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# CONDUCTING AN EXTREMISM OR TERRORISM ASSESSMENT: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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**Management Systems International**

**Corporate Offices**

600 Water Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024



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By Guilain Denoeux with Lynn Carter

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# INTRODUCTION

1. This document outlines a methodological framework for conducting an extremism or terrorism assessment.<sup>1</sup> It may be used to evaluate, and program for, a situation in which there appears to be a significant risk of violent extremism. Alternatively, it may facilitate a better understanding of the forces and dynamics that already have produced significant levels of violence, so as also to help practitioners design interventions that can mitigate the impact of such forces and dynamics. Because the expertise, policy documents and scholarship that were used in its design were often related to violent Islamic extremism, this framework is particularly suited to such a phenomenon. However, the framework was designed explicitly as a generic tool, meant to facilitate analysis of, and programming for, violent extremism in general.

2. Specifically, the framework's main, inter-related objectives are to help a Mission or assessment team in the following tasks:

- (a) identify populations that are most at-risk or vulnerable to violent extremism;
- (b) zero in on the key forces and dynamics that drive violent extremism in the setting at hand, including through a better understanding of the motivations of those engaged in violence;
- (c) improve one's grasp of how violent groups active in the country recruit, organize themselves, and carry out attacks;
- (d) identify development interventions likely to reduce the country's vulnerability to violent extremism.

3. While this methodology should be particularly useful to development practitioners, it is intended as well for other policy-makers faced with the need to understand and tackle the forces that drive violent extremism. In fact, some sections of this framework (such as that on the organization of extremist groups) could have been omitted had the tool exclusively targeted development practitioners because the ability of development assistance to impact or disrupt the organization of violent groups is probably limited, at best. By including such sections, however, the intent is to provide development practitioners with a broad understanding of the phenomenon at hand – one that includes not only those aspects of violent extremism which development interventions can affect, but also those components of it that are less amenable to being affected in any meaningful way by development assistance. More generally, the framework does not assume that development assistance necessarily provides an entry point for addressing violent extremism in the country being assessed. In fact, the analysis which the assessment team is called upon to carry out in the initial section is intended to determine the extent to which that is the case and, if so, what the best ways of proceeding might be.

4. The proposed assessment process takes place in six steps.

**Step One** entails efforts to outline a profile of “vulnerable” or “at-risk” populations. Assuming that such a profile emerges, the analysis should allow for the preliminary, tentative identification of a handful of critical drivers behind violent extremism. From those drivers, in turn, the team already may be able to infer a handful of development interventions with the potential to defuse violent extremism. While the fleshing out of those programmatic implications is left to Step Six, which benefits from further

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<sup>1</sup> Concepts such as “violent extremism,” “terrorism”, or “radicalization,” which will be used throughout the document, call for some clarification. In order not to detract from the flow of the “roadmap” which this introduction presents, definitions of these concepts are provided in Annex A.

refinements of the analysis, it is useful, even at that early stage, for the team to reflect on the programmatic implications that may be drawn from the profile of vulnerable populations.

**Step Two** aims at understanding motivations: Why do individuals join, or become loosely affiliated with, violent extremist groups and organizations? Why do they support such movements? What are the roles played by, respectively, the appeal of a particular ideology, political or socioeconomic grievances, perceived threat to culture or religious beliefs, and personal factors? It is possible to think of Step Two, in part, as an elaboration on the analysis of drivers in Step One, as an alternative approach for zeroing in on those drivers, or as a way of validating or invalidating the tentative conclusion regarding those drivers that may have emerged from Step One. Consequently, the team may conclude that, in presenting its analysis, it prefers to spend more time on Step One and less on Step Two, or vice versa; the framework certainly provides that flexibility, since it is intended not as a straightjacket, but as a way of focusing the team's attention on those variables and issues that must be addressed. It should be noted as well that if no clear profile emerges – for instance if vulnerability to violent extremism is widely spread out across society, or if at-risk populations are many and diverse – Step Two provides an alternative path for the identification of drivers.

What must be underscored, here, is that a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the motivations that propel people into joining or supporting extremist movements represents a critical step in any effort to develop adequate responses to the threats posed by these movements. Failure to grasp the true nature of the motivations involved is likely to lead to flawed policy responses. Therefore, from a range of plausible motivations, the assessment team must be able to separate those that appear to be critical from those that are not. Having done so, the assessment team will find itself in a better position to answer such basic programming-related questions as: Can motivations be addressed, especially by outside actors? And, if so, considering the nature of those motivations that appear to matter most, and the ways in which those motivations relate to each other, which kinds of remedies seem to make most sense?

**Step Three** seeks to understand recruitment. Unlike Step Two, which concentrates on the *Why?* (Why do individuals join? What are their motivations?), Step Three focuses on two sets of questions:

- Which characteristics of the overall political, social and economic environment facilitate recruitment? In other words, to what extent does the overall societal context create a “permissive” environment, i.e., one that facilitates recruitment (and, typically, operation as well) by violent extremist groups?
- How and where are individuals drawn into violent extremist or terrorist organizations? What types of recruitment processes are at work? Are individuals formally recruited? And, if so, by whom (formal recruiters or personal acquaintances)? Are they, instead, radicalized mostly on their own, without the direct physical intervention of others? Which types of spaces, institutions and arenas operate as “pipelines” for recruitment into violent extremist groups?

To the extent that counter-terrorism (CT) programming seeks to disrupt recruitment, the assessment team must be in a position to answer those questions. Different interventions liable to interrupt or interfere with recruitment will apply depending, firstly, on the extent to which, and the manner in which, the context provides an “enabling” environment for recruitment, and, secondly, on how and where recruitment takes place. Besides, understanding recruitment-related processes is critical to the assessment team's ability to develop a comprehensive “map” of violent extremism in the country at hand.

Step Three may point to some of the same variables that were identified as important drivers in Step One, or as critical motivations in Step Two (such a situation would suggest that these variables should be front and center in Step Six, on programmatic implications). What matters is that the different ways in which

the same variables play themselves out may justify their being dealt with in separate sections of the document. For instance, corruption may contribute to violent extremism in one of the following ways: (a) it may be a critical motivation, because of the deep resentment it creates (in which case it would be analyzed in Step Two); (b) its impact may be felt primarily on recruitment, for instance if the ease with which local officials can be bribed makes it much easier for violent extremists to recruit in the open (in which case it would be analyzed in Step Three); or its importance may be due to the fact that it is both a prominent grievance of violent extremists and a critical facilitating factor for recruitment (in which case it would be analyzed in those two different ways in Steps Two and Three, respectively). By contrast, the analysis may conclude that repression represents a very consequential driver insofar as motivations are concerned, but not with regard to recruitment, which repression might complicate. Thus, one of the advantages associated with breaking up the analysis between Steps Two and Three is that it allows for a nuanced understanding of the manner in which what “drivers” actually play themselves out. For both analytical and programmatic purposes, it is important to distinguish between a “driver” understood as motivation, and a “driver” understood as a factor facilitating recruitment and/or organization.

**Step Four** examines organizational factors as they relate to violent extremist or terrorist groups. From a CT programming perspective, the manner in which these groups are organized, how various cells relate to each other and to potential “headquarters,” the nature and scope of their external linkages, how and where they raise funds, and how they maintain commitment among their members (to name but a few key organization-related variables) are all decisive. For instance, decentralized networks are harder to disrupt and penetrate than a centralized, hierarchically organized movement. Because this document is intended primarily for development practitioners, and since the ability of development assistance to affect the kinds of organizational factors described above is limited, it is expected that the assessment team will devote far less attention to Step Four than to Steps One through Three. Consequently, that section of the document should be relatively brief. Still, if only for the purpose of the team’s ability to develop and present a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of violent extremism in the country being assessed, it is useful to have a sense of the key organizational factors alluded to above. In addition, there may well be aspects of a host government’s own response to such groups that can be strengthened and that hinder the operation of such groups.

**Step Five** should draw attention to actual or potential trends in the scope and nature of the threat, provided such trends can be detected. That section, too, should be relatively brief (and may be omitted if there are no clear on-going or likely changes in the threat posed by violent extremism in the country). Still, before summarizing the programmatic implications that may be drawn from (primarily) Sections One through Three, it may be relevant to attempt to determine whether risk is expanding to encompass more sections of the population or escalating in speed.

The central purpose of Step Five is to ensure that the assessment does not become “fixed in time” and, consequently, too rapidly outdated – particularly in light of what is likely to be a fast-moving target. As the document moves closer to summarizing the programmatic implications of the analysis conducted, it is critical that an effort be made to reflect on evidence that the nature of the threat, and the dynamics behind it, may be changing.

**Step Six**, finally, zeroes in on the main programmatic implications of the analysis conducted in the previous sections. By then, the assessment team already will have forged preliminary conclusions about the most relevant types of interventions – particularly since this framework deliberately encourages the drawing of tentative conclusions as each step unfolds.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Part Six’s role is to tie together, and flesh

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<sup>2</sup> It does so in part to ensure that programming ultimately does not receive short shrift, in part to enhance the likelihood that the team will keep in mind programmatic considerations throughout the analysis, and in part in order to facilitate the articulation of programmatic implications in Step Six.

out, previous programmatic implications. In Step Six, the team also may need to filter further its recommendations by considering such country- or Mission-specific constraints as sensitivity of the overall environment, the ease with which specific development and counter-extremism interventions may be conducted, and Mission and Embassy resources and capabilities.

## STEP 1: DEVELOPING A PROFILE OF AT-RISK POPULATIONS, AND OUTLINING ITS IMPLICATIONS

The first step in an extremism assessment is to develop a profile of “vulnerable” or “at-risk” populations, and to identify key phases or “tipping points” in the trajectories followed by individuals who are known to have ended as violent extremists. The populations and trajectories thus identified should provide critically important information for identifying interventions aimed at reducing extremism or the potential for it. Specifically, from profiles and trajectories, drivers behind extremism often can be inferred; based on the nature of those drivers, in turn, it becomes possible to think of certain development interventions that may reduce the potential for extremism. An understanding of the key phases through which individuals pass as they move toward extremism, or a better understanding of the “tipping points” or “critical junctures” at which they veered into violent action, also can be of great assistance in focusing development interventions.

### A. Building a Profile and Identifying Trajectories

1. Developing a profile of at-risk populations should entail careful analysis of available biographical information regarding those who have engaged in violent extremism. For instance, it may be possible to draw on journalistic accounts of the personal journeys of violent extremists, information that transpired during their trials, or transcripts of their interrogation by the police. When in the field, the assessment team should make a point of interviewing media-based, academic and other experts who have made a point of tracking the phenomenon of violent extremism. Prosecutors and lawyers for those accused of engaging in violent extremism, and others who may be familiar with violent extremists (for instance, organizations that monitor prison conditions) may be sources of valuable information.

2. The specific characteristics of vulnerable populations that the profile should seek to identify are listed below. Detailed analysis of what these characteristics suggest regarding drivers should be left to a subsequent stage of reflection. Nonetheless, as these characteristics are being identified, it is helpful for the team to begin to reflect on why individuals with those characteristics may be attracted disproportionately to violent extremism.

#### a. Gender

- Are males or females over-represented among violent extremists? (If so, why might that be the case?)

#### b. Age

- Are violent extremists recruited primarily from among certain age groups, and, if so, which ones? (Why might individuals in those age groups be disproportionately represented among violent extremists?)

