extent to which VE is "reactive" or "'proactive," and is driven by "defensive" as opposed to "aggressive" considerations, often will require that the analyst make a judgment call. VE actors themselves likely would contest that call. After all, Osama bin Laden frequently has described his rationale as "defensive" in nature, claiming that his violence merely is a response to the war that the West long has waged on Islam. But such claims ring hollow. For one, and by definition, *takfiris* such as bin Laden do not aspire to be left alone; instead, they take it upon themselves to denounce the Islam practiced by other Muslims as idolatrous, and they view the elimination of such Muslims as a religious obligation. More generally, even though the distinction between "offensive" and "defensive," or "proactive" and "reactive," occasionally break down, it remains important for both analytical and programmatic purposes.

4. The role of Gulf states' charities and funding for Salafi/Wahhabi movements across the Middle East, South Asia, and East and West Africa deserves particular emphasis under this cultural driver.

PART TWO – CORE COUNTER EXTREMISM PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES

Part Two shifts the focus from diagnostic to prescription. Specifically, it highlights twelve core principles or rules of thumb for programming DA to counter violent extremism.[64] The rules discussed below may be viewed as "filters" through which all key CE decisions should pass. When applied systematically – both to individual CE interventions and to the overall strategic orientations of a given program – they should help prevent potentially misguided decisions. They also may point to specific activities, or types of intervention, that one might not have considered initially. By capturing most of the "dos and don'ts" of CE programming, and by drawing attention to the unique challenges, trade-offs, and dangers associated with programming, they should help improve significantly the quality of decision-making in this area.

A. EXTREMISM RISK ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Rule 1: Develop a strategy after acquiring an adequate understanding of local conditions and dynamics.

1. As emphasized in the Drivers' Guide, VE must be approached and analyzed in context. That context creates key vulnerabilities to VE, as well as opportunities for, and constraints on, CE interventions. Vulnerabilities, opportunities and constraints should be clearly identified at the outset. Therefore, during both the diagnostic and programming phases, explicit efforts should be made to tap into the expertise of practitioners and scholars who are intimately familiar with the history, culture, and socioeconomic and political dynamics of the country at hand. CE programming should be grounded in that local knowledge, and typically should not be conducted exclusively from afar, though it should certainly benefit from the analysis of others. An effective CE program will be a custom-built product, not an off-the-shelf one.

2. As suggested in the above paragraph, CE programming should build on an understanding of how VE in the country being analyzed is shaped by some of that country's unique features. That said, it may be very difficult to acquire nuanced data in low threat environments; the bigger the VE problem, the more data and analyses are likely to exist, though the more difficult the problem will be to address. The characteristics to examine include:

   a. Distinctive historical legacies and cultural narratives, and their impact on the ways in which individuals and communities apprehend current events and trends.

   b. Informal power structures and the manner in which they relate to more formal mechanisms through which authority is exercised.

   c. Key traditions and values (e.g., local notions of honor), and their influence on social and political behavior.

   d. Identity divisions, other longstanding sources of friction in society, and the interplay among various sources of identity (e.g., tribal, clan-based, religious, ethnic, regional, or profession-based).

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[64] As will be apparent, some of these rules overlap. For instance, the benefits of partnering with local actors (Rule 6) are clearly related to the importance of continuity and consistency in programming (Rule 11). Meanwhile, the need for an effective communications strategy (Rule 9) is closely related to the merits of an integrated and coordinated approach to strategy design and implementation (Rule 4).

e. The host government's (often complicated) relationship to VE actors. That particular variable may affect programming both directly (it certainly can make certain types of interventions easier to "sell" and/or implement than others) and indirectly (it either hinders or facilitates the operations of those extremist groups which programming is intended to undermine).

3. The more such detailed knowledge of local society is applied to strategy design, the less likely it is that programming will involve the following, potentially fatal flaws in CE assistance:

   a. The setting of overly ambitious goals, or of objectives that cannot possibly be attained in light of local realities.

   b. Strategies or activities that are unlikely to succeed because they are not sufficiently sensitive to existing orders within local society (e.g., in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, the USG's initial failure to grasp the importance of tribes as a power structure in Iraqi society, and the mistake involved in not recognizing that tribal leaders could not easily be ignored or by-passed).

   c. Interventions that may be counter-productive and generate a popular backlash because they violate cultural norms, offend other local sensitivities, or run against the interests of local power-holders.

   d. Selection of illegitimate or ineffective local partners who cannot "deliver" because they lack grassroots support.

   e. Interventions that lend themselves to being exploited or manipulated by local forces in ways that undermine CE and other key US foreign-policy objectives.

   Conversely, programming that is embedded in a granular understanding of local society will make it easier to separate achievable from non-realizable objectives, and to pursue the former through solutions that go with the grain of local society.

4. Caveats about the importance of solid data for designing effective programs notwithstanding, it is likely to be the case that field officers will learn more about a given situation as implementation proceeds. The environment should be tracked so that adaptations can be made in the program in response to a changed situation or a deepened understanding of how drivers work in concert.

5. The need for extensive local knowledge needs to be built into the job description for, and daily routine of, field officers charged with implementing or monitoring CE programs. While the strategy-design process can rely on outside experts (both local and expatriate), and while the specifics and logistics of implementation can be left to contractors, USG personnel responsible for the overall direction and general oversight of CE projects should be conversant with the society and culture of the country within which they operate. They also should be provided with opportunities to upgrade and update relevant skills on a regular basis. Most importantly, they cannot discharge their responsibilities effectively by operating exclusively, or even primarily, from their office in a US embassy or USAID Mission. Instead, they should be urged to develop a broad range of local contacts, and to interact personally and frequently with key local informants and community leaders.

> **EXAMPLES OF LOCAL INFORMANTS TO ENGAGE**
>
> - Community leaders
> - Moderate religious leaders, associations and schools (e.g., Sufi institutions in the Sahel)
> - Journalists
> - Academics
> - Respected businesspeople
> - NGO and CBO leaders
> - Youth leaders
> - Local elected leaders

This systematic cultivation of personal relationships is essential to ensuring that CE programming will reflect evolving conditions on the ground. Without it, it also is impossible to build and sustain the partnerships that are critical to successful CE programs (see Rule 6). However, it is also, by nature, a time-consuming endeavor; therefore, field officers cannot be expected to engage in this process unless they are provided with the required time to do so. While such a statement only states

the obvious, anyone who has spent time in the field knows that those entrusted with CE responsibilities often are absorbed by administrative tasks that simply leave no time for the systematic maintenance and development of the kind of extensive local contacts networks this paragraph alluded to. That situation must be changed.

Rule 2: Disaggregate the threat and prioritize strategy elements accordingly.

1. The threat posed by VE is rarely monolithic. Some VE organizations pose a greater danger than others. Moreover, in any given country, the VE phenomenon may encompass a broad array of social forces with different, if not conflicting, interests and outlooks. For instance, those referred to as "violent extremists" may include:

    a. Religious extremists, who are moved by the desire to create a radically new society based on religious injunctions.

    b. Local power-holders (e.g., tribal leaders, "warlords") who have been antagonized by the government, or have become alienated from the prevailing order for some other reason(s), and who aspire primarily to regain the influence or the prerogatives of which they feel they have been unjustly deprived.

    c. Marginalized communities that have "drifted" to or been "pulled" into VE, due largely to neglect by governmental, political and economic elites.

    d. Bored, idle peri-urban youth driven by a search for adventure and/or a desire to lash out at a system they feel has left them with no hope for the future.

    In some cases, these very different constituencies, and the VE groups associated with them, will strike independently. In other instances, they may coordinate their actions – but the alliances they form are rarely devoid of tensions, and they amount to little more than marriages of convenience.

2. It is critical to determine whether the VE movement targeted for programming reflects the kind of divisions alluded to above. This process of disaggregating the threat – breaking down a given VE phenomenon into its potentially very different components – is essential for the following reasons:

    a. Different VE groups and actors, sustained by different dynamics, grievances, and objectives, will call for different responses.

    b. It is essential to separate those VE actors and groups that pose a greater and/or more imminent threat, from those that create a lesser or less pressing danger.

    c. One also should distinguish among threats based on the extent to which they can be addressed through CE programming.

    d. Finally, the existence of different types of VE actors who are not natural allies, and may have struck with one another alliances that are uneasy and remain fraught with tensions, create opportunities for CE programming to play on the divisions involved.

    With regard to the latter point, it is particularly important for CE programming, whenever relevant, to aim to drive a wedge, or accentuate existing divisions, between two types of actors. The first consists of hard-core, ideologically driven, and generally globally oriented religious extremists, who cannot possibly be accommodated, and must be dealt with primarily through security measures. The second type encompasses individuals, groups and populations engaged in VE, or providing tacit or explicit support for VE groups, for entirely different, and generally more pragmatic, reasons. Actors in this second category typically are driven primarily by local dynamics (e.g., inter-ethnic or tribal conflicts); by mundane considerations (e.g., a search for power and/or wealth, the desire to re-establish their influence, or gain additional social standing); by resentment at perceived external intervention into their "space;" and/or by a desire to defend values they deem to be under attack.

They might be weaned away from their (implicit or explicit) tactical alliance with more globally oriented, hard-core extremists. What needs to be determined, in this context, is the following:

- Can a wedge be driven between the two types of actors?
- Can some form of accommodation be reached with actors in the second category? Can they be incorporated into the political process? Can they be made to behave in ways that are consistent with the reduction of VE?
- Which interventions (including development and governance activities) might help bring this situation about? (One should note, here, that it is easier to talk about the need to "engage," or at least ensure the goodwill of, non-violent extremists, than to identify clear ways of doing so.)
- Finally, would such actions be consistent with overall US interests, including after their potential side effects have been identified and factored into the equation?

Detaching from the hard-core extremists the much larger group of their fellow travelers often will be critical to defusing the overall threat posed by VE. That, after all, was the key behind US successes against al-Qaeda in Iraq, beginning in late 2006. It was then that Sunni Iraqi tribal leaders turned against the AQ elements whom they initially had welcomed in their midst, and did so after reaching out to – and being reached out to by – US military commanders on the ground. When that mutual accommodation took place, beginning with the al-Anbar province, the de-facto alliance between US military commanders and Sunni tribal leaders succeeded, in a matter of only a few months, in ousting AQ from a region in which the latter had been entrenched for nearly four years. Along similar lines, the hope that those Taliban militants not bent on striking at the United States might be "peeled off" from the hard-core Taliban leadership, based in Quetta (Pakistan), and closely aligned with AQ, was a key assumption driving the new US strategy for "Af-Pak" which President Obama officially unveiled in late March 2009. In this case, as in similar ones, one should reflect carefully on the following two critical questions:

- Can individuals or groups that justifiably may be considered "extremists" insofar as their outlook, values and societal goals are concerned (e.g., they may want to impose the Shari'a, veil on women, and deny girls the right to an education) be persuaded to behave in ways that advance specific CE objectives?
- Even if that is the case, is it advisable to reach an accommodation with these actors? Certainly, some may object to such arrangements on moral grounds. But morality, here, may turn out to overlap with self-interest and program effectiveness. Specifically, if implicit or explicit pacts between the USG and radical or abusive forces undercut the credibility of the USG, and the legitimacy of the entire political order that is being strengthened or established through those bargains, such pacts may not be wise. At best, they may result in short-term, geographically circumscribed CE gains that likely will pale in comparison to their more comprehensive, long-term costs. Even limited, ad hoc arrangements with a few extremist actors may undermine the credibility of the entire CE program -- especially considering how closely the population will scrutinize the deals involved with a view to ascertaining US commitment to the values it professes, and in order to gauge the likelihood that systemic progress will be made in such areas as the fight against corruption, accountability, and the rule of law.

Rule 3: In developing a strategy, systematically identify and tap into those features of local society that may protect it against VE. Take advantage of the weaknesses that violent extremist groups display in their environment.

1. The puritanical, rigid, scriptural and militant brand of Islam which many VE organizations propagate often is at odds with the manner in which Islam is understood and practiced in societies that, historically, have embraced a more tolerant, flexible and pluralistic form of the faith. From Asia to

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West Africa, Islam was able to spread, take root, thrive and endure because it incorporated components of earlier belief systems. As a result, the "living Islam" of many Muslim societies often includes a strong mystical tradition (as reflected, most importantly, in Sufism), as well as beliefs in saints, in miracles, and in individuals who have supernatural abilities, including the power to intercede with God. What matters, here, is that communities often are as strongly wedded to those beliefs as Salafi Jihadists are determined to eradicate them, and punish those who hold them (on ground of apostasy). Therein lies a fundamental difference in both outlook and interests into which CE programming must seek to tap. After all, local societies will resist not only a perceived assault on Islam in general, but also efforts to impose a conception of their faith that radically diverge from the way in which they have understood and practiced it for centuries. This cultural identity phenomenon can go a long way toward immunizing societies against Salafi Jihadist ideas.

While from Africa to Asia Salafism has made significant inroads into urban-educated elites, more syncretic and/or tolerant belief systems remain dominant at the grassroots level. In this context, it may be possible to thwart the spread of violent extremist religious ideas through direct and indirect engagement with mainstream Sufi and similarly-oriented religious organizations and leaders. The latter typically feel fundamentally threatened – in their core ideas, social influence and vital interests – by the spread of radical, violent Salafi ideas. They see themselves as under siege, and engaged in an open or latent war with intolerant voices that condemn them as heretical, and seek their elimination. This is a key issue in the Sahel as well as in South Asia. One informant in Garissa, Kenya, noted in frustration that as a Sufi, there remained hardly a mosque in town in which he could feel comfortable about making his views known; local mosques had virtually all become Wahhabi in orientation. In Niger, as noted earlier, the Izala movement appears to be rapidly expanding popular support for a Wahhabi version of Islam. Confronting such an existential threat, and aware of the danger, traditionalists may be far more receptive than one might believe to the possibilities of cooperating with outside forces in putting down such challenges.

Programming should include efforts to reach out to religious traditionalists with a view to determining which forms of cooperation and/or support might be appropriate. For instance, helping these organizations provide social services (thereby pulling the rug from under VE groups engaged in similar efforts) may be suitable, and may give additional traction to their efforts to propagate non-violent, moderate forms of Islam. Strengthening their schools to include practical, job-oriented curricula could help them draw students from more radical madrasas. Above all, these organizations (often led by an older generation) need sound advice and assistance in developing and implementing a strategy that addresses the concrete needs, concerns and aspirations of those youth who represent the primary at-risk populations. Developing their capacity for strategic thinking and their ability to engage in outreach activities should be a priority.

One note of caution is needed in contemplating support to traditionalist religious groups. In some cases, they will be tied to elite clans that have long dominated society, while long marginalized, subordinate groups will find value in Salafi Islam, which provides a stronger platform for claiming equality. This is the case in north Yemen and also in parts of northern Mali. Development practitioners should be careful not to play into these tensions or to appear to be supporting dominant elites at the expense of weaker groups.

2. Violent extremist groups of the Salafi Jihadi type also display weaknesses that should be systematically identified, so that programming (especially communication efforts) then can take advantage of them.

    a. There typically is a significant disconnect between the transnational objectives which globally-oriented, VE organizations pursue, and the much more geographically circumscribed goals of those local groups which TSJs seek to co-opt. Recruits to, and sympathizers of, these local groups – and, even more importantly, the much larger populations that may be vulnerable to their appeal – should be constantly reminded (directly or indirectly) of these differences. That

may be particularly important where a local conflict exists, which AQ or an AQ-affiliate seeks to present as part of the global jihad. In such instances, CE programming should go to great length to highlight the systematic differences in interests and goals between local actors and globally-oriented ones.

   b. As discussed above, the cultural barriers between TSJs and the local populations they seek to manipulate also represent a significant obstacle that the former have to overcome. Specific hurdles may include the TSJs' attempt to impose their bland, literalist and "de-contextualized" brand of Islam on local society; their efforts to make religious rules the single source of social and political regulation (at the expense, for instance, of tribal customs to which at-risk populations may be very attached); their contempt for local traditions and practices; and their disregard for the authority and interests of local leaders (e.g., tribal chiefs). CE programming (especially communication efforts) should take advantage of these drastic differences in outlooks and visions.

3. It also may be possible to exploit the leadership rivalries, clash of interests, or strategic disagreements that may exist either within a single VE organization, or among rival VE groups. TSJ groups' tendency to "over-reach," and antagonize their former allies or potential base through their heavy-handed ways, may provide yet another opportunity to drive a wedge (or widen the gap) between them and the population.[65] Along similar lines, TSJ ideology is not particularly "flexible" in terms of its ability to adapt itself to changing conditions in society. That inherent weakness, too, may provide an opening. For instance, CE programming may include activities that are meant to draw attention to the growing disconnect between, on the one hand, the rigid outlook and discourse of TSJ organizations, and, on the other hand, the evolving needs and aspirations of vulnerable populations.[66] Another inconsistency that may provide opportunities for CE information campaigns consists of the frequent discrepancy between the lofty rhetoric of VE organizations and the behavior of their leaders (which often is driven by far more mundane considerations, especially self-interest). That phenomenon, and the disillusionment it often creates among former recruits, has proven to be a frequent cause of "disengagement" (i.e., individuals leaving, or turning away from, violent organizations they had once supported).[67]

4. Programming should seek to reach out to those frequently sizable constituencies (as opposed to the more limited number of urban-based, westernized, secular intellectuals) that are vilified and/or threatened by VE (e.g., Shiites or Sunni Islamists who participate in the political process, and seek to advance their interests through legal means). These constituencies represent a significant pool of potential allies for CE efforts. Harnessing Islamically-oriented groups in the fight against extremism, which also is a contest for the soul of Islam, has the advantage (unlike efforts that limit themselves to engaging Western-oriented secular intellectuals and professionals) of conveying to vulnerable populations that CE efforts are not intended to undermine Islam (see Rule 1).

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[65] "Over-reaching" may entail engaging in unnecessary, gruesome violence that creates revulsion among potential or actual followers. It also may involve encroaching on the economic interests of the local elite, efforts to by-pass or marginalize that elite, and disregard for its social and political influence (all of which were mistakes made by AQ in Iraq with regard to Sunni tribal sheikhs).

[66] In an entirely different context, a factor in the decline of the left-wing violent organizations that were active in several Western countries during the early 1970s (the Baader-Meinhof group, or Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades, the Japanese Red Army, and the Weathermen) was their inability to renew their ideology so as to make it relevant to the outlook, concerns and aspirations of a younger generation.

[67] See for instance Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

B. PROGRAM AND PROJECT DESIGN AND ADAPTATION

The rules discussed in this section may be of use to those staff designing new activities as well as to those trying to adapt an existing DA program to respond to evolving extremist threats.

Rule 4: Think holistically: design activities to support the overarching CE strategy; integrate interventions across sectors; look for complementarities and mutually reinforcing impacts; and coordinate among key stakeholders.

1. To be effective, CE efforts must mirror the enemy's own strategy – in all its dimensions and on all the fronts where that strategy is being deployed. At least insofar as TSJ is concerned, we know that the enemy's strategy closely integrates:

   a. Terrorist activities (ranging from a handful of spectacular, large-scale operations to a much greater number of smaller-scale attacks),[68]

   b. The systematic exploitation of a wide range of grassroots grievances – including (but not limited to) those that stem from grave developmental and governance deficits; and

   c. Systematic and carefully thought-out efforts to manipulate public opinion, especially the perceptions of at-risk populations.

   Against this background, an effective CE strategy may need to weave together (a) security-oriented control and containment measures; (b) development and democracy/governance (D/G) activities; and (c) a communications program. Development and D/G activities should be designed and implemented in a manner that contributes to overall CE objectives, if that is their principle or even secondary purpose.

2. This reasoning suggests that, when thinking with their CE hat on, development and D/G professionals may need to approach development and D/G issues somewhat differently from the way they traditionally have. For instance, developmental and D/G activities that make sense as part of a standard developmental or D/G program may need to be adapted to be effective in addressing VE. A gender rights program implemented from a human rights or Western secular humanist perspective (with a focus on equality)in a society that has largely accepted Wahhabi/Salafi views or clings to traditional mores might backfire, discrediting the US (and perhaps the national government) and certainly not demonstrating respect for local cultural norms or interpretations of Islam. Implementing such a program within the frame of rights granted to women within Islam might change the activities and how they are implemented and articulated but could also generate more support, less hostility and greater impact. More liberal family codes of law have failed recently in both Mali and Niger, and there appear to be no groups working to support reforms from within an Islamic frame of reference.

3. The benchmarks traditionally used to assess developmental and D/G activities may not be adequate in isolation to evaluate such activities when they are part of a CE strategy. These benchmarks may need to be modified to reflect the fact that developmental and D/G interventions are being undertaken to achieve CE objectives. When D/G or education projects are carried out as part of a CE strategy, their D/G benefits are secondary to their expected contributions to the fight against VE. Consequently, development practitioners will need to determine the links between sector impacts and the mitigation of extremism risk and measure both. In environments where the main

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[68] Large-scale operations aim to draw attention to the cause, galvanize support for it from within at-risk populations, and prompt the enemy into over-reacting. Smaller-scale attacks seek to exhaust the enemy by stretching its operational and financial resources to the breaking point, including by prompting it into becoming involved in an excessively high number of theaters.

task is one of preventing VE risk from emerging or taking hold, the measurement challenge will be substantial, and attribution nearly impossible to determine.

4. "Thinking holistically" also means that, when choosing among possible interventions, preference should be given to activities that are likely to have impacts across several of the dimensions, discussed above, of an integrated CE strategy, and/or to activities that will reinforce the impact of other key CE interventions. Thus, for instance, a local government project that addresses local economic growth and makes a concerted effort to engage youth in local decision making and community development activities would be preferred to one that focuses only on municipal budget and planning skills and broader citizen participation.

5. "Integrated programming" implies that the relative value of certain activities is largely a function of whether or not other interventions, required for the activities in question to be successful, are also being carried out. For instance, building schools will not contribute to CE objectives (or education ones for that matter) if it proves impossible to staff them with teachers and provide them with materials, or if corruption within them is so pervasive that they merely will exacerbate the cynicism or anger of local people.

6. A "coordinated approach" refers to the required coordination among all key stakeholders, during both the design and the implementation phases. On the <u>donor</u> side, stakeholders will include agencies responsible for the following tasks:

   - Delivery of DA;
   - Securing the population, and protecting it against efforts at intimidation and coercion;
   - Public communications efforts; and
   - Monitoring and analysis of VE groups, their operations, and their evolving strategies and tactics as well as monitoring of the impact of DA and communication efforts.

   Those agencies need to agree on a shared diagnostic of the problem, and on the priorities which that diagnostic suggests. They then need to reach a consensus regarding the political strategy (i.e., overall objectives, approach, and sequencing of needed interventions) that makes the most sense, in light of the existing context and the resources available. They must agree on the following:

7. How to pool resources among them, and who will contribute what;

8. The most effective manner in which these resources should be deployed in the pursuit of the political strategy that has been agreed upon; and

9. How responsibilities and tasks should be divided (i.e., who will be in charge of implementing which components of the strategy).

   With respect to both diagnostic and proposed strategy, the donor (or donors) also should coordinate closely with the host government and other potential partners in the host country. These partners should be given a stake in the success of the strategy, which can be implemented and sustained only once their cooperation and goodwill has been secured. Implementation should not begin until host actors have provided input and bought into the strategy, and until an agreement has been reached regarding their various responsibilities in its implementation.

Rule 5: Direct assistance to at-risk groups and communities; prioritize interventions; and be modest in projecting likely results.

1. Programming should be approached with a sense of modesty regarding what CE interventions can accomplish in light of the complex and multi-dimensional nature of VE, and because of other constraints likely to be faced by the donor and/or implementers. For one, as discussed in the Drivers' Guide, VE usually is fueled by a multiplicity of forces that operate on several levels. These forces may involve complicated, structural problems that have been at work for generations, that

defy easy solutions, and for which there are no quick fixes. For instance, VE movements often tap into powerful historical themes, cultural "scripts," and memories burnt into the very fabric of society. They may find it relatively easy to manipulate longstanding tensions and grievances (toward the central government, the West, rival groups or communities, or several of the above). They also frequently will exploit the latent distrust or overt hostility that may be found within certain communities toward a whole range of "outside forces" viewed as intrusive, or as seeking to impose an alien order on the local population. They will rush to tap into the anger created by long accumulated, challenging socioeconomic and political problems – from pervasive corruption and impunity to widespread social marginality and a lack of economic opportunities for young people.

CE programming must reflect an appreciation for the limitations in the extent to which the powerful forces mentioned above can be countered through the traditional tools of development and D/G assistance. That is not to say that the problem at hand is immune to the tools in question; it is, instead, to underscore that one needs to be very clear about what those tools can and cannot contribute to the resolution of the challenges posed by VE, and over what kinds of time-frames. These considerations should be reflected explicitly in the nature and scope of a CE program's objectives, in the manner in which that program sets out to pursue those objectives, and, more generally, in the approach and philosophy that underlie that program.

2. Programming also must be consistent with resource and staffing constraints. If CE activities are to be sustained over a long period of time (which often is a precondition for success, as discussed in Rule 11 below), they must reflect the limitations that may exist on the resources that can be deployed, and on the expertise of the staff available for implementing or overseeing these activities. In the coming years even more than before, budget realities are likely to require careful prioritizing and targeting of interventions. That will not be easy, considering the nature of the drivers, the large and diverse populations likely to be at risk, the variety and scope of needed responses, and the imperative of reaching a critical mass if one is to dampen risk in any significant way. Difficult and frustrating trade-offs may need to be considered (see Rule 12). On the other hand, being forced to prioritize may help avoid the dangers associated with "overreaching." Indeed, a strategy intended to address all existing sources of VE would be not merely unrealistic; it also likely would backfire, by leading to interventions that may be so intrusive as to generate more VE, not less.

3. Finally, the need to approach programming with realistic expectations and a due sense of modesty about what can be accomplished through CE interventions also stems from the lack of a solid base of relevant empirical data. We simply do not know enough, yet, about the relative value of different types of CE programs and interventions, or about the most effective mix of activities to address given forms of extremism – particularly in environments where VE already has taken hold. Far more systematic collection and analysis of data are called for in this area. While what has been learned about the drivers of VE is helpful, especially from a prevention perspective, there remains insufficient evidence to generalize about the relative effectiveness of certain risk-prevention and risk-reduction strategies relative to others.

Rule 6: Anchor the implementation in partnerships.

1. The discussion thus far already has pointed to the need for a CE strategy to be built around partnerships. Particularly critical are partnerships between USG agencies and the host government, between that government and vulnerable populations, and between both the USG and the host government on the one hand, and credible and respected local community leaders and organizations on the other. Assistance should be designed and delivered in ways that give the local stakeholders in these partnerships a sense of ownership of it.

2. This "partnership rule" suggests that priority should be given to interventions that meet the following criteria:

a. They should seek to maximize community involvement in the design and implementation of projects;

b. They should connect the population to moderate groups and leaders (religious and secular) where possible;

c. They should connect the local population to the host government or local authorities in ways that make decision-makers more accountable, more receptive to popular input, and more likely to deliver good governance; and

d. They should allow for positive, trust-building interaction between USG staff on the one hand, and local communities and community leaders on the other.

A particular intervention may end being important less for its concrete, physical outcome (e.g., the school or clinic that was built, the well that was drilled) than for the partnering process that it involved, and the benefits generated by this process (e.g., a greater awareness of what is to be gained through cooperative endeavors among forces opposed to VE). Well-crafted, effective partnerships may go a long way toward boosting local society's immunity to VE ideas and groups.

3. Relying heavily on partnerships implies that special attention should be paid to cultivating the personal relationships of trust and mutual respect without which those partnerships can neither be built nor sustained. It also points to the necessity of identifying locally influential figures that are both legitimate and able to deliver. Leaders whose influence straddles several spheres or arenas – for instance, a respected businessperson whose voice carries weight on the municipal council, and who also has access to a regional governor – may be particularly useful. Once such local partners have been identified, efforts should focus on transferring responsibilities to them. These local stakeholders should be relied upon because of their understanding of local society, and because of their ability to "make things happen" in a way that is consistent with local sensitivities. However, one also must ensure – through proper local knowledge and close, regular monitoring of projects – that local partners will use the assistance in ways that are consistent with the CE objectives that assistance is intended to serve.

> **LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS MAY BE CRITICAL TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION**
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> The advantages of working through local partners include:
>
> - More effective design and implementation due to knowledge of the ground reality;
> - Greater credibility particularly in environments that are not favorable to the US and where there will be suspicion about the motives of American entities;
> - An opportunity to reinforce the legitimacy and influence of moderate groups and forces; and
> - More likely to recognize subtle changes in the environment that will require program adaptation.
>
> At the same time, care is required in selecting and channeling assistance through indigenous partners. One could be inadvertently augmenting conflict by selecting some partners over others and could be co-opted into supporting agendas that are hardly understood.

Rule 7: Convey respect for indigenous religious and cultural norms and traditions: style and symbolism matter.