#### c. Residence and geographical origins

- Do violent extremists tend to hail predominantly from certain types of areas, differentiating in particular among urban, rural or peri-urban? If so, what are the outstanding characteristics of those areas? (And what is there about those outstanding characteristics that may account for why individuals from those areas are disproportionately represented among violent extremists?)

- If there is disproportionate representation of violent extremists in urban or peri-urban areas, do those extremists tend to be first-generation, second-generation, or third-generation or more urban or peri-urban dwellers? If most are first- or second-generation urban or peri-urban dwellers, is there evidence to suggest that the relatively recent experience of displacement represents a significant variable in their drift to violent extremism (for example, because of the disruption of previous social networks and the relative atomization it may have involved)?
- Do certain neighborhoods, cities, towns, or regions stand out as sites that feature particularly large concentrations of violent extremists, and/or as places from which violent extremists often originate? (If so, do these localities display particular features that may account for that situation?)

#### **d. Level of educational achievement**

- Are individuals with a particular level of educational achievement disproportionately represented among violent extremists? It may be relevant to distinguish, here, among the following options: university graduates; university drop-outs; high school graduates with no further education; high-school drop-outs; individuals with a primary education and some secondary education; individuals who only completed primary school; individuals who never completed primary school.
- (If individuals from one or several of the above categories are disproportionately represented among violent extremists, what is there about their level of educational achievement – for instance, relative deprivation fueled by a discrepancy between educational performance and grim job prospects, anger at educational failure and/or at the educational system, or inability to secure adequate jobs due to a lack of basic skills – that may account for their vulnerability to violent extremism?)

#### **e. Socioeconomic status**

- Do extremists tend to come from particular socioeconomic groups, and, if so, which ones? Do they recruit more heavily, or do they benefit from particularly sympathetic audiences, among certain socioeconomic categories? If so, which ones? Does the appeal of extremist groups vary significantly depending on individuals' employment status or income level? (Even at that early stage, it will be useful to begin to reflect on the reasons behind the potentially disproportionate success of violent extremists with certain constituencies based on socioeconomic affiliation).

#### **f. Ethnic or religious affiliation**

- Do violent extremists recruit disproportionately, or benefit from particularly receptive audiences, among certain ethnic, tribal or religious groups? If so, which ones, and which factors may underlie this phenomenon?

#### **g. Trajectories and Tipping Points**

- Is it possible to identify critical phases or turning points in the transformation of individuals into violent extremists? Is there evidence to suggest that many violent extremists went through similar types of experiences (e.g., failure in school; a prolonged inability to secure a job; trouble with the law; involvement in criminal activities; prison, or being, or having a close relative be, a direct victim of government repression and arbitrariness) before turning to violent extremism?

#### **h. Profile trends**

- Is the profile of, and/or trajectories followed by, violent extremists changing, and, if so, how, and how rapidly? For instance, is the threat posed by violent extremism shifting or expanding to relatively new geographic areas, are women playing a more active role in this phenomenon, or are violent extremists beginning to recruit among, or appeal to, new constituencies based on class affiliation, ethnicity or religion? (Even at that early stage, it will be useful to begin to reflect on the reasons behind potential changes in profiles and trajectories, as such trends ultimately should be reflected in programming.)

## **B. Inferring Drivers and Driver-Specific Development Interventions**

Assuming that specific profiles and trajectories can be identified, it typically becomes possible to infer some drivers behind violent extremism. Among those, a handful deserve particular attention, in part because a comprehensive review of the scholarship and policy-oriented research on violent extremism suggests that they often play a key role in the radicalization of individuals and communities alike. What follows does not represent a comprehensive list of such drivers, but merely an effort to introduce some of them. A detailed examination of the programmatic implications associated with each driver will be left to the final section of this document; for illustrative purposes, however, a few of those implications will be outlined below as well.

Once specific profiles and trajectories have been identified, the three most important tasks facing the assessment team should be:

- (a) To reach agreement on those drivers which appear to be particularly decisive. Here, the team should walk a fine line between the necessity of doing justice to the complexities of the situation on the ground, and the equally important analytical need for parsimony.
- (b) To develop a framework (and, ideally, a diagram that captures the logic behind that framework) showing how the drivers highlighted interact with, and often feed into, one another in ways that fuel violent extremism or the potential for it.
- (c) To begin to reflect on the kind of development interventions that most likely would mitigate the impact of those drivers, and thus defuse the threat of extremism.

To illustrate the type of outcome that may result from this exercise, Appendix Two includes an excerpt of the report on a pilot assessment conducted in May 2008 in Mauritania.

### **Driver One: Social isolation, alienation and marginality – and, as importantly, the personal relationships, networks and group dynamics that often develop in response to these phenomena.**

1. For all the differences between the highly-educated and well traveled individuals from middle class and upper middle class backgrounds who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks, the far more socially heterogeneous group that planned and carried out the March 2004 Madrid train attacks, and those from destitute backgrounds responsible for suicide bombings in Morocco since May 2003, all share one common characteristic: their alienation from their social environment. They, and many others who have turned to violent extremism, were essentially “misfits”: they felt out of place in, and indeed were thoroughly estranged from, the society in which they lived. In these as in other cases, social isolation and marginality appears to have contributed to radicalization. In some cases, alienation prompts individuals to drift into

pre-existing extremist groups, usually as a result of prior personal relationships with members of such groups. More often, it leads them to seek out like-minded individuals, who share their deep disaffection from, and hostility to, the society around them. In the process, cliques are formed which, over time, often become the primary venue through which individuals are radicalized.

**2.** In that regard, one must stress the critical role that group dynamics triggered by the processes of social alienation and isolation play in accounting for why individuals often join violent extremist groups in the first place; how they are radicalized through those groups; how the groups themselves undergo a process of radicalization; how individuals sustain commitment to extremist causes; and why, in some cases, they go so far as to sacrifice their own lives for those ideas. The personal relationships and group dynamics that emerge in response to social alienation and isolation thus can end up being powerful reasons for why individuals ultimately turn to violent extremism. For one, individuals often talk each other into violence, and they will do as members of a group what each one could not justify doing on his/her own. Specifically, group dynamics frequently facilitate “moral disengagement,” i.e., the ability to convince oneself that it is all right, indeed imperative, to engage in what one previously would have disavowed as inhumane and morally unacceptable conduct.<sup>3</sup> Finally, social bonds initially knit or strengthened in response to alienation and marginality over time may end up being powerful forces in sustaining commitment to extremist agendas and organizations. For instance, they frequently appear to be decisive in accounting for why individuals who have volunteered for a suicide bombing do not backtrack at the last minute, or for why those who may have developed serious misgivings regarding their group’s strategy or tactics find it so difficult to disengage from that group, or even express criticisms of some of its choices. The explanation for many such types of behavior may be found in an abiding sense of solidarity and commitment to peers; an inability to entertain facing rejection from them; and a reluctance to do anything that may be construed as betraying them, or as turning one’s back on the principles that one previously had embraced with great fervor.

**3.** The personal relationships and group dynamics that emerge in response to social alienation and marginality may be virtual as much as physical. Indeed, that increasingly may be the case. Individuals thoroughly estranged from their social environment may drift into small cliques that subsequently will operate as venues for their collective radicalization. Alternatively, they 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 and isolated individuals are exposed to violent discourses, and via which they are provided with a conceptual framework that allows them to account for their alienation, while also identifying key forces and actors responsible for it.

**4.** To sum up, therefore, the primary impact of social alienation and isolation on radicalization appears to be indirect, though it is also typically consequential. It takes place largely through the personal relationships (both physical and virtual) that individuals form in response to alienation and marginality, as well as through the ways in which they (on their own, by interacting with peers, and through virtual communications) re-conceptualize the world, and their relationship to it, in the wake of their becoming estranged from the society around them.

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<sup>3</sup> Research suggests that the de-activation of previously accepted moral codes, and the lifting of personal inhibitions on the use of violence, typically takes place incrementally, within a small, tightly knit community of individuals engaged in intense personal interactions and insulated from mainstream society. See for instance Albert Bandura, “Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement,” in Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies and States of Mind* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990), pp. 161-191; Wilfred R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups* (London: Tavistock, 1961); Jerrold M. Post, “‘Hostilité,’ ‘Conformité,’ ‘Fraternité’: The Group Dynamics of Terrorist Behavior,” *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1986), pp. 211-224; and Ehud Sprinzak, “The Psychological Formation of Extreme Left Terrorism in a Democracy: The Case of the Weathermen,” in Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism*, pp. 65-86.

5. The problems associated with social isolation, alienation and marginality are usually felt with particular acuity among youth. Certainly, it is youth affected by these problems that have shown a particularly high propensity for becoming involved in violent extremism. In part as a result, interventions particularly well suited to addressing these problems involve the strengthening or creation of positive social networks and organizations among youth. Youth-specific networks and organizations that provide social and cultural opportunities consistent with youth's aspirations, and that facilitate positive engagement with the broader society, community and polity, should be strengthened or expanded. The objective should be to replace potentially malign avenues for social interaction with positive ones. Particularly disadvantaged youth living in peri-urban areas may deserve particular attention.

To the extent that idleness and boredom (as well as the desire for adventure and heroic acts) significantly enhance youth vulnerability to extremist ideas and activities, the involvement of youth in positive projects and support systems that are attractive to youth and “keep them out of trouble” is critical. Groups and undertakings that provide youth with a sense of self-worth, empowerment, as well as 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.

Constructive, youth-oriented groups and activities can play an important role not only in and of themselves, but also as points of connection to broader, society-wide programs and endeavors. They enhance youth's sense of efficacy by enabling them to become involved in social volunteerism, charitable causes, productive advocacy (on governance and reform issues, on education and health-related questions, or on the environment, for instance) or spheres of practical activity (reforestation, crafts, etc.). 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. Further, 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 youth 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 violent extremists.

In addition to youth-specific networks and arenas, it may be advisable as well to support broader civic initiatives that have a demonstrated or potential capacity to draw in young people, particularly at-risk ones. By linking youth to decision-makers and/or to positive role models, these undertakings may facilitate their integration into the broader society.

## **Driver Two: Unmet Expectations and Relative Deprivation**

1. It inherently is difficult to generate the kind of reliable empirical data that can provide compelling, “hard” evidence for arguments framed in terms of “relative deprivation.” After all, it is much easier to define relative deprivation as a gap between “what one gets” and “what one considers one's due,” than it is accurately to determine what individuals consider their due – or, for that matter, what they actually get.<sup>4</sup> Still, there is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that relative deprivation and frustrated expectations (for upward mobility, political power, wealth, and/or social status) can be important drivers of violent extremism, and that they typically are far more decisive than absolute economic deprivation. That may be particularly true with respect to youth whose aspirations have risen significantly (in part because they are more aware of global trends, and attuned to them, than earlier generations were), but

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<sup>4</sup> Entirely different, yet equally compelling, ways of measuring what people “get” will generate radically different results.

whose expectations cannot be satisfied due to one or several of the following factors: sluggish economies; educational curricula that are not consistent with the needs of the labor market and a globalized economy; and unfair, highly discriminatory ways of distributing political power, wealth, and social status (particularly where elites and their offspring are determined to hang on to acquired privileges, and have the capacity to deny those privileges to others).

**2.** Those most likely to experience relative deprivation on a significant scale may include youth with some secondary education, but who never completed high school, and/or university students and graduates with grim economic prospects. That may be particularly true of youth who, coming from disadvantaged or modest economic backgrounds, lack the social connections that often remain so critical to economic and political success in developing countries. But the societal stresses generated by relative deprivation may be felt far beyond underprivileged youth. After all, most youth in developing countries have acquired more education, and have far broader horizons, than their parents; in part as a result, they also have built up much higher expectations about their future. Consequently, relative deprivation may be more widespread among youth than was true in earlier eras; it increasingly may be cutting across differences based on class and levels of educational attainment. Indeed, that phenomenon may become even more pronounced in years to come.

**3.** Relative deprivation may be exacerbated by the co-existence of spectacular wealth and abject poverty; by the sharp contrast between the appalling living conditions that characterize certain neighborhoods and the ostentatious wealth on display only a few miles away; by an enhanced awareness, brought about by the information and communications revolution, of the prosperity that exist both in the West and among certain constituencies at home; and, perhaps most importantly, by perceptions of pervasive high-level corruption that the authorities are either unwilling or unable to confront, or both. Tremendous resentment and anger may be generated among youth whose aspirations have risen significantly, but who lack the social contacts and influence networks to succeed in an environment in which upward mobility is shaped far more by personal connections than by individual effort and capacity.

**4.** Development interventions particularly well suited to addressing the problems created by frustrated aspirations and unmet expectations among youth include:

- a. Sharpening youth's access to knowledge and skills that reflect the needs of the marketplace. Pursuit of this objective may entail: creating additional vocational training and continuing education opportunities; imparting specialized skills known to be valued by employers; and curriculum reforms that address the potential disconnect between the content of instruction in secondary schools and universities on the one hand and the requirements of the marketplace on the other.
- b. Establishing or improving mechanisms aimed at facilitating the transition from school to work. Efforts in that area should involve partnership between government, the private sector, and community-based organizations. The private sector's contributions may include offers of internships.
- c. Improving the extent to which at-risk youth have access to information about careers; about jobs and job training opportunities; about how to prepare themselves more effectively for those careers and opportunities; and about funding sources for community-based projects. This objective should be pursued by working with state institutions, community-based organizations, and the private sector.
- d. Expanding business sectors with the demonstrated highest potential for increasing youth employment.

- e. Improving opportunities for young entrepreneurs, including those who operate in, or have been forced into, the informal sector. Faster and easier registration procedures, reduction of bureaucratic red tape, government support in identifying business and micro-credit opportunities, as well as “mentoring” for new businesses and self-employed youth may be called for. The “mentoring” in question should rely heavily on the readiness and capacity of the private sector to assist in this effort.

### **Driver Three: Government Repression and Gross Violations of Human Rights or Civil Liberties**

1. An examination of the profile of those involved in violent extremism may suggest that, for a disproportionate number of them, exposure to harsh government repression was a significant factor in their radicalization. Governments that engage in gross human rights violations and/or that systematically deny basic civil liberties to their citizens are known to be particularly prone to pushing individuals into terrorist groups. In fact, it is no accident that one of the major objectives of such groups is to prompt governments into over-reacting: terrorist leaders know full well that indiscriminate government repression has a radicalizing effect that supports their recruitment efforts. Terrorist groups also have shown that they are well-positioned to tap into a prevailing sense of injustice and victimization, which enables them to present their actions as a form of reciprocal violence, or as the only option left for redressing fundamental inequities.

2. Terrorist organizations that emphasize “just rule” – understood as rule according to the law (including religious law), involving strict and consistent implementation of the same standards to everyone – may see their appeal grow in environments characterized by arbitrary and capricious government, widespread impunity for well-connected elites, and abuses of power and authority by officials. In this respect, violent extremist organizations that invoke Islam to justify their actions may capitalize on the high value that Islamic doctrine places on justice (*`adl*) and just rulers. In Islamic thought, after all, issues of justice, fairness, and equal treatment under the law loom larger than those related to freedom of choice and popular sovereignty. Put differently, in predominantly Islamic societies, ideals of justice and equity typically resonate far more than those associated with “democracy” or “freedom.” From a political perspective, Islamic doctrine is preoccupied mostly with preventing despotism and ensuring that those in power will seek to promote the well-being of the community, as opposed to advancing their own interests. Preventing the arbitrary and capricious exercise of power, and enabling authority to be exercised in a way that reflects an understanding of the mutual obligations between rulers and ruled, are viewed as critically important. In such contexts, highly repressive, unaccountable and unchecked government may provide violent extremist “Islamist” organizations with ways of legitimizing their violence. Indeed, going back to the 1970s, analysts have concluded that a major force fueling Islamic radicalism has been the widespread perception that Middle Eastern governments have denied their people justice.

3. Harsh repression at home can result in pushing radical Islamists whose agendas originally were quite localized into the transnational arena. Having failed to defeat the “near enemy” (their own governments), these radical Islamists often have redirected their energies into confronting the “far-away enemy” (the US government), in part because of their assessment of the latter’s key role in propping up their own governments. 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 movement. More generally, it is no coincidence that many of the groups and individuals that came to provide the core of the al-Qaeda network originated from highly repressive and exclusionary political environments (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria).

4. Highly repressive political contexts also are conducive to the structuring of political opposition into “exclusive” cells that operate underground, encourage secrecy and conspiratorial mentalities, isolate their members from the broader society, demand strict ideological and behavioral conformity from them, and rigorously separate “insiders” from “outsiders.” Such features tend to promote extremism. The fear of informers and government infiltrators, combined with the constant threat of decimation by the authorities, puts a premium on discipline and on adhering to an exacting standard of conduct. They also facilitate the adoption of radical anti-system ideologies that portray the world in Manichean terms (faith versus impiety, truth versus falsehood, right versus wrong), deny the possibility of neutrality in what is presented as an existential battle, and tend to view civilians who do not side with the “struggling vanguard as complicit in an iniquitous, evil system, and, therefore, as legitimate targets.”<sup>5</sup>

5. Finally, there is significant evidence that denial of civil liberties is a reliable predictor of a country’s propensity to produce terrorists. Governments that deny their populations such basic rights as freedom of assembly and freedom of the press thus become particularly vulnerable to violent extremism.<sup>6</sup>

6. If government repression, human rights violations, and denial of civil liberties appear to represent a significant driver behind violent extremism, the usual panoply of relevant USAID interventions should be considered. Most important, however, is the extent to which young people view the US as complicit in allowing a potentially repressive and arbitrary regime to maintain itself in power, and, therefore, the degree to which they regard the US as an “enabler” of the excesses carried out by that regime. If that is the case, US-supported development interventions are highly unlikely to make up for those perceptions. Development assistance, therefore, may end up making only a modest contribution, at best, to overall US counter-terrorism or extremism objectives.

Still, to the extent that development interventions are being envisioned, priority should be given to those that aim to prevent or curb gross human rights violations and indiscriminate repression, since it is such actions that are most likely to generate the moral outrage, desire for revenge, and perceived legitimacy of resorting to violence which, in turn, extremist organizations can harness to their advantage. Special considerations also ought to be given to the following:

- a. Curbing harassment and intimidation of particularly vulnerable youth by police and other state agents. That objective may be pursued, in part, through more systematic and effective monitoring of police behavior.
- b. Improving legal recourse options for youth vulnerable to state abuse.
- c. Developing relevant civic education among at risk youth (i.e., teaching mechanisms and procedures that are available to individuals being harassed by the police).
- d. Improving respect for basic human rights in prisons, including through more systematic and effective monitoring of prison conditions. Evidence suggests that, as a rule, it is critical to address prison conditions that enable prisons to operate as vectors for radicalization.
- e. Strengthening institutions, mechanisms and processes aimed at providing bulwarks against arbitrary and capricious behavior by state agents, especially behavior likely to impact youth disproportionately.

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<sup>5</sup> See Mohammed Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

## **Driver Four: Systemic Corruption, especially Grand Corruption, and Impunity for Well-Connected Elites**

1. An analysis of the profile, actions or statements of those drawn to violent extremism may reveal that resentment of official corruption and anger at perceived impunity for elites represent particularly important motivations. To be sure, the revulsion generated by pervasive corruption does not necessarily lead to radicalization and/or violence. It, instead, may prompt civic disengagement and political apathy. The individuals and communities involved may feel that, no matter how reprehensible corruption and impunity are, they also constitute an inescapable part of life. In other words, they may be resigned to corruption and believe in its inevitability. They also may reject violence as a justifiable response to corruption. Instead, they simply may opt for various forms of “withdrawal” or “opting out” from formal political and civic processes.

Over time, however, loss of faith in, resentment at, and contempt for a political system and society deemed corrupt may translate into varying degrees of mental and/or physical break with one’s immediate environment, including sometimes family; at the aggregate, macro-level, it may result in greater levels of social anomie and social fragmentation. Such developments may go hand in hand with a surge of interest in spirituality and religion, which, for some individuals, will take the form of stricter adherence to religious dogma. Again, such dynamics need not imply a radicalization of political beliefs, and, even less so, any inclination toward violent extremism. Nonetheless, the record suggests that when individuals withdraw from a society they denounce as corrupt, and when they begin to congregate with like-minded individuals in small cliques or cells, the processes of group seclusion from mainstream society, and increasingly intense personal interactions among the members of the group, may lead to radicalization of both viewpoints and behavior, as was discussed earlier. The group as a whole, and its members individually, may drift toward ever more extreme attitudes. For one, physical separation from a society deemed “un-Islamic” may lead individuals to persuade each other to accept violence as a legitimate way of purifying that society, or of bringing about the overthrow of a political order responsible for that “contamination” or “corruption” of society. When individuals and groups adopt such views, they become ready to make connections (typically, through a gatekeeper) to terrorist or other violent extremist networks.

2. The connection between corruption and violent extremism may be even more direct and significant when, instead of triggering mere civic disengagement or disaffection, corruption elicits a profound moral outrage. That deeply felt sense of injustice, in turn, may provide a powerful motivation for supporting or engaging in violence that may take different forms:

- It may target specific individuals or constituencies viewed as emblematic of the prevailing corruption;
- It may be directed at government officials or institutions blamed either for their own ethical shortcomings, or for being unwilling or unable (or both) to confront corruption;
- It may express itself through various forms of “lashing out” at the entire system or at society in general; and/or
- It may be directed at forces (e.g., the West, the US) that are viewed as propping up a corrupt system and as partly responsible for its perceived moral decay.

(Corruption also may contribute to violent extremism not so much by prompting individuals to join extremist groups, but by creating an environment that facilitate the operations of those groups; that aspect of corruption’s contribution will be analyzed subsequently.)

3. If there is palpable anger at high-level corruption and/or at perceived impunity for well connected elites, and if there is evidence that violent extremist organizations are benefiting from this phenomenon, or are well-positioned to take advantage of it, 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 regimes that are known to tolerate and benefit from corruption is likely to undermine very significantly the probably impact of such programs as well as the extent to which anti-corruption initiatives can contribute to US counter-terrorism objectives.

### Driver Five: Political Exclusion

The systematic denial of opportunities for political participation, for influencing decision-making at the level of the community and/or the state, and/or for reforming regimes perceived to be corrupt and/or unjust, also may be a significant driver behind violent extremism. Exclusionary regimes may feed the belief that violence is the only viable option for bringing about genuine political change. More generally, anger or frustration at being denied the opportunity to affect the decisions that shape one's life and that of his/her community may be a potent factor in pushing the individuals and communities involved toward violent means of political action. Finally, it should be noted that violence fed by political exclusion is particularly likely to express itself in a religious idiom and through religious organizations where (as in much of the Arab world) secular opposition groups are weak and/or have not recovered from earlier targeting by the state, and where government repression has left religious discourse, mosques and religious organizations as the primary channels through which to organize and mobilize.