1. In both their content and the manner in which they are implemented, activities should communicate respect for Islam and indigenous customs and traditions. They also should convey proper deference to prominent religious figures or community leaders who are highly regarded by the population. Such considerations cannot be approached merely as a "plus" in programming; instead, they should be front and center during both the design and implementation phases.

2. By the same token, it is critical to guard against the possibility that interventions will be viewed as intrusive, heavy-handed, or insufficiently sensitive to local values and power brokers. As discussed in

the Drivers' Guide, VEs consistently seek to capitalize on perceptions that Islam or other indigenous traditions are vilified, denigrated, or under attack. It is essential both to implement activities that are specifically designed to counter such perceptions and to avoid interventions – especially in such sensitive, "loaded" areas as gender roles or the content of education – which local populations easily may perceive as efforts to impose certain values on them. By contrast, support for the restoration of Islamic cultural artifacts, or the refurbishing of a mosque, can go a long way toward conveying respect for indigenous values. In the process, such interventions will help counteract propaganda by VE groups, and may create the local goodwill and cooperation required for successful CE efforts.

In short, the positive and negative signals which assistance programs send – deliberately or unwittingly – can end up being more decisive than the assistance itself. Aid recipients often scrutinize the latter's content, as well as the manner in which it is delivered, with a view to determining what both reveal about donor motives and underlying attitudes toward local society and culture. Those in charge of program design, therefore, should remain very sensitive to the central role that local perceptions will play in shaping the success of CE programs.

3. The less invasive the intervention, and the more actively it engages credible local leaders and institutions, the more likely it is to succeed and avoid triggering a backlash. That is yet another reason why activities should be designed so that their implementation relies as much as possible on power brokers and opinion leaders with a solid grounding in their respective communities (see Rule 6). The goodwill of such individuals should be systematically cultivated – and not only when they are needed to carry out a particular project.[69] That being said, strategy design also must consider the trade-off between the need to delegate to local actors responsibility for the implementation of many activities and the donor's understandable desire to maintain overall control over the CE program.[70] To be sure, a compelling case can be made for maximizing local involvement, minimizing US visibility and fingerprints, and maintaining influence by operating from behind the scenes. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, it is important to remember that the very local forces upon whom one needs to rely for implementation purposes may be tempted to act increasingly autonomously. They may engage in behavior that is not consistent with, or even begins to undermine, key US objectives. While host-society actors should be given a sense of ownership of the CE program, and a stake in its success, they should not be allowed to "hijack" that program surreptitiously.

4. When thinking about ill-advised interventions that are likely to backfire due to the way in which they are cast, and the signals they send, one type looms particularly large: efforts to press for secular values and systems, and/or to undermine the role of religion in educational curricula. Interventions along those lines are misguided in two main regards. First, they are inherently very intrusive, and likely to be perceived as attempts to undermine Islam. For those reasons, and as discussed above, they are particularly prone to generate a strong backlash, and play into the rhetoric of VEs. Second, they are based on a deeply flawed diagnostic. They imply a strong correlation between holding religious views and being inclined to VE, which simply is not supported by the evidence. In reality, Violent Islamist extremists (VIEs) often are characterized by their lack of religious knowledge - especially those active since the early 2000s. Some analysts even have suggested that these militants' lack of sound religious education is a significant factor in making them vulnerable to violent extremist discourses that are based on a gross simplification or distortion of basic religious concepts and ideas. From that perspective, the solution might seem to lie in stronger and more effective (not less) religious education. Such education might provide at-risk populations with the ability to

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[69] In Iraq, the deference that US military commanders on the ground showed to Sunni tribal shaykhs (*shuyyukh*) was critical to the latter's changing views of the US, and to their decision to collaborate with American forces in ridding their respective communities from AQ influence. See for instance John A. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January 2009).

[70] See David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 16.

evaluate critically ideas that they otherwise might be inclined to take at face value, given their lack of relevant perspective and knowledge.

A related, but separate, argument revolves around the limited appeal of secular nationalism across much of the Muslim world (as, indeed, elsewhere). The significant constituency that once existed (during the 1950s and 1960s) for secular nationalist ideas has largely withered away. Promoting a secular vision for which there seems to be few takers does not make practical sense. Populations left disillusioned by the promises and premises of secular politics aspire to a political order that takes into account their religious values and traditions. They do not think that religion ought to be relegated entirely to the private sphere. They believe, instead, that there is a legitimate place for it in the public square, and that religious ideals have much to contribute to elevating the quality of public life, including by infusing it with moral, spiritual and ethical content. They fear that, without religious principles to draw on, public life will drift into mere individualism, hedonism, and materialism; individuals will be left to pursuing their own interests, and the sense of forming a community united by a commonality of purpose will disappear.[71] In this type of environment, promoting (or even appearing to promote) secular values as a potential antidote to violent religious extremism may be a non-starter.

Rule 8: Ensure that development interventions are designed to produce CE benefits or impacts, and that the CE benefits are significant enough to merit the interventions.

1. The anticipated CE benefits of development interventions cannot be taken for granted but must be carefully thought through and articulated. Most importantly, the connection between specific interventions and the particular CE benefits expected from those interventions must be made clear and explicit. The connection also must be plausible in light of what is known about CE programming and its limitations.

2. Two misconceptions should be dispelled from the outset:

   a. The idea that the mere multiplication of standard development interventions (such as building wells, schools, or health care units) will have a significant CE impact is not born out by the evidence. To be effective, those activities need to be integrated into a comprehensive, well-thought-out CE strategy (see Rule 4). Unless interventions are rooted in a holistic approach to CE programming, their CE benefits are likely to be far less than what the advocates of those interventions typically allege or assume.

   b. It also is naïve to believe that building one-off isolated pieces of infrastructure here and there, or engaging in welfare and relief activities, necessarily will help in "winning hearts and minds;" countering recruitment efforts by VE groups, or undermining their ability to operate within certain communities. The interventions in question do not necessarily generate gratitude. Moreover, whatever goodwill they create may not last long and may not be sufficient to offset negative views of the US (for instance, those rooted in US foreign policies related to countries in the Muslim world) and/other other powerful drivers of VE. More importantly, gratitude may not be enough to counter intimidation and coercion of local populations by VEs.

3. Programmers should also ponder whether the anticipated gains are sufficient to justify the investments involved. That is particularly true with regard to governance-related interventions. For instance, if pervasive social marginality has been identified as a primary driver behind VE, and if the lack of basic social services is a major force sustaining the marginality in question, how helpful will building a few health units be? How many such units need to be built, and where, in order to make a

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[71] See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to Al-Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

dent in VE? Are water and sanitation facilities more important than clinics? For any given amount of resources, what should be the proper mix between clinics, schools, wells, and job-creation programs? If job-creation programs are considered, how can USAID leverage policy changes and other forms of assistance to ensure the creation of more jobs than direct funding can yield? We may never know how many jobs need to be created to reduce sufficiently the alienation that fuels VE, but it is important to consider critical mass, scaling up and sustainability issues at the project design stage and in monitoring impact?

Rule 9: An effective communications plan is essential to success. Formulate that plan early on and treat it as a core element of the CE development strategy. Monitor the impact of messages as well as popular and key stakeholder reactions to communications and perceptions of the development program. Make adjustments in the communications strategy and the program as target group feedback suggests is required.

1. This rule flows from the previous one, but is important enough to warrant its own treatment. An enemy that places public communications at the heart of its approach, and whose strategy presumes that the war will be won or lost based on public perceptions, can be countered only through programming that makes information operations front and center as well. As discussed above, the anticipated development impact of an activity may be high, but if its desired effect on public perceptions among populations vulnerable to VE is low, it may be necessary to adjust that activity and/or alter the communications approach.

2. Communication efforts cannot be approached, as they typically have been in the past, as attempts to explain or justify to audiences ex post facto policies or interventions that are already underway. Instead – and precisely because winning "the war of perceptions" is so critical – interventions should be undertaken only after perceptions have been studied and a communications strategy has been developed to respond to those perceptions and to describe the interventions in the best manner possible. Some activities, at least, should be intended primarily to support a particular communication strategy (as opposed to the other way around), and help that strategy gain traction with at-risk populations. What is required, then, is a serious rethinking of the appropriate sequencing of development and D/G interventions on the one hand, and communication activities on the other.

> **TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGNS**
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> - Radio and TV PSAs that credit the USG, host government and/or moderate partners with development impacts that address long standing grievances and that create a sense of hope that problems can be resolved.
> - Radio and TV talk and call in shows featuring moderate voices on themes related to religious tolerance, non-violent methods for resolving grievances, and inter- and intra-faith dialogue (as is currently being supported by USAID in several countries in the Sahel).
> - Outreach (face to face or mass media) that directly confronts and corrects extremist-provided misinformation and propaganda, but communications should not be purely defensive.
> - Campaigns that deliberately target youth and the most at-risk segments of the population, including use of moderate chat rooms, twitter and Facebook to reach aggrieved educated urban youth.

3. Communication campaigns must be grounded in reality. Superficial "hearts and minds" approaches that are too obviously disconnected from actual policies on the ground will not only fail, but could backfire and antagonize their intended audiences. Not only do actions speak louder than words, but they also are critical for words to gain traction. Resentment at the perceived hypocrisy that they betray may add fuel to an already burning fire, and be exploited by VEs. Information operations have to be able to point to, and be given momentum by, on-the-ground efforts to address grievances, improve underlying conditions, remedy dangerous gaps in governance, and spur economic

development. They should encourage the use of constructive channels to address issues, provided such channels exist. They also should tap into initiatives on the diplomatic front that contradict the enemy's propaganda.

4. Communications plans (and development interventions) need to be based on an understanding of existing perceptions and experiences. Population survey data should be used and if possible collected to shape not only topics of messages but how those topics are handled.

5. Because indigenous voices typically enjoy greater credibility and resonate far more than those of foreign actors, communication campaigns should rely as heavily as possible on them, relay them, and seek to amplify their impact. Home-grown initiatives and local discourses that aim to counter VE should be tapped into – though great precautions should be taken to ensure that even indirect and discrete external backing does not discredit those indigenous voices and initiatives.

6. Communication efforts should emphasize gains that result from programming – particularly those that relate to the key grievances of at-risk populations. If headway is made toward improving access to justice, for instance, but vulnerable populations are not aware of this progress, it is likely that no CE benefits will have been secured.

7. Communication campaigns should also determine which party is to obtain credit for any gains from DA. The choice will vary according to the environment. In a country where the US is generally unpopular, the USG will want some credit. It may however also be critical to strengthen national or local government legitimacy or the influence of moderate groups by communicating their role in providing the assistance.

8. It is also important to monitor, and attempt to counter, communication efforts by extremists that meant to undermine or deride US or host government CE objectives or programs. Where it is clear that VE groups are driven by greed and participate in illicit activities, communications messages should point that out (see Part III, item 5 for more on this point).

9. In short, an effective CE communications plan needs to operate at several levels: the support being provided, the impact of that support, the parties key to providing the support, the countering of alternate negative messages, the strengthening of moderate positions, and sometimes even the correction of misinformation that plays into grievances. In Mali for example, Tuaregs in the north think that they are substantially poorer and more marginalized that communities in the south; this is not necessarily the case, as poverty data suggest.

Rule 10: Think through the potential unintended consequences of particular interventions before making any final decision about programming. Assess unintended consequences while implementation is underway, and redesign activities as required.

1. "Do no harm" should remain the cardinal rule of CE programming – particularly considering how easy it is for CE interventions to backfire. Consequently, programs and activities should not be finalized until one has made an explicit effort to speculate on their potential unintended consequences. In one example from Afghanistan, school security became an issue, drawing in the police to protect the school. The police proved so exploitative, that the effort to provide schooling backfired and led to support for the Taliban.

2. Unless the risks associated with non-intervention are so high that there is not option but to engage, programmers should balance carefully the potential benefits of any program or activity against the possible dangers stemming from its implementation – taking into account the likelihood that interventions can reduce risk in a meaningful way. Sometimes, doing nothing – or acting indirectly, or on the margins – can be the wisest course of action (for instance, if the risks associated with non-intervention, or very limited forms of interventions, are lower, and more manageable, than those that

might result from more significant forms of involvement). It may be easier to initiate a large-scale CE program than to extricate oneself from it – at little or no cost – once it has been launched. Poor implementation or the termination of projects that results in benefits that do not match the expectations that they generated may create frustration or anger (and, therefore, opportunities for VEs) that might not have existed if these programs had not initiated in the first place.

3. The most dangerous, unintended consequences of CE programming often stem from the possibility that local populations will look upon CE interventions as a form of external intrusion. As discussed earlier, when populations believe that their values are being threatened by outside forces, and/or that their space is being invaded, they become particularly prone to rise up against the source of that interference. Foreign meddling, or the mere perception of it, can act as a catalyst that will unify very different strands of VEs; once united, the latter may pose a far greater threat than each previously did each on its own.

   Western encroachment also provides an opportunity for VE groups to pose as the defenders of those Muslim communities that feel intruded upon. Foreign-based Jihadists, whom local society once may have regarded as alien, suddenly may be viewed in a very different light; they now may be regarded as fellow Muslims also engaged in a common fight against Western invasion. In short, heavy-handed, highly visible CE interventions that are insufficiently attuned to local sensitivities can play into the hands of VEs in a myriad of ways. After all, it is no accident that the strategy of global Jihadists has been to seek to insert themselves, and become embedded in, local society, and then to provoke Western intervention. Their hope has been that over-reaction, or over-reaching, by Western governments – or merely the dangers that result from entanglement with local dynamics – will antagonize local populations, help these populations overcome their initial resistance to the foreign Jihadist presence in their midst, and convince them to take part in the global jihad.[72]

4. One set of possible unintended consequences relates to community policing. Reliance on community-based organizations to provide for security at the grassroots level, and prevent infiltration by VEs, can be a particularly effective CE tool. It can isolate VEs from the environment they seek to contaminate, while providing employment opportunities for individuals who, otherwise, might be vulnerable to the lure of the salaries sometimes provided by VE groups. However, planners should also be aware of some of the significant difficulties and dangers associated with this approach.

   a. The neighborhood watch organizations established or strengthened in order to further CE objectives may evolve into different types of entities, driven by objectives that are not necessarily consistent with – and even may be antithetical to – the fight against VE. They may become more akin to vigilante groups that prey on the population, run protection and extortion rackets, or for which greed, or the search for power, may become overarching goals.

   b. The relationship between local self-defense organizations and formal state institutions charged with public security and law-and-order may be fraught with tensions. That is likely to be the case if grassroots organizations begin to operate increasingly autonomously. Dangerous strains also may manifest themselves in societies that are divided along ethnic, tribal or sectarian lines, and where community-based organizations and central-government institutions are controlled by groups that are distrustful of one another, and have a history of mutual antagonism. The central government (or, more specifically, those groups that dominate it) may view with great misgivings the establishment or strengthening of armed neighborhood organizations in areas that are inhabited by populations it does not trust, or with which it historically has had a tense relationship. If so, traditional state-building objectives (including strengthening the authority, legitimacy and effectiveness of national-level state institutions) may not easily be reconciled with

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[72] See David Kilcullen's insightful discussion of the "Accidental Guerilla Syndrome" in *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

efforts to provide for security at the local level by working through community-based organizations.

To complicate the situation even further, the USG may be torn between the need to consolidate ties to, and maintain the cooperation of, the central government, and the equally important necessity of relying on community-based organizations at the local level. USG agencies tasked with implementing CE programs may find themselves in the difficult situation of having to provide direct and indirect assistance to armed neighborhood watch groups that are viewed with, at best, great distrust by the military or official police that some of those very same USG agencies also may be training. Indeed, manifestations of this very predicament could be observed in Iraq in Spring 2009.[73]

Rule 11: Balance the advantages of continuity and consistency against the need for flexibility.

1. Consistency and continuity in programming help convey a long-term commitment to the country and its population, which, in turn, may be critical to building the local trust and partnerships discussed above. Where CE assistance is portrayed as part of a broader, long-term relationship, it is more likely to be accepted. Recipients of assistance must be reassured that projects will not constantly be revisited and/or significantly altered (with on-going ones being dropped, and new ones being launched), since such recurring changes are likely to have a negative impact on the overall effectiveness of programming. Continuity of key staff is important as well, and for the same reasons. Excessive staff turnover will make it difficult to build the needed personal relationships.

   A degree of continuity in programming also is critical to ensuring that the CE capacities of the host government and local civil society are being built up steadily. Ultimately, the primary burden for combating VE will have to fall on local actors; therefore, consistency is useful in ensuring the sustainability of the CE gains generated by assistance.   Some activities will be pursued for short-term gains and need not be and cannot be made sustainable, but ultimately local partners will have to take over.

2. While there is much to be said in favor of continuity in programming, it is also important that such programming be able to reflect new threats and opportunities; changes in the nature, scope or manifestations of existing threats; as well as lessons learned through the implementation of existing programs. In Iraq, for instance, the ability of US military commanders on the ground to sense, in 2006, that the Sunni tribal Shaykhs were beginning

> **ILLUSTRATIVE QUICK IMPACT ACTIVITIES**
>
> - Short term vocational training and jobs-creation or cash-for-work programs to address youth unemployment
> - Humanitarian assistance in natural or man-made emergencies
> - Social programs for youth
> - Housing or livelihood support for the vulnerable
> - Restoration of cultural/religious artifacts

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[73] In early April 2009, the (Shiite-dominated) government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (supported by the US) found itself engaged in a showdown with several (Sunni-controlled) "Awakening Councils" – the creation of which had been encouraged earlier by the US. From late 2006 onward, these Awakening Councils had played a key role in US efforts to drive AQ out of areas it had infiltrated; they also had been viewed as a way of integrating former (Sunni) insurgents into the new Iraqi order. In fact, until January 1, 2009, when responsibility for the 94,000-or-so councils was formally transferred to the Iraqi Army, their members had been on the US payroll. In April 2009, tensions between several Awakening Councils and Iraqi and American soldiers escalated into armed clashes in the Fadhl Sunni neighborhood of Baghdad, as well as in the predominantly Sunni provinces of Diyala and al-Anbar. This situation opened up the dangerous possibility that the US might find itself caught in an internal, violent battle between two nominal allies. It did not help that, from the very moment Awakening Councils had emerged, the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad had regarded them with great suspicion, and expressed concern that they might form the nucleus of an armed Sunni opposition to the new order. Though the situation was brought under control (at least temporarily) – through an arrangement that involved the disbanding of the councils involved, and the integration of all their members into Iraqi security forces – the sequence of events summarized in this footnote illustrates many of the dangers discussed in the text.

to turn against AQ, and these commanders' quick and skilled reaction to the opportunities that this new situation offered, was critical to the significant CE gains that were made in 2007-08. Similarly, in post-Suharto Indonesia, the 2004 tsunami, and the devastation it brought about, prompted globally-oriented Jihadists to try to co-opt the separatist rebellion in Aceh – by establishing a presence on the ground and seeking to distribute aid. Rapid and effective delivery of large-scale humanitarian assistance by the US and Australia played an important role in thwarting such efforts. In short, while consistency is important, so is the ability to adjust programming quickly and effectively in order to reflect often rapidly changing conditions on the ground.

3. Programming, therefore, must seek to reconcile the competing demands of responsiveness and adaptability on the one hand, and steadiness and steadfastness on the other. A measure of continuity is essential to signaling determination and commitment. It helps reassure local partners that one will "stay the course," and conveys to the enemy that one will not be deterred or distracted. But flexibility also is critical considering the changing and fluid nature of the threat.

This conclusion suggests that programming typically should consist of a mix of short-term and longer-term interventions. Short-term, quick-impact interventions are likely to be especially critical in high risk environments, where VE organizations are active and effective and where government and civil society institutions show serious capacity deficits. Long-term interventions (for instance, those that aim to fight corruption) may be absolutely essential to addressing the structural causes of VE. However, because of their very nature, they are unlikely to produce much visible impact in the short run. It is always possible, of course, that citizens will see even modest improvements in a hopeful light – but one should hold limited expectations in this area. Instead, it may be necessary to complement long-term programming with short-term activities that create a sense of momentum and progress. On the other hand, short-term interventions may generate quicker and more visible progress, but they may not be sufficient to address several essential root causes of VE. They also may be harder to sustain over time.

In short, a proper balance between short-term and long-term interventions may be necessary. Critical governance and developmental deficits can be addressed through long-term projects that take time to generate quick results, but do confront some of the key root causes of VE. At the same time, short-term activities may be hard to sustain, and may not be as effective at changing the structural conditions that feed VE. However, they may be necessary to bring about short-term improvements that can "buy time," and help change perceptions at the grassroots level, while convincing at-risk populations that "help is on the way," and that there are tangible benefits to reap from siding with the authorities against VEs.

Finally, the need to reconcile flexibility and sustainability suggests that, even with regard to long-term interventions, priority should be given to smaller, lower-cost projects that can be modified and redirected depending on both the results they produce and evolving conditions on the ground. Because smaller projects are easier to "recalibrate," there is much to be said for long-term strategies to be built around a series of small projects, as opposed to a few larger ones. Smaller generally is better.

Rule 12: In setting policy in high VE risk environments, identify and consider the trade-offs that may exist between CE objectives and standard DA approaches.

In countries in which VE risk is very high and endangering state stability as well as USG security, CE objectives are likely to take precedence over development goals. At times, these separate objectives will be mutually supportive, but on other occasions trade-offs will have to be considered between CE and other goals. Trade-offs also may exist among CE objectives. These trade-offs must be given serious consideration before programming decisions are finalized.

1. For instance, democratic development may call for the empowerment of marginalized populations, and for their being given a greater role in political life and governmental decision-making. That very process, however, may provide openings for VE groups. It may be, for example, that the populations in question have shown themselves to be more susceptible to infiltration by VE organizations. Alternatively, efforts to create a more inclusive system may be resented by other groups, especially if it translates into a questioning of the dominant position they historically had enjoyed (and which may not have been justified by their relative share of the total population). If they feel themselves to be "cornered," those historically dominant groups may rise up against the new order, and welcome the support of VEs – including foreign-based ones, who, thereby, might find an avenue for embedding themselves in local society. It was that basic scenario, after all, that essentially unfolded in Iraq after the downfall of Saddam Hussein, when a resentful Sunni minority that had dominated the country and the state since their formation in 1920 suddenly found itself marginalized, due not only to the fall of the regime, but also to the Coalition Provisional Authority's decision to disband the Iraqi Army and engage in "de-Baathification" of state institutions. In a less extreme scenario, democratization can exacerbate ethnic/clan tensions, as decentralization appears to have done in northern Mali, potentially providing an opening for TSJ groups to align with one side or another.

2. As discussed above, CE interventions may call for securing the goodwill of local power brokers who preside over extensive patron-client networks. Such locally influential figures may be uniquely positioned to enhance security, prevent infiltration of communities by VEs, and guarantee that the broader population will cooperate with CE goals. Because they hold a great deal of sway over the community, and have the ability to make agreements stick, the success of a CE program may depend on their readiness to assist. By contrast, any attempt to by-pass them may doom CE assistance to failure. Thus, it may be necessary to channel assistance through them. However, one should ensure that the manner in which they subsequently use the assistance provided does not undermine the good governance objectives (especially those related to the fight against corruption) that are critical to the long-term success of CE programming. In short, while the realities on the ground may push toward an accommodation with local power-brokers who may not be those one might wish to engage in a less imperfect world, it is critical that, overall, the arrangements struck with those leaders help boost both donor credibility and the legitimacy of the authority structures and mechanisms one seeks to put in place or reinforce.

   Moreover, the leaders in question are likely to use the assistance placed at their disposal to solidify their clientele networks, thereby further legitimizing and perpetuating their authority (which, typically, is based on a mixture of ascriptive criteria and the demonstrated capacity to deliver goods and services). Thus, the pursuit of CE goals may well work at cross-purposes with standard D/G objectives that revolve around the diffusion of power, increased political competition, and the weakening of traditional authority figures that resist a genuine leveling of the political field. Such CE programming may not be consistent either with the building or strengthening of formal, effective and authoritative power structures at the expense of more informal mechanisms of governance in which key decision-makers are neither truly accountable nor subjected to systematic oversight. Put differently, CE programming may point to the need for striking with power brokers deals that are hard to reconcile with support for transparency, accountability, enhanced political competition at the grassroots level, and more effective state institutions – all of which constitute the nuts and bolts of standard D/G programming. In this respect as well, decision-makers will have to weigh carefully the trade-offs involved in pursuing CE as opposed to D/G objectives (and vice versa).

   Iraq since the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime illustrates some of these dilemmas. Around 2005, US military commanders realized that the allocation of reconstruction projects among Iraqi bidders could not be decided merely on the basis of the relative quality of the respective proposals submitted. That practice initially had been promoted so as to encourage competition and fairness. However, it could not be sustained, as it was not always consistent with the interests of the main

Sunni tribal shaykhs. They needed to win the bids, so as to be able to continue to funnel resources to lesser shaykhs and other clients within their tribe, which, in turn, was critical to their ability to sustain their authority. Since ensuring the cooperation of the main tribal shaykhs was essential to the fight against AQ, but because those shaykh would cooperate – and could deliver their clients – only if they could maintain control over key sources of patronage, the need for transparency and impartiality in the allocation of reconstruction projects ultimately had to take a backseat to more pressing CE imperatives.[74]

3. More generally, and as discussed under Rule 12, trade-offs may emerge between, on the one hand, CE-driven efforts to strengthen and rely on local authority figures and institutions, and, on the other hand, the potentially equally pressing need to ensure the cooperation of the central government, while boosting its capacity to exercise authority across the national territory. Where local power brokers and central government leaders are engaged in a battle of wills, reconciling these conflicting objectives may be particularly difficult. In Iraq, for instance, the Sunni tribal sheikhs, whose assistance in the fight against AQ is essential, remain very distrustful (and vice versa) of the Shiite-dominated central government in Baghdad, which, for the US, also represents a critical partner whose collaboration must be secured, and the effectiveness and authority of which must be boosted, if VEs are to be defeated.

4. One final trade-off that deserves special consideration relates to the respective merits and dangers of seeking to counter ideas and movements that are both "extremist" in outlook, and violent in their methods, by reaching out to individuals or groups that hold similarly "extremist" ideas, but who neither engage in violence, nor condone the resort to it. In short, is it the case that, in some settings at least, VEs only can be marginalized by reaching out to non-violent extremists? From a CE perspective, do the benefits of engaging non-violent extremists outweigh the downsides associated with doing so, or vice versa?

Those thorny questions assumed new prominence in early 2009, when discussions regarding the re-orientation of US policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan began to revolve around the possible reaching out to "moderate Taliban" (in reality, as noted earlier, individuals who hold extremist views, but are not wedded to violence). There as elsewhere, the dilemma revolves around whether or not it is wise to engage individuals and groups that hold "reactionary" and "anti-democratic" views (e.g., hard-core Salafists who support the strict implementation of the Shari'a and are opposed to girls' education, entertainment, and/or to setting of a minimum age for marriage) – on the ground that securing their support or at least goodwill may be necessary to defeat actors (e.g., Salafi Jihadists) that hold many similar views, but also engage in, or condone, violence. One line of reasoning suggests that, where "extremist" ideas already hold sway, only non-violent extremists enjoy the grassroots credibility needed to convince others that violence is neither justified nor advisable. Other analysts denounce such a strategy as not merely misguided, but dangerous as well. They note that, in most cases, the line separating "non-violent" from violent extremists is not sharply delineated: the former often maintain close ties to the latter; many individuals move from the first to the second category; and the key disagreement may not necessarily reside in whether violence is justified, but when violence should be used (i.e., the so-called "nonviolent extremists" often may condemn violence not as such, but on the ground that it is "premature," and that resorting to it will create a backlash that merely will postpone achievement of the goals they share with VEs). A related fear is that reaching out to "non-violent extremists" will help legitimize their extremist views, thus contributing to the spread of the very extremist ideas which, in turn, will prompt at least some of those holding these opinions to drift into violence.

The trade-off discussed above is a particularly difficult one. Many of the arguments made on each side of the dispute are compelling. And there probably is no "one-size-fits-all" way of resolving it.

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[74] See for instance John A. McCary, *op. cit.*, 50.

The costs and dangers involved in reaching out to "non-violent extremists" will be greater in some contexts than in others. Similarly, there are likely to be more alternatives to that course of action in some countries than in others. Such conclusions underscore, once again, the centrality of contextual variables to understanding VE and developing appropriate CE responses.

C. SUMMARY

The rules discussed above should come into play at different points in time. They first should be considered when a CE strategy is being developed and when specific activities are being examined. They also may be applied after tentative decisions have been made in both areas, as a way of "double-checking" that those decisions do not violate any of the basic principles outlined above. Finally, they can be used while implementation is underway to make mid-course adjustments in response to a changing environment or the appearance of harmful of unintended consequences. Doing so should improve significantly the quality of CE decision-making, and help avoid potentially serious mistakes that would make an already daunting task even harder.