If there is profound anger at the lack of avenues for political participation, and if there is evidence that violent extremist organizations are benefiting from this phenomenon, or are well positioned to take advantage of it, development interventions can be designed along two parallel tracks:

- a. *Supply-side activities*, i.e., those that aim to enhance the capacity of the political system to respond to the demands of populations particularly vulnerable to violent extremism (e.g., disadvantaged youth). Programs that target parliament, political parties and local government should be designed or re-examined accordingly. Ministries with responsibilities that involve those populations should be provided with assistance in improving their outreach to them, especially in priority target areas. If necessary, the inclination and capacity of political parties and NGOs to reach out to at-risk groups, and to advocate on their behalf, should be improved. This objective may be pursued, in part, by allowing the concerns of at-risk populations to be more adequately incorporated into the platforms of political parties and CSOs, and by enhancing the degree to which relevant populations are represented in the decision-making structures of those organizations. By the same token, the visibility and influence of civil-society groups among vulnerable populations may need to be improved. That objective may be pursued by increasing the capacity of these NGOs to provide tangible benefits to populations that are not necessarily part of their usual audience. Local governments' consultations with organizations that articulate the concerns of vulnerable populations might need to be increased and institutionalized as well.
- b. *Demand-side activities*, i.e., those that aim to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable populations to express their demands in ways that enhance the likelihood that these demands will be addressed by decision-makers. 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. Relevant skills would include: how to make oneself heard, how to defend one's rights, how to promote one's interests within the system, how to organize oneself at the grassroots level, and how to engage with local and national government institutions. Helping vulnerable youth develop their inclination and capacity to advocate for solutions to the

problems they face should be a priority, as should be increasing youth's access to decision-making arenas at both the national and local/community levels. Many of the key intended results would not necessarily be specific to disadvantaged youth. They would include:

- More competitive and fair national and local elections;
- More authority, autonomy and resources for representative governing bodies (legislatures, councils and assemblies) at the local and national levels;
- Greater citizens' access to, and influence over, those representative bodies.

### **Concluding Comments on Drivers**

Drivers rarely operate in isolation from each other. As noted earlier, the analysis should focus on identifying those drivers that are particularly salient, and how they relate to one another. Harsh government repression and systemic political exclusion usually operate hand-in-hand. Resentment at pervasive corruption and impunity for well-connected elites may compound significantly feelings of relative deprivation, or indeed be largely responsible for them. Corruption may sap state capacity – including the government's ability to confront the social exclusion that fuels violent extremism. It also may be that it is primarily in areas that feature high levels of social exclusion and fragmentation that the problems of relative deprivation and the anger at pervasive corruption are felt most acutely. Meanwhile, the “pull” exercised by violent ideologies may be largely a function of the alienation created by social exclusion and frustrated expectations. Whether that indeed is the case, or whether the drivers identified relate to one another in different ways, should receive attention by the assessment team fairly on in the process.

## STEP 2: UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS

1. Reflecting on the motivations that may prompt individuals to join or support violent extremist groups represents a critical step both in the investigation of such groups and in the development of appropriate policy responses to the challenges they pose. For analytical purposes as well as in the interest of parsimony, motivations may be grouped into five main categories:

- a. The pull or appeal exercised by a particular ideology, worldview or set of beliefs.
- b. Grievances that are so deeply felt that they evoke within the individuals and communities concerned a deep sense of moral outrage, injustice, indignation, and anger.
- c. The search for economic gain, or the pull exercised by prior involvement in illicit economic activities.
- d. Personal factors (from a desire for revenge or vengeance, or in order to follow in the footsteps of a friend or relative).
- e. Intimidation or coercion may force individuals or communities to “support” or even work for violent extremist groups.

2. These four categories are presented with an understanding that the following caveats apply:

- a. Not all possible motivations fall into one of these four categories. Still, most do, and, for the purposes of an extremism assessment, this typology should be able to capture the most relevant motivational factors.
- b. In real life, individuals act based on mixed motivations. Thus, for instance, strong commitment to an ideology need not exclude the search for economic advantage. Similarly, those to whom Jessica Stern refers as “lone-wolf avengers” (individuals who engage in terrorist activities on their own, who act without explicit orders and without the support or guidance of an organization) are typically moved by both the appeal of a particular ideology or worldview and by personal factors (they typically have a “chip” on their shoulder, feel easily slighted, and, due to their own history, they feel tremendous resentment and anger toward particular individuals or institutions). Nonetheless, while we need to recognize that, in most situations, mixed motivations will be at play, for both analytical and programmatic purposes it is important to be able to separate those motivations that are critical from those that are less decisive. That is one of the tasks that Step One needs to accomplish.
- c. In practice as well, it is often difficult to separate, for instance, personal factors from both deeply felt grievances and the appeal of a particular ideology. Ideologies may resonate with particular individuals or communities because they are consistent with these individuals or communities’ own experiences (e.g., of discrimination, social exclusion, or oppression) and/or because they emphasize certain themes (e.g., social justice) that are central to the grievances which these individuals and communities may harbor toward “the system.” Ideologies may gain traction because they provide a frame that gives broader meaning and significance to existing grievances – though in the process they typically will amplify those grievances as well. But while in some cases it may be difficult to isolate the impact of ideology from that of grievances, it should remain possible in most instances to determine whether violent extremism is driven primarily by one, as opposed to the other, of these two categories of drivers.

## A. Grievance-Driven versus Ideology-Driven Organizations

For purposes of both analysis and programming, it therefore is useful to distinguish between grievance-based and ideology-driven terrorist or violent extremist organizations. Since, as discussed above, in practice many groups will be driven by a mix of ideological fervor and particular grievances, these two categories should be approached as ideal-types or as polar ends on a continuum. Being able to place an actual organization on that continuum often will constitute an important first step in understanding that organization. It also will provide critical insights into the ease with which that organization can be contained, and, if so, how that goal may be best achieved.

Grievance-driven and ideology-driven organizations can be contrasted from several key angles: their respective goals and the nature of their agendas; the theater within which they operate; how they relate to the broader society and political system, and the extent to which they are embedded within it; and how the use of violence relates to their ultimate objectives.

When analyzed according to the criteria stated in the above paragraph, grievance-based organizations – such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine, Hizballah in Lebanon, or, in an entirely different setting, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, in Sri Lanka – display the following features:

- a. They have fairly clearly delineated grievances, and those grievances are the main force driving them. The primary source of their grievances – i.e., the “enemy” or opponent within which they find themselves locked in a conflict – is usually well defined as well.
- b. These grievances are “territorialized,” in the sense that they are tied to a particular piece of land that the organizations in question seek to “liberate.” Resisting what the organizations involved view as foreign occupation thus frequently represents these organizations’ core objective. Put differently, these organizations take part in what is a geographically circumscribed conflict, and they seek to achieve a specific territorial objective. Their operations concentrate on that particular territory, and they do not generally aim to bring conflict or violence to other arenas and theaters.
- c. No matter what one thinks of the legitimacy of the grievances involved, they are – at least in principle – amenable to being addressed by the other side. In other words, because the grievances are not open-ended, because they are limited to a particular territory, and because it is possible to envision satisfying most of them in a way that does not entail total capitulation by the other side, they can be described as “realistic,” and, thus, remediable.
- d. Grievance-driven organizations use violence primarily as a strategic weapon – i.e., as a means to achieve certain objectives. Though over time militants may become addicted to violence – and, as a result, the distinction between means and end may become blurred – at least initially violence is in the service of a specific political objective; there is a strategic or tactical rationale for resorting to it.
- e. Side by side with engaging in violence, many grievance-driven organizations also involve themselves in social activities and the political process. They may have a “political” wing as well as a “military” one. They may compete in elections, lobby the government, and cultivate ties to elected representatives, government officials, and key politicians. They may seek access to representative bodies, at both the local and national levels, in order to advance their agenda and place “their people” in positions of influence throughout the political and governmental systems.

They also may be seeking to win followers, and/or live up to their own sense of religious or moral obligation, through an elaborate network of welfare, educational and health projects, that provide large segments of the population with vital services that typically compensate for poor service delivery by government agencies strapped for funds and riddled with incompetence and corruption. In all those respects, the organizations in question generally operate within the confines of “the system” and play according to its rules. As a result, some of those organizations may be deeply embedded in society, and are not adequately described merely as “terrorist” organizations. They also constitute a broad social and political movement that enjoys broader popular support and legitimacy – and, therefore, may pose particularly complex challenges for those seeking to contain their influence – than terrorist organizations that operate on the fringes of society and are devoid of mass following.

- f. It is worth exploring whether the government helps fuel grievances (homegrown, foreign-stimulated, or both), confers legitimacy on (some of) them, and/or allows them to be expressed openly and sometimes in violent ways (“controlled” violence or not). The team should reflect on which of those options is at work, and draw the implications for programming (e.g., addressing grievances becomes much harder if and when the government fuels them). I also think it makes sense to outline the basic typology you suggest by comparing and contrasting the cases of Mauritania, Pakistan, Kenya and Yemen. In fact, you might as well use what you have in the body of the email to write the relevant paragraph.

The label of “ideology-driven organization,” by contrast, may be used to refer to organizations characterized by the following traits:

- a. Their goals (e.g., restoring the caliphate) are nebulous and/or grandiose, and seem completely disconnected from any sense of reality or the possible. Their opponents or enemies are vaguely defined as well; they may be described, for instance, as “Jewish-Christian crusaders,” “*kufr*” (unbelief), “falsehood,” “unbelief,” or “*jahiliyya*” (the state of “ignorance” which characterized Arabia prior to Prophet Muhammad’s revelations, and to which Salafi Jihadists and other radical Islamists believe modern societies have reverted). While these organizations may invoke specific grievances (as Ben Laden did when he called for a withdrawal of US military forces from Saudi Arabia) or particular causes (the Palestinian issue), they do so only to gain traction with broader segments of the population, which they know they could not possibly win over on the basis of their actual platform. Consequently, resolving the geographically circumscribed conflicts and satisfying the specific grievances that these organizations invoke in order to justify their actions would not put an end to their violence (just as the US decision to withdraw its military forces from SA did not bring an end to Al-Qaeda terrorism).
- b. Members of ideology-driven organizations tend to have a completely skewed view of the world – which generally is not true of their counterparts in grievance-based organizations. Whether or not one agrees with the objectives and methods of grievance-based organizations, the followers of most such organizations tend to display unexceptional viewpoints on a whole range of critical issues. They may hold extreme opinions regarding the particular conflict in which they are engaged, but, otherwise, their outlook tends not to be strikingly different from those of their fellow citizens. That, however, is not true of ideology-driven organizations. Far more so than grievance-based groups, these organizations are prone to display cult-like, millenarian or messianic features, and their members tend to have opinions that are far out of the mainstream on virtually every single critical issue. In part for that reason, ideology-driven organizations do not usually take part in the legal political process, which they typically reject in its entirety. Nor are they involved in any significant way in providing social services to the population. Far from being embedded in the societies within which they operate, they tend to be “external” to, or

“super-imposed” on, them. As a result, they can derive no popular support or legitimacy from activities in the mainstream political and social arenas; the legitimacy they can muster is tied entirely to their vision of the world and the extent to which it resonates with the public. Consequently as well, they tend to enjoy a much narrower base of support than grievance-based organizations, and operate on the fringes of society or underground.

- c. Unlike grievance-based organizations – which, as suggested above, are generally rooted in a particular territory, and have specific and geographically contained objectives related to that territory – ideology-driven organizations tend to be “de-territorialized”: their agenda is not tied to a particular piece of land or the conflicts associated with it. Ideology-driven organizations have no intrinsic interest in local struggles; they care about them only to the extent that those struggles provide them with a potential local base from which to conduct their global operations. They are “transnational” in nature, and aim to bring violence to an ever-expanding number of theaters of operation.
- d. As noted above, grievance-based organizations generally resort to violence as a strategic or tactical weapon, as they pursue clear, limited, and at least theoretically attainable political objectives (such as putting an end to what is viewed as foreign occupation). By contrast, ideologically motivated groups frequently see violence as far more intrinsic to their very existence and core objectives. Their members often believe in violence’s redemptive virtue, and are more prone to become addicted to it. Thus, for instance, they may view violence as part and parcel of a religious obligation to be engaged in a never-ending struggle against errant beliefs and practices; as an integral component of a timeless cosmic battle between good and evil, truth and falsehood, belief and heresy; as a requirement for securing salvation, helping atone for one’s sins, and reaping the spiritual benefits of martyrdom; as a means of purifying oneself and cleansing society from its impurities; or as a way of bringing about the apocalypse.

From a programmatic perspective, the distinction between primarily grievance-based and mainly ideologically driven extremism is particularly consequential. For one, no matter the considerable challenges they pose, most forms of grievance-based extremism may be easier to try to address than their ideologically driven counterparts. When and where clearly defined grievances can be satisfied through concessions, it may prove possible to defuse the forces which drive that violent extremism. By contrast, ideologically driven terrorism typically cannot be dealt with through a negotiation process – particularly, as in the case of al-Qaeda, when the ideology posits grandiose goals that can only be reached through the surrender of the opponent and/or the destruction of society as we know it. Furthermore, having determined that one is in the presence of a primarily grievance-based form of violent extremism, the programmatic implications are generally straightforward: can those grievances be successfully remedied, and, if so, how? Ideologically-driven extremism is not only far more difficult to address, but, to the extent one can do so, it calls for different types of responses, as suggested below.

## **B. Ideology-Driven Extremism**

Social scientists and policy-makers alike repeatedly have underestimated the power of ideologies and deeply felt convictions as the primary motivations behind numerous forms of violent extremism. While interests, narrow grievances, the search for power or wealth, and specific political agendas certainly may motivate some violent extremists to varying degrees, others are moved primarily by grand ideas and an unshakable belief in the inherent superiority of certain values. Unless one understands the powerful emotions those ideas and values evoke, and how they resonate in certain types of political and historical circumstances, one will fail to understand what truly drives numerous militants into violent extremist groups.

In many cases, what brings violent extremists together is their shared dedication to a particular vision of how society ought to be organized, and/or their strong questioning of the moral basis upon which their societies are presently organized. That is true of many Salafi Jihadist groups today, just as it was true – in radically different contexts, and on the basis of entirely different worldviews – of the left-wing radical groups of the 1970s in West Germany (the Red Army Faction or “Baader-Meinhoff Gang”), Italy (the Red Brigades) and Japan (the Japanese Red Army). The critical role played by firmly held beliefs must be considered if one is to account for the strength of the commitment displayed by members of many violent extremist groups; their persistence in the face of overwhelming odds (or, at least, despite clear military superiority by the opposing side); their frequent realization that they are unlikely to see the objectives they pursue achieved during their lifetime; as well as their readiness to undergo tremendous suffering and deprivation for the cause they embrace.

Values and beliefs also matter to the extent that they may provide moral justification for violence. The perceived presence of a compelling moral imperative is often required for individuals to convince themselves that it is acceptable – indeed, as they view it, necessary – to resort to cruelty toward others. Merely focusing on the presumed pressures or incentives created by the social, economic and political environment in which violent extremists operate does not suffice if one is to account for this phenomenon. Both longstanding and more recently forged norms and worldviews must be taken into consideration as well.

Along similar lines, violent extremists often are driven, in part, by culture-based and culture-specific perceptions of what is fair and unfair, just and unjust; they are moved by implicit understandings of when deprivations constitute an integral part of life and, therefore, merely have to be endured and when, instead, they amount to violations of some basic moral compact between rulers and ruled, and thus provide a legitimate ground for violence. Two key points, therefore, need to be underscored: first, perceptions of whether or not existing circumstances justify the resort to violence often are far more decisive than those circumstances themselves; second, these perceptions do not develop in a vacuum; instead, they are strongly influenced by the prevailing cultural and ideological setting in which they emerge.

A related observation is that within typically large populations of disaffected or alienated individuals, only a much smaller number are ready to use violence. The prevailing social, political and economic environment is not what sets that smaller group apart from the larger population of which it is a component; presumably, after all, that environment is experienced by all. Instead, what distinguishes violent extremists from the rest are, to a significant extent at least, the values they embrace, the quest for an intense and exacting form of spirituality that often animates them, as well as the broader worldviews and convictions they have in common, and which typically portray violence as a logical and acceptable form of retribution for the deprivation they feel they are made to endure. Significantly, after analyzing and holding discussions with a broad variety of terrorists across different religious traditions, Jessica Stern underscores the single most important trait which they all share: “All of them describe themselves as responding to a spiritual calling and many report a kind of spiritual high or addiction related to its fulfillment.”<sup>7</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer echoes this view when he comments that “in talking with many of the supporters of these cultures of violence, I was struck with the intensity of their quests for a deeper level of spirituality than that offered by the superficial values of the modern world.”<sup>8</sup> That is not to say that violent extremists always are driven primarily or exclusively by ideology and values; it is merely to

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<sup>7</sup> Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (HarperCollins, 2004), p. 281.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (University of California Press, 2001), p. 222.

acknowledge that some of them are, and that worldviews and norms often feature in the mix of motivations that prompt even others to act.

No examination of the role that ideas play as a critical driver behind many extremist and terrorist movements would be complete without comprehending these movements' anti-modernist and anti-liberal agenda. A disproportionate number of violent extremist organizations in the past three decades have rejected, explicitly and unconditionally, modernity, pointing to what they view as its lack of spiritual content and its ethical poverty. The violence in which they have engaged has been intended, in part, to display, in an intentionally spectacular and dramatic fashion, their contempt for, and complete repudiation of, post-enlightenment values and secular humanism. They have portrayed these values as an unacceptable quest for a Godless universe. They also have blamed modernity for the ascent of unbridled individualism and hedonism, and for the triumph of materialism and moral relativism. In those circumstances, violent extremism should not be viewed as the enraged response of individuals who feel betrayed at having been promised – only to be subsequently denied – the benefits of modernity. It should be understood, instead, as an effort on their part to roll back modernity by fighting its symbols and manifestations. To many violent extremists, modernity is not something to be aspired to; it is a threat around which a wall must be built, or as a looming danger that must be confronted head-on. Religious extremists, in particular, tend to view modernity as encroaching on sacred values; they regard it as an all-powerful force which, if left to its own devices, inevitably and irremediably will destroy the integrity of their societies and cultures.

The discussion above ties into the point made earlier regarding the importance of spirituality in driving and sustaining membership in many radical violent organizations. From the perspective of numerous such groups, modernity is fundamentally unfulfilling, as it fails to infuse life with a sense of meaning and purpose. As a result, countless violent extremists have “fallen upon violence” almost accidentally, as they were looking for spiritual purpose – and, ironically, for clear, moral standards of behavior. In a confusing world that presents individuals with an ever-expanding and bewildering array of personal options, they were searching for certainties, truths, and clear rules upon which to anchor behavior. Unfortunately, and as a result of both psychological and group dynamics processes described in other parts of this document, that quest often ended in their embrace of radical anti-liberal, anti-modernist violent ideologies.

As mentioned earlier, ideology-driven extremism is extremely difficult to address. Nonetheless, when faced with it, one should consider the following potential responses.

***First response: Address Features of the Environment that Enable the Ideology to Gain Traction***

The analyst first should seek to identify potential features of the social, political and economic environment that might enable the ideology to resonate. For instance, socially excluded, marginalized individuals who experience everyday discrimination and injustices may be particularly receptive to ideologies that are built around the denunciation of such phenomena, and that seek to tap into the anger they produce. In other words, violent ideologies will reverberate with certain individuals and constituencies more than with others depending on the prevailing conditions in which these individuals or constituencies conduct their lives; if that is true, efforts to change these conditions may help dilute the appeal of those violent ideologies. As Marc Sageman has suggested, the idea 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 such ideas themselves feel to be the victims of widespread discrimination and injustices. By the same token, individuals who feel totally disempowered, who believe that they are being ignored by elites who only show contempt for them, or who, worse, have come to conclusion that their very humanity is being denied by the inhumane environment in which they are forced to live, may be drawn to violent extremist ideologies that provide them with both a sense of empowerment and a way of lashing out at the system. Again, when such circumstances do apply, it may be possible to undermine the

resonance of the ideology by addressing those conditions that give it traction. Because development assistance 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 ideologically driven violent extremism.

### ***Second Response: Discredit the Extremists' Core Ideas***

Building on the rationale that ideas only can be combated with other ideas, the response to ideology-driven violent extremism also should entail nuanced and thoughtfully orchestrated efforts to expose the flaws, inconsistencies, contradictions, counter-productive nature, and/or immorality of the ideas that drive violent extremists, as well as the enormous damage and suffering that these ideas often produce for the communities that provide support for them. Side by side with this “discrediting enterprise,” compelling ideological alternatives to the ideas of violent extremists should be put forward and disseminated as widely as possible.

With regard to Salafi Jihadists, for instance, it is essential to de-legitimize or de-bunk some of the notions, concepts and perceptions that are central to their narrative, such as: the West is implacably and inherently hostile to Islam, and bent on destroying it; the Salafi Jihadist undertaking is part of a timeless cosmic struggle or epic moral battle between good and evil; violence is a religious obligation, and engaging in it is critical to securing personal salvation; or violence has redeeming and purifying virtues – specifically, it is a way through which one can atone for one’s sins and through which society may be cleansed from its impurities.

Another critical component of the response to ideologically driven violent extremism is to publicize the enormous damage that it usually inflicts on those very populations for which it claims to speak. For instance, it is important to remind the Muslim public, subtly and through indigenous voices, that innocent Muslim civilians have been the main victims of Salafi Jihadist violence, and that that violence has made it far more difficult for the countries that have been afflicted by it 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 the groups in question should be prompt to capitalize. Average citizens must be made to comprehend the enormous pain and suffering that their fellow Muslims have experienced at the hands of Salafi Jihadists. The same often holds true for other societies and cultures: potential sympathizers of violent extremists must be made to understand that they typically do not share the same values as those extremists, and that they have nothing to gain – individually and collectively – from helping those extremists advance their agendas.

Efforts to undermine the core ideas that drive violent extremists should be undertaken carefully. Ill-designed, insufficiently thought through initiatives easily can come across as offensive, patronizing or even insulting to the very audiences one is seeking to influence. Therefore, the potential for counter-productive interventions is particularly high. Against this background, one ought to keep in mind the following guidelines:

- a. The “counter-narrative” offered to at-risk populations should reflect these populations’ concerns and aspirations – not, implicitly or explicitly, dismiss their validity. For instance, where and when constituencies are attracted to violent religious extremism in part because of their rejection of a purely secular order and their search for spiritual purpose, 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 moral standards to which people adhere so strongly in less belligerent directions. 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.”<sup>9</sup> (Atran, 2006:141-142).