PART THREE – RESPONDING TO SOCIOECONOMIC DRIVERS

The remainder of this document, which consists of *illustrative* responses to VE drivers, should be read while keeping in mind that the forces that fuel VE typically reflect complicated structural problems and dynamics, some of which cannot be affected in a significant way by DA. Others drivers can be affected (though sometimes not in the short-term), but for development interventions to make a difference, they must be coordinated with other efforts (for instance, an effective communications strategy) and carefully designed and implemented to avoid un-intended consequences. Even then, programmers should be clear from the outset about what development interventions can and cannot accomplish, and realize that, in most cases, results will take time to materialize.

With these caveats in mind, this section offers a menu of illustrative options for addressing key socioeconomic drivers. Parts Four and Five conduct the same kind of analysis for political and cultural drivers, respectively. In practice, some of these drivers overlap, and most play themselves out through, or by interacting with, other drivers. Consequently, interventions related to one driver may help mitigate the impact of other drivers as well. And since, in most instances, youth represent the most at-risk population, many of the interventions outlined below are particularly relevant to 15-30 year olds.

1. **Responding to Marginality; and Countering the Effects of Social Networks and Group Dynamics that Pull Youth into VE Organizations or Activities**

    a. The core objective of most interventions meant to mitigate the impact of these two inter-related drivers should be to replace potentially malign avenues for social interaction with positive ones. Programming should seek to create or strengthen relevant networks, clubs, organizations, and activities among youth, or make them more accessible to youth. A good CE strategy should be as concerned with providing high-quality social and cultural opportunities as it is with skill building and employment, enterprise development or cash-for-work opportunities. Given the role that relationships and social networks play in recruitment, supporting channels for positive social action may be of great value. In addition, in many countries of interest (including those studied for this paper: Niger, Mauritania, Kenya and Mali), it will be difficult to provide the amount of employment required. Economies are not growing fast enough and development resources are slender. It then becomes important to try to determine whether social and civic interventions can have impact in isolation from a marked increase in the creation of jobs.

    b. Particular attention should be paid to youth-centered institutions (e.g., youth clubs or sports leagues) and activities (e.g., summer camps, sport tournaments, theatre or festivals) with a demonstrated potential for keeping youth in the system, and for hindering the ability of extremist groups and ideas from making inroads among them. One should ensure that the institutions and activities in question provide social and cultural opportunities that are consistent with youth's aspirations, and facilitate their positive engagement with the broader society, community and polity.

    c. Constructive, youth-oriented groups and activities can enhance youth's sense of efficacy by enabling them to become involved in volunteerism, charitable causes, productive advocacy (on governance and reform issues, education and health-related questions, or the environment, for instance) and spheres of practical activity (reforestation, crafts, etc.). In Niger and Chad, in vulnerable regions, youth have been employed and trained as community reporters, covering local governance and youth affairs for radio programs. By exposing youth to positive role models, they provide indirect and direct forms of mentoring that may prove critical in sheltering at-risk youth against the lure of violent voices. As positive, youth-oriented social networks and organizations are created or strengthened, a core group of pragmatic and constructive young

socio-cultural leaders may emerge. Through the example they set, the discourse they articulate, and the tangible gains produced by their actions, these leaders may provide youth with compelling alternatives to the path of violence. Their legally oriented, pragmatic and constructive vision and commitment to community may become a powerful weapon against VEs.

d. To the extent that idleness, boredom, and the desire for adventure and public recognition significantly enhance youth vulnerability to extremist ideas and activities, the involvement of youth in positive projects and support systems that are attractive to them and "keep them out of trouble" is critical. Groups and undertakings that provide youth with a sense of self-worth, empowerment, and membership in, and contribution to, the broader society have proven to be effective ways of reducing resentment at, and alienation from, "the system." In the process, they help inoculate youth against extremist ideas and "violence entrepreneurs" who actively target vulnerable populations.

e. In addition to youth-specific networks and arenas, it may be advisable to support broader civic initiatives that have a demonstrated or potential capacity to draw in young people, particularly at-risk ones. Especially when such initiatives link youth to decision-makers or to positive role models, they facilitate youth's integration into the political and economic mainstream. NGOs and political parties could be supported to reach out more to youth.

f. Populations that may deserve special attention in interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of marginality and negative networks and dynamics include particularly disadvantaged youth living in peri-urban areas, as well as recently urbanized populations (including upwardly mobile youth who have moved to cities to pursue educational opportunities). Such constituencies are more likely to feel socially isolated, and to be searching for connections and meaning.

> **LOCAL/MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND AN INTEGRATED CROSS-SECTORAL PROGRAM**
>
> A local governance program in a city or region at risk of VE could be designed to address several drivers:
>
> - Disgruntled, bored, and under-employed youth;
> - Disintegration of family control and social norms;
> - Corruption that limits opportunity and causes resentment;
> - Lack of participation/influence channels to obtain redress for grievances; and
> - Low government legitimacy.
>
> The program could help local governments and NGOs establish quality youth programs, support local economic development and cash for work programs that would provide employment, create mechanisms to control corruption, establish more transparency in government operations and decision making, and create new opportunities to solicit citizen input, including from youth.

2. **Responding to Societal Discrimination**

a. Programming should identify existing areas of societal discrimination, and pinpoint those that provide the most recurrent or likely sources of exploitation by VE organizations. Discrimination may be based on regional, sectarian or religious affiliation, or it may affect disproportionately a particular age group; interventions should be framed accordingly.

b. It is critical to diminish the likelihood that groups that suffer from prejudice and inequities will hitch their bandwagon to that of VE organizations. Interventions that can serve this purpose include:

- Skill-building programs for disadvantaged constituencies.

- Legal aid, leadership training, and exposure to advocacy techniques for populations that face discrimination.
- Projects that enhance the effectiveness of vulnerable communities at making themselves heard, defending their rights, organizing themselves at the grassroots level, and engaging with local and national government institutions. Such activities should be integrated into existing mechanisms for the delivery of vocational and life skills. Helping vulnerable youth develop their inclination and capacity to advocate for solutions to the problems they face should be a priority.
- Support for more equitable and effective power-sharing arrangements.
- Programs that aim to reduce discrimination in hiring, employment, and access to basic services; that level the political playing field among communities; and that improve life opportunities for groups that feel victim to longstanding biases.

3. **Responding to Frustrated Expectations and Relative Deprivation**

Achievement-oriented youth with several years of formal education, especially high school and university graduates, are especially likely to feel that their actual opportunities are out of sync with their aspirations. But because of the revolution in information and communication technologies, young people in general are increasingly aware of the opportunities made available to others. As a result, even less educated, more deprived youth may fall victim to relative deprivation. Development interventions that can help address these problems include:

a. Sharpening youth's access to knowledge and skills that meet the needs of the marketplace to enable youth to find employment. Employment opportunities matter not only because of the material benefits they bring about, but because they are essential to self-esteem and to developing social relationships that are not defined by shared opposition to "the system." Holding a regular job is essential to feeling that one has a place and stake in the community, that one can start and sustain a family, that one is respected, and that the future generally holds some promise. Youth who feel this way may be less vulnerable to VE messages. In some environments, quick impact short-term employment or cash-for-work activities may be useful approaches to providing some income to youth.

Pursuit of this objective may entail: creating additional vocational training and continuing education opportunities; imparting specialized or "soft" skills known to be valued by employers (e.g., the ability to work effectively with others and behave as member of a team, communications skills); and reforms that address the disconnect between the requirements of the marketplace and the curricula in secondary schools and universities.

Promoting formal education without regard to the job market, and without developing links to job placement programs, may result in larger numbers of disgruntled youth.

b. Establishing, expanding or improving mechanisms aimed at facilitating the transition from school to work. For example, improving the extent to which at-risk youth have access to information about careers; jobs and job training opportunities; about how to prepare themselves for those careers and opportunities; and about funding sources for community-based projects. Efforts should involve partnership between government, the private sector, and community-based organizations.

c. Helping business sectors with the highest potential for increasing youth employment expand their activities. Where economic growth and Foreign Direct Investment are very low, and where there are far more youth seeking jobs than the economy is able to accommodate, being able to identify, and then expand, those business sectors that are most able to absorb at-risk youth is important. Such endeavors should rely on close collaboration of the public, private and NGO sectors.

d. Improving opportunities for young entrepreneurs, including those who operate in, or have been forced into, the informal sector. Relevant interventions include those that expedite and simplify registration procedures, reduce bureaucratic red tape, and facilitate access to micro-credit opportunities. "Mentoring" programs for new businesses and self-employed youth may be called for, and should be conducted in coordination with the government and the private sector.

4. **Responding to Unmet Social and Economic Needs**

   a. As discussed earlier, in a depressed economic environment, the lure of salaries and other economic benefits may contribute to the appeal of VE groups. If so, traditional development activities aimed at improving social and economic conditions among vulnerable populations are certainly appropriate. Quick impact activities such as cash-for-work may also be useful.

   b. Particular efforts should be made to create jobs, improve access to basic services that are of greatest concern to the local population, expand micro grants, and facilitate self-sustaining growth within at-risk communities. As discussed earlier, such development activities may be critical to fighting VE not only because of the material benefits they produce, but also because of the process they entail (they can help bring the community together, make it harder for VEs to infiltrate it, and foster trust between the community and government officials).

   c. Where VE organizations use the provision of services to recruit or secure support from the community, efforts to improve service-delivery may involve the strengthening of relevant government institutions (especially those that provide services in high demand by high-risk groups). However, where it seems unlikely that such endeavors will produce quality services, it may make more sense to rely on NGOs -- especially moderate, religiously-oriented groups. In some cases, it may be very useful to boost the readiness and/or capacity of these moderate religious organizations to address the socioeconomic needs of their respective communities. That will be an option particularly worth pursuing if there is evidence that constituencies within those organizations (e.g., a rising, younger leadership) understand that, if their organizations (e.g., Sufi orders) are to remain relevant, able to attract younger members, and able to compete with more extremist organizations, they must add effective service delivery to their more traditional religious activities. Engaging these organizations may include improving their capacity for strategic planning. In all cases, it is critical that the assistance be provided in ways that do not undermine the credibility of the organizations.

   d. Where, by contrast, religious organizations that provide services to the community condone, support, or are engaged in VE activities, interrupting the flow of resources to those organizations should be a priority. In that case, however, an effective communication strategy that explains the actions undertaken is important. Even more critical is the ability to put in place substitute financing, or alternative sources of services, so as to undermine the effectiveness of efforts to blame the host government or the USG for creating or compounding socioeconomic hardships. Whenever extremist groups derive credibility from their provision of services, supporting alternative (and higher quality) means of service provision is essential. Blocking the flow of financing to Islamist charities without putting in place substitute sources of support does not represent an adequate response to the problem of "terrorist financing."

5. **Responding to Greed or Illegal Economic Activities**

   a. Where smuggling, trafficking, money-laundering and/or extortion rackets play a sizable role in supporting the activities of VE groups, the usual battery of measures to combat these phenomena and dismantle (or at least disrupt) terrorists' financial networks should be deployed (in society at large, as well as within the communities especially affected). Depending on the situation, the following may be called for: criminal justice reform; anti money-laundering laws and activities and stronger forensic accounting skills; improved policing (including through

community policing programs that rely heavily on collaboration among the public, private and NGO sectors); and enhanced investigative and monitoring capacities for relevant state agencies.

b. When and where there is evidence that, their rhetoric notwithstanding, VEs are motivated primarily by greed, one should engage in subtle, carefully crafted outreach campaigns designed to enhance awareness of that situation among vulnerable populations. Evidence suggesting that VEs are driven by the search for profit and/or self-aggrandizement should be disseminated widely, as should be tangible indications of the heavy costs that their actions impose on the community. The objective should be to discredit VEs by showing them for who they truly are – not "freedom fighters" or disinterested heroes moved by a desire to improve the well-being of others or redress some grand injustices, but criminals or con artists who hide their search for wealth and/or power under the cloak of religion or ideology. Such campaigns need to be carried out by indigenous, credible sources. Such sources should not include agencies linked to the USG. Assistance should aim to broaden the impact of their message and activities. Particular care should be taken to ensure that support for these sources is provided in ways that do not compromise their credibility and, therefore, effectiveness.

PART FOUR -- RESPONDING TO POLITICAL DRIVERS

1. **Denial of Political Rights and Civil Liberties**

    a. The lack of avenues for meaningful political participation, and for affecting decision-making, or the authorities' consistent disregard for basic civil liberties, may be fueling widespread alienation from the system. If there is evidence that VE organizations benefit from this phenomenon, or are well positioned to take advantage of it, development interventions can be designed along two parallel tracks: supply-side and demand-side activities (see below).

    b. In both cases, it is critical to keep in mind that, from a CE perspective, programming should address not so much the disregard for political rights and civil liberties per se, but the extent to which this situation renders some populations more susceptible to VE, or the degree to which it affects particularly at-risk groups. Even if they are significant, overall improvements in political rights and civil liberties might generate few CE gains if the improvements that are made do not affect primarily vulnerable populations. The opposite is also true (modest overall improvements in political rights and civil liberties might generate significant CE gains if they impact primarily at-risk groups).

    c. "Supply-side activities," here, refers to interventions that aim at the following:

        *   With regard to political rights, they seek to enhance the extent to which the political system "supplies" populations that are particularly vulnerable to VE (e.g., disadvantaged youth) with avenues for meaningful participation in political life, and for involvement in the decisions that affect their lives and the community at large. Since youth typically are most at-risk, and since, in more traditional societies, they often remain excluded from positions of influence and authority, special attention should be paid to enhancing their visibility in both formal and informal arenas for decision-making.

        *   With regard to civil liberties, they seek to enhance the degree to which these liberties are respected.

    d. To address potential deficits in political rights, and the resulting political-exclusion problem, supply-side activities should aim at the most relevant (depending on the case at hand) of the following objectives:

        *   Enable political parties and civil society organizations (CSOs) to become more effective at reaching out to vulnerable populations (especially disadvantaged youth), at representing their interests and aspirations, and at advocating on their behalf. The inclination and capacity of parties and CSOs to perform those functions often needs significant upgrading, including by allowing the concerns of at-risk populations to be more adequately incorporated into their agendas and activities, and by enhancing the degree to which at-risk populations are represented in their decision-making structures. Where a significant disconnect exists between political parties and vulnerable populations, that disconnect may be addressed through long-term programming, but in the short-term it may make more sense to concentrate on NGOs. One way in which the visibility and influence of civil society groups among vulnerable populations can be improved is by increasing their capacity to provide tangible benefits to populations that are not necessarily part of their usual audience.

        *   Help build/strengthen an adequate array of "middle ground" moderate institutions to represent citizen needs and interests so that individuals do not need to gravitate to the extremes.