- b. In order to be credible and, therefore, effective, “counter-narratives” and efforts to promote ideological alternatives to violent extremist ideas should come from within the societies involved. For one, efforts by the United States to diffuse the potential ideological appeal of Salafi jihadism must reflect an awareness that the United States is 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 US was never well placed to play a central role in these debates; its ability to do so is even more constrained today, in light of its diminished moral authority and credibility in the Islamic world. Consequently, the debates in question – and, in particular, implicit or explicit attempts to reject the use of violence based on religion – must take place among Muslims. Indigenous voices must be the driving force behind this war of ideas. They include religious figures, community leaders, prominent intellectuals, young activists, and, perhaps particularly importantly, well-known former Salafi jihadist or radical Islamists who have recanted, and are now eager to tell youth that violence neither can neither be condoned nor provide a solution to the problems that afflict them and their societies.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, Muslims themselves will decide which interpretations of their faith prevail. That is not to say that donors cannot influence those debates. It is merely to recognize that their influence will be exercised on the margins. They can, for instance, discreetly help provide spaces – both physical and virtual (the effort must include a vigorous internet component) – for leaders and associations that can be relied upon to fight the appeal of violent extremist ideas. The individuals and associations in question may include young imams, youth or community leaders, as well as faith-based community groups that deliver material assistance in ways that also address individuals’ spiritual needs. Such individuals and entities are far better equipped than donors to understand the true nature and dynamics of the problem posed by violent extremism, as well as the sources of its allure to at-risk populations; the grassroots credibility they enjoy also gives them powerful assets to combat this disease. Donors can help them disseminate their ideas, sometimes provide them with adequate resources (when it does not risk undermining them), and work to broaden the political space that the local authorities are willing to grant them.

### C. Grievance-Driven Extremism

The grievances that may underpin violent terrorism can be divided into two main categories:

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<sup>9</sup> Scott Atran, “The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism.” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring), pp. 141-142.

<sup>10</sup> One example is the case of Egyptian radical Sayyed Imam al-Sharif, who once was the prominent leader of Islamic Jihad (the group which killed Anwar al-Sadat, and with which Ayman al-Zawahiri was affiliated). In 1988, al-Sharif joined with Ben 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 ideas that he once had embraced and, in fact, helped articulate. In 2007, he even published *The Document of Right Guidance for Jihad Activity in Egypt*, which 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).

- The first category consists of grievances that stem from political, economic and social dynamics that are, for the most part, indigenous to the country in question. We will refer to those grievances as “homegrown.”
- The second category consists of grievances that originate primarily in the regional and international system – and, more specifically, in the way in which that regional and international system impacts the country being analyzed. For lack of a better word, we will refer to those grievances as “foreign-stimulated.”

Inevitably, real-life grievances often straddle the line between “homegrown” and “foreign-stimulated,” and contain elements of both categories. For analytical as well as programmatic purposes, however, it is helpful to seek to determine whether their homegrown dimensions take precedence over the extent to which they reflect broader anger over international and regional political dynamics, or vice versa.

### *Homegrown Grievances*

In Step One’s examination of potential drivers, several types of “homegrown grievances” were identified and discussed at some length already: government repression and gross violations of human rights and civil liberties; unmet expectations and relative deprivation; systemic corruption and impunity; and political exclusion. Development interventions capable of addressing these grievances were noted as well.

### *Foreign-Stimulated Grievances*

At least insofar as violent Islamic extremism is concerned, two main types of foreign-stimulated grievances deserve particular attention. The first consists of the perception of an existential threat to Islam (as a religion or culture), and/or to Muslims (as societies and peoples). This threat typically is viewed as emanating primarily from the West in general, and from the US in particular. It usually entails the perception that the West and/or the US are fundamentally hostile to Islam and Muslims, and that they are bent on the domination and subjugation of Muslim countries and peoples, on exploiting their resources, on denigrating their faith, and/or on deriding or vilifying their most sacred religious beliefs and figures. The sense of victimization and urgency involved in those grievances may prompt those who harbor them to conclude that the very existential nature of the threat to their physical security and/or cultural heritage provides legitimate ground – indeed, even a moral imperative – for resorting to violence. The violence in question, in turn, may be directed at US and other Western targets; at organizations and individuals that are viewed as subservient to, and complicit with, the US or other western powers; and/or at civilians who fail openly to side with those who share these grievances. Individuals susceptible to the “on-going war against Islam” narrative also typically believe that the use of violence today represents an acceptable form of retribution for historical wrongs and earlier attacks against Islam.

A second type of foreign-stimulated grievances consists of a conviction that the international system is fundamentally hostile to Muslim societies and peoples, that it relegates Muslim societies to a subordinate position in international affairs, and that the way in which it operates largely accounts for Muslims’ loss of control over both their personal lives and collective destinies. Such perceptions, and the belief in an existential threat to Islam and Muslims, often overlap and feed into one another. For instance, the view that oppression, domination or victimization of Muslims is built into the current international system is likely to reinforce the belief that Islam itself is under existential attack. Consequently, in most situations where one of the two types of foreign-stimulated grievances analyzed here are at work, the other one also will be found to be operative.

No discussion of the impact of foreign-stimulated grievances would be complete without mention of the role of military occupation. For instance, in their explanations of suicide bombings, scholars such as Robert Pape, Mia Bloom, and Bruce Hoffman all have emphasized the importance of occupation as a

driver. Pape, in particular, views foreign occupation as the single most important cause of suicide terrorism. The core of his argument is that "... every group mounting a suicide campaign over the past two decades has had as a major objective – or its central objective – coercing a foreign state that has military forces in what the terrorists see as their homeland to take those forces out."<sup>11</sup>

Finally, foreign-stimulated grievances can play an important role not only in radicalizing individuals in the first place, but in prompting them to travel to conflict zones, where they may be exposed to further indoctrination and acquire training as well as experience in the use of terrorist tactics. They, in turn, subsequently may come back to their home countries battle-hardened and more determined than ever. That general trajectory, after all, was followed by thousands of Algerians, Egyptians and others who first traveled to Afghanistan during the 1980s, before returning home and playing a critical role in the launching of either full-fledged domestic insurgencies (as in Algeria and Egypt between 1992 and 1997) or more sporadic attacks. For some countries, in fact, the impact of the "pull" exercised by Afghanistan was still felt well beyond the 1990s. Thus, in his detailed examination of the biographies of those violent Saudi Islamic extremists responsible for the bombing campaign that began in the kingdom in May 2003, Hegghammer underscores that having traveled to Afghan training camps in the late 1990s was, by far, the decisive factor in the radicalization and the organization of those militants. In turn, in seeking to account for why these individuals traveled to Afghanistan in the first place, Hegghammer concludes that "by far the most common political motivation was outrage at the Chechen war. A large number of those who went to Afghanistan between 1999 and 2001 wanted, in fact, to fight in Chechnya, but were either unable to get there or unfit for fighting, so they ended up in Afghanistan instead. Similarly, some Saudis went to Kashmir in 1999 or 2000, only to be redirected to Afghanistan."<sup>12</sup> While conducting field research on violent Islamic extremists in Mauritania in May 2008, one of the authors of this document repeatedly was provided with evidence to suggest that a similar logic was at work thousands of miles away from Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the desire to take part in the jihad in Iraq often was the decisive driver behind the radicalization of some young Mauritians. Many of them ended up carrying out attacks in their country either in order to "build up their credentials," and thereby convince recruiters to send them to Iraq, or as a "consolation prize," after having been turned down for, or otherwise been unable to join in, the fight in Iraq.

### ***Addressing Foreign-Stimulated Grievances***

Development assistance can be of only limited use in addressing foreign-stimulated grievances. Almost by definition, the greater the role of foreign-stimulated grievances as opposed to homegrown ones, the more difficult it becomes to rely on country-specific development interventions in order to address the threat posed by violent extremist organizations. By the same token, the more U.S. policies on pan-Islamic or pan-Arab issues are viewed as fundamentally unjust, and the greater the moral outrage they elicit, the more difficult it becomes for development programming to counter the propensity of these policies to feed the pull exercised by violent extremist organizations and rhetoric among vulnerable populations.

Still, it also is easy to underestimate the many ways in which development assistance can mitigate the impact of foreign-stimulated grievances. It bears remembering, in this regard, that the boundary between foreign-stimulated and homegrown grievances should not be exaggerated: the extent to which foreign-stimulated grievances resonate, and the magnitude of the moral outrage and anger they evoke, often is a function, in part, of problems or dysfunctions that exist in the domestic arena. For instance, the more one feels victimized, discriminated against, or marginalized in one's daily life, the more vulnerable one may become to ideologies that emphasize global discrimination, victimization, and marginalization. Personal

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House), p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, pp. 39-60 (Winter 2006), p. 49.

experiences then can be viewed – and made sense of – as mere manifestations of far broader trends.<sup>13</sup> One’s anger and sense of injustice over the treatment of fellow Muslims in such places as Palestine, Iraq or Chechnya, and one’s feeling of mutual solidarity and obligations toward one’s co-religionists, easily may be magnified and given far more immediacy when one also perceives oneself and one’s immediate community to be a victim of the broader “war against Islam” or of global trends that lead to disempowerment and subjugation. Put differently, a global narrative of persecution or exclusion will have more traction if it seems to be supported by, or consistent with, personal experiences in the domestic arena. The perception of entire cultures and societies being relegated to a subordinate position in international affairs will tend to be stronger among individuals who feel left behind and reduced to spectators of trends set by others. It follows from this logic that development interventions that seek to reduce discrimination, social exclusion, and marginality at home, and that seek to empower individuals and communities alike, may be able to go a long way toward diminishing the traction from which global ideologies of violence benefit. Specifically, should the assessment reveal that foreign-stimulated grievances are high, the following guidelines and examples of possible development activities should be considered.

#### *Countering the Perception of an Existential Threat to Islam*

- 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 they will 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.
- In the planning and delivery of assistance, working with and through respected religious figures (at the national or local levels or both) may be advisable.
- Contributions to the restoration of Islamic cultural artifacts can send a powerful signal of respect for Islam.
- “Counter-narratives,” especially among youth, that provide alternatives to the “culture of victimization” and notions of “Islam under siege” which radical voices seek to cultivate, should be relayed and amplified. This objective should be pursued carefully, so as not to compromise the counter-narratives themselves. Indigenous voices that articulate a more confident and positive view of Islam’s role and prospects in the modern world should be encouraged discreetly and indirectly.

#### *Countering the Perception that the International System Discriminates Against Muslim Societies and Peoples*

- Support indigenous narratives that counter the idea of victimization and a more informed and nuanced discourse about how Muslim societies relate to the international system.
- Disseminate information about specific accomplishments by individuals Muslims, Muslim groups and organization, and Muslim countries on the international stage. These “success stories” should involve situations in which the relevant Muslim actors played according to the rules of the

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<sup>13</sup> See Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

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 a position of inferiority.

- Widespread poverty, marginality, and lack of economic opportunities (especially among young Muslims) feed resentment toward richer and more successful countries, fuel a perception of inferiority relative to them, and can be presented as proofs that the international system is biased against Muslim societies and peoples. In that regard, it may be possible to reduce the perception of global discrimination against Muslims through traditional USAID activities focused on spurring economic growth and entrepreneurship, on creating the regulatory environment that make both possible, on developing human capital, and on creating a more level playing field that rewards initiative and effort.