        *   Help representative bodies -- national legislatures, regional assemblies, and local councils -- provide more meaningful opportunities for citizens, especially from at-risk populations, to

express their interests and affect policy outcomes. Pursuit of this objective may necessitate supporting an increase in the authority, resources, and autonomy of those assemblies. Especially if a geographic area is being targeted for special attention, working with local governments (including ensuring that they regularly consult with organizations that articulate the concerns of vulnerable populations) is likely to be more critical than assisting the national legislature. If political will to engage in meaningful decentralization is lacking, engaging community leaders outside of formal arenas may help, but the sustainability of both these efforts and the gains made through them may be problematic. Support for grassroots coalitions that advocate for decentralization should be considered.

- Provide ministries (e.g., youth, social affairs, employment and vocational training) for which vulnerable populations are particularly relevant with the kind of assistance that enables them to improve their outreach to those populations, and ability to shelter them against VE, especially in priority geographic areas. Ministries of religious affairs also may seek to strengthen the capacity of imams to perform the type of social work that will heighten their aptitude to engage youth. Pursuit of this objective may entail reform of the curriculum in those institutions where imams are trained. A corps of "imams-cum-social-workers" may be developed that can be deployed to particularly vulnerable areas.

- Ensure that elections (at the local, regional and national levels) become freer, fairer, and more genuinely competitive and that information campaigns target youth and first time voters. On its own, electoral reform is unlikely to address the alienation produced by political exclusion. Without it, however, changes in the areas above may not be sufficient or sustainable.

e. To address potential deficits in civil liberties, and assuming that the political will to do so exists,[75] supply-side activities might focus on enhancing the capacity of the justice system to protect the rights of citizens, especially those most relevant to at-risk groups. However, improvements in civil liberties are not sufficient. They must be accompanied by concurrent progress in perceptions (that civil liberties are being better protected). Relevant interventions, therefore, may support the following:

- Improvements in the capacity of justice-sector institutions (e.g., courts, prosecution and the police) to operate in ways that are fair and consistent, especially with regard to procedures that are particularly relevant to at-risk groups. Pursuit of this objective may necessitate better oversight mechanisms,[76] a more independent judiciary, improvements in justice-system transparency,[77] and better skills, training and knowledge by justice-sector personnel.

- Quick impact assistance to judicial institutions (e.g., supplies, transport, equipment) to improve efficiency/effectiveness, while support for mobile courts and mediation centers or other non-formal mechanisms of dispute resolution may also contribute to performance improvements.

- Legal reforms to expand and strengthen individual rights, especially those particularly relevant to vulnerable populations. Examples of possible reforms include creating a cadre of public defenders for disadvantaged, at-risk groups, placing limits on pre-trial detention, NGO outreach to prisons and monitoring of prison conditions, reforming juvenile justice

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[75] Trying to secure improvements in institutional behavior in an environment where there are no reform champions is generally a recipe for a failed program.

[76] Better oversight mechanisms will contribute to fairer justice-sector institutions in that they will decrease the risks of corruption and patronage within those institutions, and reduce the potential for inappropriate meddling into them by government officials and politicians.

[77] Improved transparency creates greater pressure for fairness because actions by judges, police, prison personnel, prosecutors and public defenders will become less hidden from public view. As transparency increases, it also should become easier to identify and correct fairness-related problems in the manner in which these officials discharge their functions.

and instituting alternative sentencing and more effective use of bail and plea bargaining, and/or reforming criminal procedures.

- Increased efficiency and effectiveness of justice-sector institutions (e.g., improved court administration or upgrading of the capacity of the prosecutor's office), but only if there is simultaneous progress in the fairness and integrity of these institutions.[78]

f. To remedy deficits in political rights and civil liberties, demand-side activities may be undertaken as well. The aim of those activities should be to strengthen the capacity of at-risk populations (or of entities advocating on their behalf) to express demands related to political participation, input into decision-making, and respect for civil liberties, and to do so in ways that will enhance the likelihood that these demands will be satisfied.

- In the case of disadvantaged youth, for instance, one approach might entail weaving civic education and advocacy skills activities into existing mechanisms for the delivery of both vocational and life skills. Youth would be taught how to make their voices heard, how to defend their rights, how to promote their interests within the system, how to organize themselves at the grassroots level, and how to engage with local and national government institutions. Helping vulnerable youth develop a sense of efficacy and as well as the inclination and capacity to advocate their interests.
- Support for CSOs and media organizations to advocate effectively on issues related to the political rights and civil liberties of at-risk populations should be considered as well. Both types of organizations should become more active and effective in monitoring government behavior, disseminating findings broadly, advocating for change, defending the rights of vulnerable populations, and increasing those populations' knowledge of their rights and how to pursue them.

2. *Harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights*

a. If harsh government repression and gross human rights violations represent a significant driver behind VE, the usual panoply of relevant USAID interventions should be considered. Most important, however, is the extent to which at-risk groups view the USG as complicit in allowing a potentially repressive and arbitrary regime to maintain itself in power. If the USG is viewed as an "enabler" of the excesses carried out by that regime, US-supported development or D/G interventions are highly unlikely to make up for that perception, and DA will end up making only a very modest contribution, at best, to overall US CE goals. Evidence suggests that the human rights arena is one D/G area where USAID programs have not produced much impact.

b. If development or D/G interventions are being considered to mitigate the impact of this driver, priority should be given to activities that aim to prevent or curb gross human rights violations and indiscriminate repression. Almost by definition, many of the interventions highlighted above regarding civil liberties are relevant here as well. In addition, a determination will need to be made as to whether the primary problems related to repression and human-rights violations stem from a lack of political will, from the absence of a proper legal framework (e.g., laws that

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[78] From a fairness perspective, efficiency matters to the extent that, for instance, if backlogs are severe, pre-trial detention may be very long, and cases may take years to wend their way through the courts -- all of which will add to the sense that the system is unjust. Lengthy case-processing time also can enable those who are well connected and have access to resources to mount frivolous cases and take advantage of those who are less well positioned to sustain a lengthy court battle. Such a situation, too, will feed into the sense that the system is unfair. In addition, to be consistent in the way in which it adjudicates disputes, a justice system must meet at least some standards of efficiency. Effectiveness, too, can be a critical consideration. Of course, increases in effectiveness of the justice system do not always correlate with improvements in citizen rights. For instance, increasing the effectiveness of a police force with a record of physically abusing citizens would be a poor policy choice. In other respects, however, increases in effectiveness may be required to generate improvements in fairness. For instance, the ability of the police to investigate a political murder, and to collect and preserve evidence, or the ability of the prosecutor to put together a convincing case, is in part a function of their effectiveness.

provide for due process are lacking), from defective implementation mechanisms (e.g. laws exist, but they are not implemented or respected), or from other capacity-related deficits. Depending on that assessment, special considerations might be given to one or several of the following:

- Legal reform to increase protection of basic rights, especially as they affect at-risk populations. Reform of existing laws may be required to address either substance- or process-related deficits. As in the case of interventions centered on civil liberties more generally, if legal reform is undertaken, assistance should be provided to make justice-sector personnel more knowledgeable of the new laws.

- Increasing citizen knowledge of rights, including through civic education programs, the media, and civil society. At-risk populations should be a focus of these efforts, which, for instance, may enhance awareness of the mechanisms and procedures that are available to individuals being harassed by the police. Support for civil society and media organizations should aim to help both become more active and effective in defending the rights of vulnerable populations, and in holding relevant institutions accountable for delivering justice. Strengthening human rights NGOs and institutions that advocate for victims of state-perpetrated abuses may be particularly important. If the media and CSOs are to become more effective monitors of, and advocates for, citizen rights, they also must become more knowledgeable about the judicial processes and the duties and obligations of justice-system personnel.

- Improving legal recourse options for populations vulnerable to state abuse, including through civic education programs among at-risk populations, and by creating a cadre of public defenders for the disadvantaged populations.

- Enhancing the readiness and capacity of the justice system to apply laws fairly, and disseminating information regarding progress. As discussed above with regard to civil liberties, it may be critical that justice-sector actors and institutions (judges, prosecutors, police, prisons) become more independent from, and better able to resist, the external political pressures exercised on them, and that they become more likely to apply the law equally, regardless of class, ethnicity, religion or social status. One should bear in mind that no CE program is likely to have access to the extensive resources necessary to bring about significant progress in all those areas; therefore, choices will need to be made. Those justice-sector problems that pose the greatest VE risk, and where there is some momentum for reform, should be the focus of attention.

- Justice-sector personnel (particularly the police) often receive inadequate training, a situation that can result in repression that could be prevented with increased knowledge and skills. For example, in many countries, police officers lack investigative skills, are not trained in gathering and preserving evidence, and have limited access to poorly-equipped forensic labs. This situation can lead to the torture of suspects, in an attempt to gain the confessions required to prosecute. In addition, the enhanced sense of pride that may result from greater competence and a stronger feeling of professionalism may lead to some diminution in corruption.

- Curbing harassment and intimidation of at-risk populations (e.g., youth) by police and other state agents. That objective may be pursued through more systematic and effective monitoring of police behavior, and by engaging police in running youth clubs and activities. Projects that seek to improve relations between police and at-risk populations by having them engaged in collaborative endeavors should be considered.

- Improving respect for basic human rights in prisons, including through more systematic and effective monitoring of prison conditions. When prisons seem to operate as conduits between criminality and VE, prison reform should be a priority.

3. *Foreign occupation*

   This driver cannot be addressed through standard DA, except to the extent that space exists to address some of its inevitable consequences (e.g., harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights).

4. *Political and/or military encroachment*

   a. This driver underscores the need for programming to remain constantly alert to the possibility that development interventions may be viewed as intrusive. In this area, programmers should err on the side of caution. Existing as well as anticipated interventions should be systematically reviewed and "second-guessed" with an eye to this particular challenge.

   b. The danger that activities will be perceived as a form of external interference will be reduced if these activities are designed and implemented through a process that relies heavily on partnerships. As emphasized earlier, identifying and engaging individuals who enjoy grassroots support, respect and credibility within at-risk communities should be a priority.

   c. This driver also points to the need for CE interventions not to rely more than is strictly necessary on military operations, or on forceful efforts to impose state authority into areas long accustomed to enjoying a significant degree of autonomy. Even when such efforts yield short-term tactical successes, they may entail significant long-term strategic costs - indeed, they may end up destabilizing the very regions they are intended to make more immune to VE. That, of course, is not to say there is no place in a CE strategy for military operations and attempts to strengthen the authority of the state in regions where that authority is contested; it is, instead, to underscore how challenging such endeavors are, and how carefully one must balance their likely benefits (which often are readily apparent) against their potential costs (that typically are harder to anticipate). The application of "hard power" is both tempting (in that it appears to provide an easy fix to the problems created by hard-core VE operatives) and dangerous (in light of the civilian casualties it may produce, especially when insurgents operate in the midst of crowded civilian areas). Military operations, in this context, may end up creating willing recruits for VE organizations; even more so, by aggravating the local grievances that VE groups often exploit to their advantage, they may facilitate the emergence of a more complicit society.

5. *Endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites*

   a. If there is widespread anger at high-level corruption, or at perceived impunity for well-connected elites, and if there is evidence that VE organizations are benefiting from this phenomenon, or are well-positioned to take advantage of it (in terms of either recruitment or community support), relevant development interventions include standard anti-corruption programming, as well as rule of law activities aimed at combating impunity. As with regard to repression and human rights violations, however, overt US support for blatantly corrupt regimes is likely to undermine very significantly the possible impact of anti-corruption programming, and the extent to which it can contribute to US counter-terrorism objectives.

   b. Programming should be informed by an understanding of the answers to the following three questions:

   - From a CE standpoint, is the overarching challenge corruption or impunity, or both?
   - Insofar as corruption is concerned, should high or petty corruption receive the most attention? For VEs themselves, resentment created by grand corruption and elite impunity may be critical motivations, while in terms of community support, petty, everyday corruption might be the most critical factor, in that it facilitates the operations of VE organizations.
   - Related to the previous question, is the primary impact of corruption that it creates grievances, or that it facilitates the operations of VE organizations?

- Survey research, targeted interviews, as well as the rhetoric of VE groups should help answer these questions and establish a program focus.

c. Standard **interventions to reduce the grand corruption that is most likely to create the motivations to join or support VE groups** include:

- Increasing the readiness and capacity of the justice system to prosecute corrupt individuals, fight impunity, and provide redress to victims of corruption, especially among at-risk populations.
- Institutional and procedural changes to control corruption in government and public-sector agencies at both the national and local levels.[79] Relevant steps may involve: public-procurement reform; establishing financial disclosure requirements; streamlining the processes necessary for obtaining documents and licenses; and strengthening independent control agencies to monitor the behavior of public-sector employees and hold them to account.
- Improving the legal and regulatory framework for fighting corruption and impunity, and taking steps to enhance the readiness and capacity of oversight bodies and the judiciary to monitor compliance, and/or to enforce the laws.

   Among corruption-related reforms that may be most critical to undermining the ability of VE organizations to operate, reducing opportunities for money laundering, improving banking regulation and supervision, and upgrading customs procedures may be particularly relevant.

d. A focus on the forms of corruption that most constrain opportunities (educational and livelihood) for youth may be important and more manageable than full-scale reform.

e. Programming should be informed by a recognition that the extent to which corruption and impunity create motivations for involvement in, or support for, VE activities is primarily a function of <u>perceptions</u> -- perceptions of the scope of corruption and impunity, of the degree to which the government is inclined to fight them, and of the advances (or lack thereof) made in those areas. Therefore, where political will or progress manifests themselves on those fronts, relevant information should be publicized. It may be particularly important to bring about an enhanced awareness that the government is more inclined to fight those problems, and more successful in doing so, than is generally assumed.

   In short, here as well, targeted interventions must be combined with an effective communications strategy. Activities can be designed to ensure that civil society groups and the media are active and effective in reporting and disseminating information about government and civic initiatives to combat corruption and impunity. The objective of these efforts should not be to downplay the gravity of corruption and impunity, but to convey that some momentum exists to address them, and that they can be fought by working through the system.

   Assistance to media and CSOs should not be only for the purposes of reporting and disseminating information; it also should aim at harnessing those institutions to sustain political will by government officials, and to bring about further advances in fighting impunity and corruption. Support for freedom of information legislation may be vital to enabling NGOs and the media to obtain the information they need if they are to be effective in their fight against corruption and impunity. The information in question might be as different as the fees required at health units; the contacts for filing complaints about requests for bribes; the funds being

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[79] The extent to which local interventions should take precedence over national ones, or vice versa, will vary from one case to another.

allocated to one's local government for education or roads; expenditure reports from different government institutions; or the criteria for awarding a contract.