## **D. The Search for Economic Gain, or the Pull from Prior Involvement in Illegal Economic Activities**

The search for economic gain is rarely the primary – let alone the only – motivation behind individuals’ decision to join violent extremist groups. However, especially in poor countries, it can be part of the mix of factors that play a role both in prompting individuals to become affiliated with such groups, and, even more so, in keeping them there after they have joined. For instance, there is evidence that in Pakistan the salaries paid to militants have helped jihadi groups retain members.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in post-2003 Iraq, 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.<sup>15</sup> Over time, furthermore, economic considerations can become more pronounced in shaping the behavior of a violent extremist organization: the role played by ideological fervor, religious convictions, or deeply felt grievances may recede, while the search for economic gain assumes a more prominent part. When that transformation happens, involvement in crime, smuggling, or trafficking no longer represents merely a means for violent extremists to fund their activities; it, instead, becomes a driving force of its own behind their actions.

From a different angle, a study of the background and personal trajectories followed by some violent extremists (especially of the radical Islamist type) reveals that prior involvement in illicit activities sometimes predates – and, in several key respects, appears to pave the way for – subsequent involvement in violent extremist groups. In certain contexts, criminal or greed-motivated behavior seems to create a situation that makes individuals receptive to the rhetoric or agenda of violent extremist groups; alternatively, it may facilitate tactical alliances or marriages of convenience with them. In those instances, what began merely as a search for economic gain ends up operating as well as a bridge toward a subsequent involvement, direct or indirect, with violent extremism. The path from criminality to violent extremism, particularly of the radical Islamic type, may take four main forms:

- a. In some cases, turning to a particularly strict interpretation of Islam may be viewed as a way to atone for one’s past, to make up for a life of crime, and to put oneself solidly back on the straight path. It can be seen as a conduit to redemption, and as an effort to achieve spiritual salvation. Such considerations, for instance, appear to have played a key role for at least one of the masterminds of the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 285.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance Amit R. Paley, “Iraqis Joining Insurgency Less for Cause than for Cash,” *Washington Post*, November 20, 2007, p. A01.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance Andrea Elliott, “Where Boys Grow Up to Be Jihadis,” *The New York Times*, November 25, 2007.

- b. Paradoxically, embracing intolerant and extremist religious views also may be a means of justifying – to oneself as much to others – continued involvement in criminal activities. For instance, an 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 merely 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 represented an important source of the appeal of radical preachers to idle youth who were involved in drug dealing, yet were also eager to have their behavior legitimated by figures viewed as carrying moral authority. Similar situations have been shown to exist elsewhere.
- c. A third possible connection between criminality and violent extremism (and one that certainly is not limited to radical Islamic groups) may lie in the mutual interests that stem from operating in a common geographical space. For instance, violent extremists and those who control drug smuggling networks may find that they share certain critical interests, including avoiding detection by the security forces, and being able to circumvent state institutions more broadly. Over time, efforts to coordinate operations, and cooperation in the area of logistics, may give rise to ideological affinities as well. More generally, petty thieves, smugglers and racketeers on the one hand, and violent extremists on the other may be brought together by their common desire to see state capacity undermined – the former because a weak state gives them a relatively free rein to operate, and the latter not only for that same reason, but also because it becomes easier for them to de-legitimize a weak state that cannot deliver basic public goods the population.<sup>17</sup> One should note, finally, that the process by which criminals and violent extremists may develop ties to one another does not necessarily reflect intent by either party; instead, it simply may stem from the fact that once a particular path to circumvent the law or state institutions has been discovered by one of those two parties, it can be used by the other as well.
- d. Last but not least, criminality may lead to violent extremism through jail-induced radicalization. The experiences of both developed and developing countries suggest that jail frequently operate as vehicles for one or several of the following processes:
- Exposure to indoctrination and recruitment mechanisms;
  - A religious awakening which, in some cases, may lead to the adoption of violent extremist views regarding both religion and politics. The likelihood of this dynamic taking place increases when individuals who experience a rediscovery of their faith, or a deepening of their religious convictions, also are subjected to abuses, to the rhetoric of “spiritual leaders” already in prison, or to recruitment networks inside jails;
  - Much more effective organization, leadership structures and collective self-awareness and confidence by previously amorphous, small, disorganized and scattered groups.

It bears remembering, in this regard, that 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

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<sup>17</sup> However, the analyst should bear in mind that, in some cases, turf wars and struggles over the use of existing illicit networks may create discord, as opposed to cooperation and affinities, between traffickers and violent extremists. Furthermore, when those engaged in criminal activities benefit from the complicity of members of the security forces or the army, while violent extremists are being hunted down by the authorities (or vice versa), the former may hesitate to ally themselves with the latter. In essence, in a game that involves three actors – criminals, state officials, and violent extremists – any two of them may be reluctant to forge an alliance when doing so might lead one of those two actors to expose himself to the costs involved in antagonizing the third one.

(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. In Morocco, an examination of the personal journeys of many violent Islamic extremists also points to the importance of jails as vehicles for recruitment, radicalization, and organization. The starting point in this process was the large-scale security crackdown that followed the May 2003 Casablanca bombings, and which resulted in the jailing of the overwhelming majority of those arrested in three detention centers (in, respectively, Salé, Casablanca, and Kénitra), where, in each case, they were placed in the same pavilion.

The subjecting of prisoners to torture and other forms of significant human-rights violations appears to be the single most critical way in which time spent in jail may lead to an embrace of violent extremist agendas. It also seems to be conducive to a belief in the “purifying” nature of violence, as well as to the conviction that targeted and indiscriminate killings alike are justified forms of retribution for suffering previously endured. After all, both Sayyid Qutb, the father of modern jihadism, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda’s second-in-command and its most influential ideologue, spent years in Egyptian jails. The abuses to which they were subjected at that time are believed to have shaped their outlook in very significant ways, particularly in terms of convincing them of the fundamentally evil and cruel nature of the modern secular Arab state. Qutb, for instance, spent nine years in jail, and it was there that he fine-tuned all his key ideas. And, as Lawrence Wright reminds us, “stories [of his] suffering in prison have formed a kind of Passion Play for Islamic fundamentalists.”<sup>18</sup> Wright also notes that Montassir al-Zayyat, Zawahiri’s biographer, maintains that it was “the traumatic experience suffered by Zawahiri in prison [that] transformed him from being a relatively moderate force in al-Jihad into a violent and implacable extremist.”<sup>19</sup> When, after being brutally tortured in prison, Zawahiri was released in 1984, he displayed “an overwhelming desire for revenge, which was characteristic” of those who had been abused in prison.<sup>20</sup> Along similar lines, the previously mentioned analysis of the biographies of Saudi militants who joined “Al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP),” which claimed responsibility for the terrorist campaign that started in the kingdom in May 2003, notes that “a striking number of QAP militants ... had spent time in prison before 2003... Most of [them] said they were subjected to physical and/or psychological torture.”<sup>21</sup> The author adds that jihadist literature emanating from Saudi Arabia is replete with accounts of brutal and humiliating treatment in Saudi prisons.<sup>22</sup>

Over two decades ago already, in his seminar study of radical Islam, Emmanuel Sivan had observed that “the prison experience was to be, in effect, crucial in the making of most of the other New Radicals as well.”<sup>23</sup> The brutality that regimes displayed at the time toward members of the Muslim Brotherhood, their disregard for procedural rules, and the degradation to which incarcerated Islamists were subjected were all decisive in solidifying the militants’ belief that the existing sociopolitical order had to be destroyed, and that no compromise could be found with existing regimes. More recently, Lawrence Wright goes one step further when he proposes the following:

“One line of thinking proposes that America’s tragedy on September 11 was born in the prisons of Egypt. Human-rights advocates in Cairo argue that torture created an appetite for revenge, first in Sayyid Qutb and later in his acolytes, including al-Zawahiri. The

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<sup>18</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67. It did not help that Zawahiri had cracked under torture and betrayed his friends, and that he was forced to carry the guilt associated with that for the rest of his life.

<sup>21</sup> Hegghammer, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, endnote 42, p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 25-26.

main target of the prisoners' wrath was the secular Egyptian government, but a powerful current of anger was also directed toward the West, which they saw as an enabling force behind the repressive regime. They held the West responsible for corrupting and humiliating Islamic society. Indeed, the theme of humiliation, which is the essence of torture, is important to understanding the radical Islamists' rage. Egypt's prisons became a factory for producing militants whose need for retribution – they called it justice – was all-consuming.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Addressing Economic Motivations**

When, in a depressed economic environment, the lure of salaries and other economic benefits represents a significant part of the appeal of violent extremist groups to vulnerable populations, traditional development activities aimed at improving social and economic conditions among those populations are certainly appropriate. Particular efforts should be made to create jobs for those viewed as most susceptible, improve access to basic services linked to employment, expand micro grants, and facilitate self-sustaining growth in at-risk communities. Where smuggling, trafficking, money laundering and/or extortion rackets play a sizable role in supporting the activities of violent extremist groups, the usual battery of measure 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 more particularly affected). Depending on the situation at hand, the following may be especially called for: criminal justice reform; anti money laundering activities; improved policing (including 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.

Where and when there is evidence that, their rhetoric notwithstanding, violent extremists are motivated primarily by greed, one should engage in subtle outreach campaigns designed to enhance awareness of that situation among particularly vulnerable populations. Evidence suggesting that violent extremists 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 violent extremists 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 implemented by groups/sources with credibility; such sources may not include agencies linked to the USG.

Finally, when prisons seem to operate as conduits between criminality and violent extremism, prison reform should be a priority. Curbing mistreatment of prisoners and improving monitoring of prison conditions should receive particular attention. Especially where youth are involved, targeted mentoring, tutoring and life-skills programs should be put in place.

## **E. Individual-Specific Variables**

Among those factors that may push individuals toward violence, specific events (especially traumatic ones) in the lives of militants can trump the appeal of an ideology, religious fervor, the search for profit, or broader political, social and economic grievances. In particular, a desire for revenge can be decisive. There is evidence, for instance, that many Palestinians who carried out suicide attacks during the second intifada previously had been injured or arrested by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), and/or had a relative

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<sup>24</sup> Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

(often a brother) who had been killed by the IDF.<sup>25</sup> The example of Chechnya's "black widows" – female suicide bombers whose husbands had died fighting for Chechnya's independence – also comes to mind. Of course, such individual-specific variables hardly can be dissociated from the broader political context: in the case of the examples above, the greater the level of society-wide repression, and the more indiscriminate it is, the likelier it becomes that a significant number of individuals will be motivated by a desire for revenge. Still, because different individuals react differently to the same levels of overall repression, and because they are unlikely to be equally affected by that repression, individual-specific variables do matter and must be taken into account.

The example set by close relatives or friends also can play a significant part in the turn to extremism. For instance, the previously mentioned study of the background of Saudi militants involved in the wave of terrorist attacks that shook the kingdom in 2003-04 notes that "[many had gone] or tried to go to Afghanistan to follow in the footsteps of a brother or a friend who had gone before them. Others went because their brother had fallen in combat in Afghanistan and they wanted to die a martyr so that they could be with their dead brother in heaven."<sup>26</sup> Overall, the author notes, "the available sources point to the extraordinary importance of social networks in mobilizing people to go to Afghanistan. Many had a relative or a friend who had gone previously. Most people made the travel preparations as well as the journey itself with friends or relatives. Group dynamics such as peer pressure and intra-group affection seem to have been crucial in the process."<sup>27</sup>

Along similar lines, Andrea Elliott's essay on the Mezwak quarter in Tetouan (Morocco) showed that the frequency with which individuals from that neighborhood could be found traveling to become suicide bombers in Iraq, or being recruited into other wings of the global Salafi Jihadist network, was due, to a significant extent at least, to the demonstration effect or the precedent set by a brother, or by a former neighbor and friend.<sup>28</sup> It is, of course, difficult to program for such individual-specific variables, though when they appear to play a salient role the analysis ought to take note of them. Further, as suggested earlier, it certainly is possible to address the role that social bonds and group dynamics play in pulling individuals into violent extremist networks, and one may try to offset their potential impact through the creation of more positive vehicles for social integration.