6. *Poorly governed or ungoverned areas*

   a. Where poorly governed spaces provide VE organizations with significant opportunities for recruitment, or for establishing bases of operations, programming should begin with a determination of whether this situation reflects a capacity deficit (e.g., insufficient resources or personnel) by the state, a lack of political will by at least some senior government officials (who may have concluded that the existence of poorly governed areas serves their political or strategic designs), or both.

   b. Where lack of political will looms large, other obstacles stand in the way of achieving an enhanced government presence, or state institutions show little potential for improvement in their capacity to deliver critical services, the menu of options available to donors is limited.

      - In this kind of context, many of the tools available are primarily diplomatic ones. Pressure may be brought to bear on the host government to upgrade its presence in ungoverned and lightly governed areas (and to do so in a way that will not create a backlash that VEs can exploit). The pressure in question can be applied directly, indirectly (e.g., by relying on political parties, the media, and CSOs), or both.
      - Where the government cannot, or will not, become more active and effective in areas that are vulnerable to VE penetration, working with CSOs active there may be the primary means of denying VEs the ability to insert themselves into local society. Improving community-based governance mechanisms should be a main concern, since those mechanisms might be critical to ensuring order and creating the kind of environment in which development is possible. Civil society assistance should concentrate on those NGOs with the greatest potential to thwart the ability of VEs to establish a foothold among at-risk populations, and/or on those that show a capacity to fill in, at least partially, the vacuum created by the absence of the state. NGOs should help provide what normally would be characterized as "public" services -- especially those that are in high demand by at-risks groups (e.g., disadvantaged youth).
      - In ungoverned or lightly-governed spaces, improving security and reducing violence and illegal behavior must be a priority. Community-policing programs may be critical to achieving that objective. Efforts to increase employment and self-employment also are relevant to that goal.

   c. Greater state readiness to become more actively involved in areas that remain poorly governed creates an environment more conducive to programming. Some of the options discussed above -- e.g., community-policing programs that aim to isolate VEs and elicit the support of the local population in monitoring extremist movements and activities, as well as overall reliance on CSOs to improve governance -- certainly remain valid. But in addition, the following approaches may be considered:

      - Develop the presence of government institutions, and strengthen their capacity to deliver basic services and reach out to particularly vulnerable populations. The focus, here, should be not simply on services that are needed (or the earmarks that USAID must satisfy), but on those that are mostly fueling citizen anger or despair, and most relevant to at-risk groups. Complaints bureaus and "one-stop shop" service centers, where a number of documents and licenses can be obtained, may be particularly pertinent interventions in urban slum settings and can be undertaken as quick-impact activities, via mobile clinics. In those settings as well, efforts to improve governance should entail greater opportunities for populations to become more actively involved in the decisions that affect the welfare of their families and community.

- Address community grievances and community development issues through collaborative endeavors that bring together state institutions, CSOs, and the private sector. Youth employment, vocational training, and the delivery of social services should receive particular attention. Whenever possible, engage moderate religious leaders and institutions in those endeavors.
- Attention also might be paid to strengthening the state's capacity to deny VE organizations access to critical conflict resources, especially weapons, funding (from both domestic and foreign sources), manpower, and control of lucrative economic activities or resources (e.g., through smuggling networks or money laundering operations).

7. *Local conflicts*

a. From a CE standpoint, only some local conflicts -- those that heighten the risk of being exploited by transnational VEs or of becoming a source of VE -- necessitate programming. For instance, Christian-Muslim tensions in Kenya and northern Nigeria, Tuareg-regime antipathy in Niger and northern Mali, and Hindu-Muslim conflict in India, raise the risks, while pastoralist conflicts over water among equally marginalized groups in very isolated and poor areas in the Africa typically do not. Being able to determine the extent to which the conflicts involved pose a significant VE threat is a necessary first step. This, in turn, requires a solid understanding of where these conflicts unfold, the forces they pit against each other, and what they are about.

b. It is critical to understand the local causes of these conflicts, and to resist the temptation to view them as mere local manifestations of transnational threats. Approaching local struggles that are driven by local issues and dynamics as mere expressions of global threats could play right into the hands of transnational VEs seeking to hijack those struggles.

c. Where local conflicts create vulnerability to VE, it is essential to determine the specific ways in which they do so:

- Are they eroding the state's capacity to govern, and/or its ability to constrain or monitor the activities of VE organizations?
- Does the violence and chaos they produce provide VE organizations with opportunities to operate, hide, or gain access to weapons and other illicit resources?
- Are they enabling VEs to develop a presence by offering their support to one of the parties involved? Conversely, is one of those parties reaching out to VEs in order to secure legitimacy for its cause and/or access to the resources VE organizations can provide?
- Which other opportunities does the conflict at hand provide for VE organizations to recruit and/or build community support?

d. Where there is evidence that VEs can take advantage of local conflicts, programming may entail support for one or several of the following endeavors:

- Efforts to address the core grievances of strongly aggrieved groups, in a way that diminishes the likelihood that these grievances can become hitched to the bandwagon of VE organizations. Relevant programs comprise those that help reduce discrimination in hiring, employment, and access to basic services; that level the political and economic playing field among groups and communities; that help create more equitable and effective power-sharing arrangements (especially by providing at-risk populations with greater influence and recognition); and that improve life opportunities for groups that feel themselves to be the victims of longstanding inequities or prejudice.
- Conflict-mitigation or resolution activities, including through the strengthening of relevant arenas and the provision of the required skills (e.g., via civic education programs and curriculum reform); by quickly initiating or supporting mediation efforts; by developing the ability of civil society and media organizations to improve relations among groups (and/or

by diminishing the use of polarizing rhetoric by media organizations, and ensuring that they do not magnify inter-group distrust and hostility); by strengthening or expanding societal and institutional connectors; and by enabling collaborative endeavors and productive dialogue among contending groups.[80] Supporting projects that involve cooperative efforts among groups that have a history of contentious relationships with each other can produce both developmental and conflict-mitigation benefits. It also may reduce the social isolation and marginality that frequently feed VE.

- Carefully crafted public-communications campaigns to underscore the differences in goals, philosophies, and interests between VEs and the local constituencies with which they are trying to forge an alliance. At-risk populations should be made aware that VEs do not have their interests at heart, and that they merely are seeking to harness local struggles for their own purposes. Attempts to drive a wedge between VEs and the groups that they are seeking to co-opt may entail highlighting the costs imposed on local communities by the activities of VEs, and the lack of concrete, tangible assistance that these extremists actually provide to the communities whose cause they rhetorically embrace.

- The reframing of conflicts which protagonists have cast as all-encompassing, intractable struggles -- over religion, cultural identity or existential issues -- into resolvable contests over policy, or political and economic opportunities. Pursuit of this objective may entail support for moderate, pragmatic voices on both sides of the struggle involved.

- Efforts to strengthen the state's capacity to monitor and interrupt the flow of conflict resources to protagonists. These resources might include minerals, drugs, and smuggling routes. State control also will deny transnational terrorist groups access to those resources.

8. *State support for extremist groups*

a. If the state support in question is from the host government, this driver cannot easily be countered through DA. Instead, dialogue and pressure at the diplomatic level represent the most readily available means of addressing this driver. Evidence gathered by development professionals in the conduct of their work may be used to document the deleterious impact of state support (as long as doing so does not impact negatively on the ability of those professionals to continue to discharge their primary responsibilities). From a programming perspective, a better understanding of the nature and dynamics of state support matters primarily because of that variable's potential implications for interventions intended to address other drivers.

b. If, by contrast, the state support in question originates with a foreign government (or several of them), and if there is political will on the part of the host government to confront that situation, assistance can be provided to that effect. If the flow of resources from foreign states or entities (e.g., charitable NGOs) is being interrupted, however, and if at-risk populations are likely to be negatively affected by this reduction in foreign aid, it is critical that alternative sources of funding or humanitarian assistance be put in place. DA can play a critical role in facilitating this process.

9. *Discredited governments and missing or co-opted legal oppositions*

a. To the extent that many of the interventions discussed above help boost the credibility of formal, legal authority structures, they are relevant as well to addressing this driver. Particularly pertinent are programs and activities that shore up the government's capacity to:

- Deliver basic services, especially those in high demand by at-risk groups.
- Create an environment conducive to economic growth and job-creation, especially in at-risk communities.

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[80] More effective dialogue may require that individuals become more tolerant of those who are different, and that they develop better communication, negotiation and conflict resolution skills -- all of which may be supported through appropriate programming.

- Provide youth in those communities with the skills and the education they need to envision and secure a decent future.
- Offer high-quality social and cultural opportunities to vulnerable youth.
- Deliver adequate governance, including by being both willing and able to control corruption and mismanagement in the allocation of public resources.
- Respect basic political rights and civil liberties.
- Deliver impartial justice.
- Avoid unwarranted resort to repression, and the capricious and arbitrary exercise of power.

Progress in several of those areas should help reduce the salience of the driver discussed in this section. But here again, because perceptions are critical to the success of a CE program, it is not enough that advances take place -- awareness of them also must be disseminated among at-risk groups. Activities to that effect should be implemented, including by relying on civil society and media organizations.

b. For reasons discussed earlier, the existence of a legal opposition viewed as credible, and as offering genuine and compelling alternatives to the policies followed by those in power, is essential to enabling at-risk constituencies to feel that it is possible to bring about change by working within the system. Conversely, the absence of such an opposition will benefit those who argue in favor of violent solutions to existing problems.

Thus, it is not enough for a formal opposition to exist -- that opposition also must be seen as meeting some basic standards in terms of its independence and effectiveness. An opposition that is viewed as co-opted, manipulated, and impotent simply may increase cynicism toward the system, or even compound the anger toward it. The same will be true if formal opportunities for political participation exist -- e.g., through elections, even if the latter are generally free and fair -- but do not translate into actual influence over critical decisions. The ability of the opposition to gain access to "toothless" representative bodies will do little to diminish the potential for VE. That will be particularly true once the limitations and constraints under which these bodies operate have become more readily apparent, dampening earlier hopes that liberalization might pave the way for substantive democratization. Individuals who have grown weary of the limitations associated with a political game they have come to regard as rigged and disingenuous are more likely to feel the pull of VE rhetoric.

c. From the perspective of a CE program, these observations underscore the great limitations of D/G interventions that support liberalization processes widely perceived -- especially by at-risk groups -- as amounting to mere "cosmetic" or "superficial" democratization. These perceptions may originate in one or several of the following sources:

- Representative bodies have not been fully empowered. Decisions in certain key policy areas lie beyond the authority of those bodies.
- Some state institutions or agencies (e.g., the military, or intelligence and security agencies) are not truly accountable (under the constitution, in practice, or both), and they do not operate with sufficient transparency.
- Existing "rules of the game" (e.g., the constitution as well as the rules that govern elections and political parties) create a severely imbalanced political field. They undermine the capacity of moderate opposition groups to exercise genuine influence, and lead some in their ranks to question the merits of continued participation in the system.
- "Cosmetic liberalization" that does not involve the empowerment of representative institutions capable of making senior decision-makers truly accountable for their actions may buy regimes some time. However, it does not represent a viable, sustainable strategy. People initially may give regimes the benefit of the doubt -- i.e., they may accept to take part in political arenas and processes that are tilted to incumbents' advantage, but nonetheless

seem to offer some ways of affecting decision-making processes. When that does not turn out to be the case, and when the limitations of the processes and institutions associated with "sham democracy" become increasingly evident, people likely will turn away from them (which, for instance, might be reflected in lower turnout for elections to toothless parliaments), and, ultimately, they even may feel the pull of more radical messages. In short, it is dangerous to place too much faith in "liberalization processes" that do not entail a genuine redistribution of power and authority. Far from creating "safe outlets" for the expression of grievances, and for "domesticating" or "integrating" potentially troublesome movements (e.g., Islamists) by providing them with an illusion of participation and influence, such processes may end up in generalized disillusionment. They may foster disenchantment with legal political processes, discredit moderate oppositions, and create support for radical alternatives. Especially among at-risk populations, the path from disaffection to VE may be a short one.

d. When such a situation prevails, relevant interventions include those that seek to:

- Enhance the authority of representative bodies, including by supporting required changes in the rules of the game. That objective, in turn, may entail backing for broad-based coalitions that advocate changes in those rules. It also may involve assistance to arenas and processes that facilitate the political bargains that typically are necessary to bring about substantive democratization (as opposed to mere liberalization).
- Ensure that liberalization processes produce tangible gains for at-risk populations.
- Create more truly competitive political processes, including through party-strengthening activities, electoral reform, and improved conduct of elections.
- Curb the extent to which certain key state institutions suffer from serious accountability and transparency deficits, and operate beyond the purview of representative bodies. Security-sector reform may need to be a critical program component.
- Enhance knowledge of governing processes among at-risk populations.[81]

10. Intimidation or coercion by VE groups

a. It **may** be difficult for DA programs to counter in any significant way the application or effectiveness of coercive tactics by VEs. At a general level, the most effective response is to strive to guarantee the security and physical safety of the communities affected by those tactics, and to provide individuals in those communities with access to impartial justice. Relevant interventions were discussed in earlier sections of Part Four.

b. Other **types** of interventions likely to make it more difficult for VEs to establish a foothold at the grassroots level, including through threats and bullying, include activities that provide for:

- More effective community policing and community-based organizing.
- A more visible, constant, and effective government presence.
- Greater trust between, on the one hand, officials and local power holders and, on the other hand, the communities impacted by the VEs' intimidation or coercion tactics.
- Enhanced capacities by the authorities to monitor activities by VEs.

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[81] The actual strength of a political opposition is not only a function of the political space available to it. It also reflects that opposition's ability to maximize use of that space. Substantive and procedural knowledge of governmental processes, especially among at-risk populations, should facilitate their making the most of existing opportunities for effective participation.

In addition, more effective governance and participatory processes, as well as enhanced prospects for community-wide development, may provide communities with greater incentives to resist efforts by VEs to intimidate or coerce them into compliance.

11. *Perception that the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies and peoples.*

Such perceptions are not easily countered through DA. They usually have deep roots in history, and have been reinforced by recent or on-going developments and trends in the diplomatic and military arenas. Forces as powerful as these are difficult to affect or counteract through development programming. Certainly, the more at-risk groups view U.S. policies on pan-Islamic or pan-Arab issues as fundamentally unjust, the harder it becomes for development programming to offset the moral outrage created by these policies, as well as their propensity to feed into VE rhetoric and behavior. With all these critical caveats in mind, the following, possible responses to this driver should be considered:

a. **Support** poverty reduction, job creation, entrepreneurship, and educational endeavors that improve life chances for youth in at-risk communities. Large-scale poverty and marginality, as well as inadequate skills and a lack of economic opportunities in general, feed disadvantaged Muslim youth's resentment toward richer countries. They foster a perception of inferiority relative to these countries, or even the belief that one is being discriminated against by them. They may be viewed as tangible indications that the international system is biased against Muslim societies and peoples. Resentment at perceived low international standing and global inequities, in turn, can contribute to the appeal of VE rhetoric and behavior. Therefore, activities that reduce those perceptions by fighting the very conditions in which they thrive are appropriate.

b. Support (**discreetly** and indirectly) indigenous voices that counter "victimization narratives" and that contribute to a more informed and nuanced discourse about how Muslim societies relate to the international system.

c. Disseminate information about the accomplishments of Muslim individuals, organizations, and countries on the international stage. These "success stories" should involve situations in which Muslim actors played according to the rules of the international system and/or benefited from them in a way that suggests that that system is not "biased against Muslims," and does not condemn Muslims to failure or a subordinate status.

PART FIVE -- RESPONDING TO CULTURAL DRIVERS

1. Of all three categories of drivers examined in this document, cultural drivers are usually viewed as the least amenable to being affected by development interventions. In part, this reflects the fact that these drivers are inextricably tied to issues of personal and collective identity, perceived existential threats, centuries-old legacies, and the memories associated with them. As a result, they evoke powerful passions and emotions, the intensity of which tends to be compounded by the "high politics" issues (in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, for instance) that often are woven into these drivers as well.

2. When addressing cultural drivers, particular care should be taken to some of the key principles discussed in Part Two:

   - Ensure that, in both their content and the manner in which they are implemented, interventions will communicate respect for Islam as well as indigenous customs, religious figures, and cultural leaders.
   - Always remain mindful that interventions may be viewed as a form of cultural intrusion.
   - Whenever possible, engage credible indigenous cultural authority figures, especially respected religious leaders.

3. Cultural drivers often can be addressed, at least in part, indirectly, by tackling the socioeconomic and political conditions that enable certain themes to resonate.

   - For instance, socially excluded individuals who experience everyday discrimination and injustices may be particularly receptive to rhetoric that is built around the denunciation of such phenomena, and that seeks to tap into the anger they produce.
   - Individuals who feel totally ignored and marginalized may be drawn to VE ideas that provide them with a sense of empowerment and a means of lashing out at a system they have come to regard as fundamentally evil.
   - The concept of a "war on Islam" – and related efforts to mobilize individuals by drawing on the ire generated by the treatment of Muslims in Palestine, Chechnya, and other places – are more likely to fall on receptive ears when the individuals exposed to those ideas themselves feel victimized.

   More generally, violent ideologies will reverberate with certain individuals more than with others because of the environment in which these individuals conduct their lives; consequently, efforts to change that environment may help dilute the appeal of violent rhetoric and behavior. Because DA frequently can play a key role in this process, it is wrong to assume, as some analysts do, that development aid is inherently ill-suited to tackling the cultural drivers of VE.

4. Side by side with tackling the socioeconomic and political conditions that allow certain themes to gain traction with particular populations, another response to cultural drivers is to discredit some of the ideas that lie at the core of VE discourses. In doing so, particular care should be taken to some of the key principles discussed in Part Two:

   a. These efforts should be undertaken carefully. Ill-designed, insufficiently thought through initiatives easily can come across as offensive, patronizing or even insulting to the very audiences we are seeking to influence. Therefore, the potential for counter-productive interventions is particularly high.

   b. The "counter-narratives" offered to at-risk populations should reflect these populations' concerns and aspirations – not dismiss (explicitly or implicitly) their validity. For instance, where there is evidence that constituencies are attracted to violent religious extremism in part because

of their rejection of a purely secular order, and because individuals in them are searching for a sense of spiritual purpose and guidance, it likely will be self-defeating (and even dangerous) to endeavor to contain radical groups by seeking to undermine sacred religious values and promote secular ideals. What is needed, instead, are efforts to redirect religiosity and the quest for moral purpose so that it does not express itself in belligerent ways. Scott Atran appeared to be reaching that conclusion when he observed:

> What has struck me in my interviews with mujahideen who have rejected suicide bombing is that they remain very committed to Salafi principles, with firm and deep religious beliefs. Those who seem to succeed best in convincing their brethren to forsake wanton killing of civilians do so by promoting alternative interpretations of Islamic principles that need not directly oppose Salafi teachings.[82]

c. In order to be credible and, therefore, effective, "counter-narratives" should come from within the societies affected by VE. Donors are not in a position to tell Muslims what Islam really is about -- what constitutes a proper interpretation of Islamic doctrine, and what represents a deviation from it. The United States never was well placed to shape these debates, and its ability to do so today is more constrained than ever. Instead, indigenous voices must be relied upon. These voices include religious figures, community leaders, prominent intellectuals, and young activists. It also is important to explore the CE-related opportunities created by well-known former Salafi Jihadists or radical Islamists who have recanted, and are now eager to tell youth that violence cannot be condoned under Islam, and that is does not offer a solution the problems that afflict them and their societies.[83] Donors can amplify the impact of those voices, remaining attune to the need to do so in ways that do not discredit them. Specifically, donors can nurture the political space within which these voices can express themselves (including by working with the host government to that effect). They can help disseminate the ideas of opinion leaders who are dedicated to fighting against VE ideas. They can help provide relevant leaders and associations with physical as well as virtual places for their activities (the effort should include a vigorous internet component). The individuals and associations in question may include young imams, youth and community leaders, as well as faith-based community groups that deliver material assistance in ways that also address the spiritual needs of at-risk groups. Such actors are far better equipped than donors to understand the true dynamics behind VE, as well as the sources of its allure to at-risk populations; they also enjoy the grassroots credibility needed to be effective in combating this disease.

d. Discreet support for indigenous, moderate religious organizations (e.g., Sufi orders) should be explored. As noted earlier, that assistance should entail strengthening these organizations' capacity to reach out to at-risk populations, especially disadvantaged youth, by developing their readiness to provide services and engage in strategic visioning and planning. To operate as effective antidotes to VE, these organizations need to ensure the sustainability of their operations and expand their audience. That objective may be pursued by helping these organizations complement the spiritual functions they historically have performed (often quite

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[82] Scott Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism." *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring), pp. 141-142.

[83] Sayyed Imam al-Sharif, once a prominent leader of Islamic Jihad (the group which killed Anwar al-Sadat, and with which Ayman al-Zawahiri was affiliated), is perhaps the best-known former Jihadist to have repudiated the views he once embraced. In 1988, al-Sharif joined with Bin Laden to form al-Qaeda, and the book he published that year (*Foundations of Preparation for Holy War*) had an enormous impact on the first wave of Salafi Jihadists. In the past decade, however, al-Sharif has become better known for systematically rebutting the worldview that he once helped formulate. His *Document of Right Guidance for Jihad Activity in Egypt*, published in 2007, has been described as "a systematic refutation of al-Qaeda's theology and methods." See Bret Stephens, "How al-Qaeda Will Perish," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2008, p. A. 22. For other examples of former Islamic radical militants who have moved away from violence and have endeavored to convince others to follow their example, see Fawaz Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy* (Harcourt Press, 2006).

well) with activities ranging from vocational training to social and cultural opportunities that can be attractive to today's youth.

5. Regarding, in particular, the need to counter the perception of an <u>existential threat to Islam</u>, the following approaches, rules of thumb, and interventions are especially pertinent:

   a. Review existing and anticipated interventions to ensure that they convey respect for Islam, and that they are consistent with the ideals and values that have particular resonance in Muslim societies. At the very least, the likelihood that activities might be perceived as an attack on Islam should be minimized. Remember that a little symbolism can go a long way, and that signs of respect sent through particular assistance packages may be as important as these packages' actual content. For one, contributions to the restoration of Islamic cultural artifacts can send a powerful signal of respect for Islam.

   b. Refrain from efforts to undermine the place of religion in educational curricula.

   c. Be appropriately skeptical of efforts to press for secular values and systems. As emphasized earlier, the connection between religiosity and being prone to "religious" VE is weak, at best. In some cases, what may be called for is higher-quality religious instruction, not less religious education. A more effective grounding in Islam may enhance significantly the readiness and capacity of at-risk populations to evaluate critically VE ideas that entail a gross simplification or distortion of basic religious concepts.

   d. Explore prospects for working through, and with, moderate religious leaders and organizations (at the national or local levels, or both).

   e. Narratives that provide alternatives to notions of "Islam under siege" should be systematically relayed and amplified, especially among vulnerable populations. Indigenous voices that articulate a more confident and positive view of Islam's role and prospects in the modern world should be encouraged.

   f. When particular crises take place that appear to symbolize (often gratuitous) disrespect for Islam (e.g., the Danish cartoons episode), it is important to move swiftly and effectively to distance the USG from the messages that are being sent. It also is critical to articulate a compelling response to efforts by VE organizations to exploit such developments. Providing more contextual information for the events -- e.g., explaining why and how they took place, what they signify, and what they do not mean -- is both an essential and difficult task.

6. Insofar as <u>broader cultural threats</u> are concerned, the following suggestions apply:

   a. Systematically review existing and anticipated activities to diminish the likelihood that they will be viewed as infringing on cultural norms, as offending local sensitivities, or as representing an affront to indigenous values.

   b. As noted earlier, avoid interventions -- especially in such sensitive areas as gender roles or the content of education -- which local populations easily may perceive as efforts by external forces to impose certain values on them.

   c. When designing activities, be sensitive to how the targeted populations' cultural outlook will influence how these activities are likely to be received, and, consequently, their prospects for achieving intended results.

7. Finally, development interventions or approaches that are particularly relevant to <u>the fight against VE organizations driven by "proactive religious agendas"</u> include the following:

   a. Activities that seek to address the socioeconomic conditions -- illiteracy, poverty, or educational curricula that do not promote analytical and critical thinking, for instance -- that make it easier for those religious agendas to gain traction with at-risk populations.

b. Discreet, indirect support for local actors who enjoy the grassroots credibility needed to challenge effectively extremist arguments (including by exposing the inconsistencies, contradictions, and immorality of the ideas that drive VEs), and whose more peaceful worldviews show a capacity to resonate with at-risk populations.[84] It is particularly critical to harness these indigenous voices to de-bunk some of the key ideas conveyed by Salafi Jihadists, including: the West is implacably hostile to Islam, and bent on destroying it; the Salafi Jihadist undertaking is part of a cosmic struggle pitting good against evil; violence is a religious obligation, and engaging in it is essential to securing personal salvation; or violence has redeeming and purifying virtues (e.g., it is a way through which one can atone for one's sins, and through which society may be cleansed from its impurities).

c. Support for arenas in which these "counter-narratives" are expressed, and moderate religious leaders and thinkers are active. Relevant interventions include support for internet chat rooms, community radio, school based or youth programs, and public-debate fora. Assistance to message- and program-development may be called for as well.

d. Help in disseminating evidence of the criminal activities in which VEs are engaged; of the damage and suffering that their activities have inflicted on society;[85] or of the extent to which local values and traditions are fundamentally incompatible with those of VEs.

e. Activities (such as public debates, workshops and conferences) that seek to broaden the manner in which at-risk groups approach religious issues, or that seek to refine the religious lenses that they apply to contemporary social, economic and political issues.

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[84] Where local groups can be found that are willing to take on this potentially dangerous task, they may be unwilling, or very reluctant, to accept support from US entities, for fear that they will become discredited if they do so.

[85] At-risk populations must be reminded that innocent Muslim civilians have been the main victims of Salafi Jihadist violence, and that that violence has made it far more difficult for vulnerable populations to meet the challenges they face. In this regard, the oft-noted tendency of Salafi Jihadist groups to "overreach" represents a powerful asset on which those seeking to discredit these groups should capitalize.

ANNEX A
CONTINUUM OF VE THREAT AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE RESPONSES

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Threat Level Continuum:	None/Negligible	Low	Medium--High	Insurgency &/or regular deployment of terrorist tactics
Country Examples:	Chad, Niger	Mali, Mauritania	Kenya (low medium), Morocco (medium), Yemen (high)	Iraq, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan
Characteristics:				
Drivers	Few/some present (may be mainly socio-economic)	Some/more present, perhaps more severely felt	More present, more severely felt, may interact in ways that exacerbate impact, some de-legitimizing of the state	Many present (more cultural drivers), severely felt, interact in malign ways
VE Activity	None or very sporadic, driven by outside group(s), not much local traction	Some present, may be sporadic and/or externally driven but some attempts to create roots	More significant; local recruitment and community apathy or passive/active support; may be some signs of intimidation & at high end, increased/regular use of terrorist acts	May be many VE groups with strong armed component & active terrorism over large areas; significant recruitment; intimidation & community support; reliable means of financing often with links to criminal activity; may control significant population
Religious environment	Predominantly traditional, state may oversee rel. authorities	May be mixed with Wahhabi/Salafi versus Sufi traditionalist tensions	Mixed but more extreme, Sufi traditionalists on defensive & weakened hold on population	Considerable pressure on the population in support of more extreme views
State response to VE	N/A	Will vary; gov't may ignore or repress & repression may be a factor in keeping risk low but it creates risk in long run	Will vary but may ignore – gov't might be too weak to address or even support against other domestic opponents -- or may repress also or actively oppose	Will vary: regime eventually will feel existential threat (e.g., Pakistan) and be forced to combat but may find harder to confront when it wakes up to the threat. State is weak and at least partially de-legitimized so combating VE will be difficult.
Societal Resilience:	Medium to high	Will vary	Weakened	Very weak
Task:	**None or prevention;** guessing at drivers that might	**Mainly prevention;** may be easier to determine	**Mitigation in areas where high risk, try to contain threat to those areas & prevent**	**Defeating or weakening insurgency/limiting expansion.** Recruitment & community support need to be

Threat Level Continuum:	None/Negligible	Low	Medium--High	Insurgency &/or regular deployment of terrorist tactics
	contribute to VE; no issue w/ recruitment or community support but enabling environment may need attention.	drivers; limited attention to recruitment &/or community support but enabling environment may need attention.	**spread**. Recruitment & community support need to be addressed, also enabling environment.	addressed, also enabling environment. Intimidation needs to be reduced.
Development Response:	Normal development program w/ some attention to drivers in regions where most significant, & to strengthen resiliencies. Broad Muslim engagement.	Reduce drivers and attend to communications in at risk areas or among at risk groups, strengthen resiliencies. Broad Muslim engagement.	Weaken drivers in areas where high salience, strengthen resiliencies, improve human security, shore up gov't legitimacy & response to threat, active communications campaign to counter. Monitor for prospects of negative effects.	1) Citizen security paramount; dev. may be hard to deliver. Address drivers in <u>insurgent-affected areas</u>, bolster gov't legitimacy (where possible), active communications; 2) Weaken drivers, ensure security, active communications in peripheral areas <u>to build a barrier around insurgent areas</u>, & strengthen resiliencies.