Individual-specific attributes also matter in that, due to their background, outlook and previous experiences, certain types of persons may be more vulnerable to the rhetoric of violent extremist organizations. Distraught individuals looking for meaning, a sense of brotherhood and companionship, and a conceptual framework to make sense of a bewildering environment may be particularly at risk (even as one recognizes that there is no single "violent extremist personality," and that there is no evidence that violent extremists are more prone to display mental health problems than is true of other individuals). Yet again, however, it is difficult to separate such personal attributes from the environments that often promote them. Thus, for instance, widespread social exclusion, marginalization and dispossession may feed the search for empowerment through violence. By the same token, urban or peri-urban enclaves that are culturally and socio-economically alienated from mainstream society may encourage a propensity to lash out at a world the inhabitants of those enclaves cannot relate to, succeed in, or accept. Such observations underscore that the key to analyzing motivations is not to list them, but to separate the more

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<sup>25</sup> See for instance Robert J. Brym and Bader Araj, "Suicide Bombing as Strategy and Interaction: The Case of the Second Intifada," *Social Forces*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (June), pp. 1969-1986. One also may consult Sean Yom and Basel Saleh, "Palestinian Suicide Bombers: A Statistical Analysis." Unpublished paper, available at <http://www.ecaar.org/Newsletter/Nov04/saleh.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Hegghammer, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> Hegghammer, *op. cit.*, p. 50

<sup>28</sup> Elliott, *op. cit.*

significant from the less critical ones, and to understand the manner in which the former relate to, and feed into, one another.

## **F. Intimidation or Coercion**

Violent extremist groups may force individuals or communities to provide passive or active support or, in some cases even (e.g., the Tamil Tigers who began abducting young people when the number of volunteer fighters dropped and who extort money from Tamil businessmen). Coercion is a factor in areas where the government lacks substantial presence and cannot or will not provide security and protection to its citizens. This may be a bigger factor when extremist groups graduate to insurgencies and begin to control actual territory as with the Taliban in Afghanistan or Pakistan. In the case of Pakistan's Tribal Agencies, traditional tribal elders are being assassinated, tribal councils have been attacked and thousands have migrated to safer areas of the country to escape extremist pressure.

Development assistance programs may not be able to significantly affect the application or effectiveness of coercive tactics by militants. In some cases, strengthening the police to provide better security may provide a partial solution but in most cases, the police will be too incompetent and corrupt to be of much value. Policing is in any case a different business than fighting an insurgency.

## STEP 3: UNDERSTANDING RECRUITMENT

Since hindering or disrupting recruitment represents a critical counter extremism objective, it is essential to pinpoint those factors that may be conducive to it, and to understand better as well the dynamics and mechanisms that underpin it. Accordingly, Step Three zeroes in on the conditions that shape the ability of violent extremist organizations to recruit, and on the processes according to which such recruitment takes place. In order to facilitate the analysis, it is suggested that the assessment team differentiate between three sets of variables:

- a. Factors that create a permissive environment – i.e., features of the overall political, social and economic context that may facilitate recruitment.
- b. Recruitment processes and agents.
- c. Recruitment spaces.

### A. Permissiveness of the Environment

In trying to understand recruitment,<sup>29</sup> it is important first to determine the extent to which, and the ways in which, the overall political, social and economic context may be conducive to it. For illustrative purposes and the sake of parsimony, it is suggested here that five types of contextual factors have a particularly high propensity to facilitate recruitment by violent extremist organizations. These factors by no means represent an exhaustive list – the assessment team may well determine that other, more critical forces are at work – but the literature and empirical evidence regarding violent extremism suggest that they often play a decisive role:

1. The presence of safe havens,<sup>30</sup> or the existence of ungoverned or poorly governed spaces.
2. The existence of protracted local conflicts.
3. Endemic Corruption.
4. High levels of social exclusion and marginalization.
5. A lack of legal avenues for expressing political grievances and for participating in political processes more generally.
6. Government complicity or complacency in the face of extremist group recruitment (as in Pakistan).

Factors 3 through 5 also were discussed from a different angle in Step Two. However, they are examined here from the perspective of their ability to facilitate recruitment, which, as the introduction to this

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<sup>29</sup> In this document, recruitment is defined as the process by which individuals formally or informally join a group, organization or social movement engaged in violence.

<sup>30</sup> In this document, a safe haven refers to an area in which illicit actors (e.g., narcotics or arms traffickers, insurgents, or terrorist organizations) are present. By contrast, “ungoverned” or “poorly governed” spaces refer to areas in which the presence of the state is very limited and/or where state institutions are particularly ineffectual. Such areas, therefore, have the potential to evolve into safe havens, but have not yet become so (or, at the very least, evidence that they have made that transition is missing).

framework underscored, is different from the extent to which they may represent a direct grievance or motivation for those who decide to join. Of course, it may well be that the same factor operates as both a critical grievance and a variable that significantly facilitates recruitment. In that case, it becomes even more essential that programming address that factor.

### **Safe Havens and Poorly Governed or Ungoverned Spaces**

**1.** Ungoverned or poorly governed spaces may facilitate recruitment in one or several of the following ways, and the assessment team should determine which, if any, apply to the situation at hand:

- a. Ungoverned or poorly governed spaces (e.g., Pakistan's Tribal Agencies) may enable violent extremists to establish sanctuaries or safe havens.
- b. Short of leading to the establishment of sanctuaries, they may provide violent extremists with room within which they can operate more easily. While violent extremist organizations have shown that they can operate in countries in which the quality of governance is high or relatively high (e.g., UK, Spain), their operations and freedom to maneuver in those countries are significantly complicated by effective detection and monitoring mechanisms. That is not the case in countries where the quality of governance and the effectiveness of government institutions are low.
- c. Finally, poorly governed spaces characterized by grossly inadequate governance may create passive or active support for violent extremists among communities that feel ignored by the government. While there is only limited and scattered empirical evidence to that effect, the feeling of being abandoned by the authorities may create community support for violent extremists, or at the very least it may be conducive to a readiness by the communities involved to let those extremists operate in their midst (or to feel that they are unable to risk trying to prevent their operation).

**2.** 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 violent extremist groups to operate, include the following:

- a. Peri-urban slums
- b. Border regions
- c. Places mired in violent conflict and/or criminality
- d. Remote, isolated, or desert regions with low population density

**3.** In light of the above, it is important that the assessment team be able to determine the following:

- a. Are there specific regions in the country, or types of areas, that constitute safe havens? If so, which ones, where are they located, what are their main features, and what is known about violent organizations active in them?
- b. Are there specific regions of the country, or types of areas, in which the state's presence is particularly weak, and/or governance especially poor, and where there is evidence that this situation facilitates recruitment by violent extremist organizations, or creates a potential for them to establish safe havens? Which aspects of state performance are particularly deficient in those geographic areas?

- Ability to prevent illicit actors from operating without detection.
- Willingness to avoid predation.
- Ability to maintain public order, deliver security, and provide judicial services for the area's inhabitants.
- Ability to create economic conditions conducive to job creation, especially among youth.
- Ability to provide vital services in such areas as education (particularly when radical groups gain credibility by filling the gap in services.).

4. For programmatic purposes, it is important as well that the team be able to establish whether the existence of safe havens or poorly governed spaces is due primarily to low state capacity (e.g., lack of resources and/or personnel), a lack of political will on the part of some senior officials, or both. Finally, particular attention should be paid to the state's ability to deny violent extremist organizations access to critical conflict resources, especially weapons, funding (from both domestic and foreign sources), manpower, and control of lucrative economic activities (e.g., through smuggling networks or money laundering operations).

5. Where the existence of safe havens or poorly governed spaces provide violent extremist organizations with significant opportunities for recruitment, programming options include the following:

- a. Strengthen the presence and capacity of government institutions in those areas, especially with regard to their ability to deliver basic services and reach out to particularly vulnerable populations.
- b. Address community grievances through both state institutions and improved community-based governance mechanisms.
- c. If and when an enhanced government presence is difficult to achieve, or if state institutions show little potential for improvement in their capacity to deliver critical services, strengthen civil-society organizations that can do so and more generally can be relied upon to reduce the ability of violent extremists to establish a foothold among at-risk populations.
- d. Establish or develop community policing to isolate violent extremists and elicit the support of the population in tracking them down and monitoring their activities.
- e. Encourage joint, coordinated action between the public, private and NGO sectors in order to address community development issues, particularly in such areas as youth employment, vocational training, and the delivery of social services.

### **Protracted Local Conflicts**

1. Lingering inter-group struggles, especially those with pronounced sectarian, ethnic or tribal dimensions, and secessionist or nationalist movements fueled by longstanding discrimination or oppression, can create significant recruiting opportunities for violent extremist organizations. These organizations may decide that they are well positioned to take advantage from the rivalries, chaos or lack of functioning state that debilitating internal struggles present in order to expand their support base, including by portraying themselves as the champions of one of the parties involved. In the past fifteen years, for instance, transnational terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda have made a deliberate attempt to co-opt local conflicts and weave local and transnational agendas together. Though their efforts failed in Bosnia, Aceh, and other conflict zones, they sometimes met with significant success, at least for a period of time. In Iraq, al-Qaeda was able to graft itself onto an insurgency initially led by former Baathists, military officers, and some tribal leaders. In Chechnya, groups initially 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. Conversely, one side in a power struggle may seek to link up with transnational terrorist organizations, whether to add legitimacy and moral purpose to its cause, to secure access to the financial and other forms of support that transnational terrorist organizations can provide (e.g., weapons, logistical assistance, manpower, intelligence, or control of valuable communication or transportation facilities), or both.

**2.** Where significant local conflicts that might be coopted by violent extremists are present, the team should begin by developing a better understanding of where these conflicts unfold, the forces they pit against each other, and what they are about. It then should investigate the ways in which they may be enhancing the capacity of violent extremist organizations to recruit, hijack the agenda and build community support:

- a. Are these conflicts eroding the state's capacity to govern, and/or its ability to limit and monitor the activities of violent extremist organizations?
- b. Are they enabling violent extremists to align themselves with, and secure the goodwill of, one of the parties involved? If so, how successful are violent extremists in this effort, what sort of support are they providing, and what is the overall impact of their engagement?
- c. Are they prompting one of the groups involved to affiliate itself (loosely or tightly) with violent extremist organizations, whether to build legitimacy for itself, to gain access to conflict resources, or both? If so, which party and which local conflict are involved, and how successful is the attempt at forging an alliance?

**3.** Where there is evidence that local conflicts facilitate recruitment by violent extremist organizations, relevant programming may include:

**a.** Efforts, public and private, to underscore the differences in goals, philosophies, and interests between violent extremists and the local groups or organizations with which these extremists are trying to forge an alliance. Vulnerable populations should be made aware that violent extremists do not have their interests to heart, that they do not seek to bring a resolution of existing conflicts in a way that might benefit aggrieved groups, and that they, instead, merely are seeking to harness local struggles for their own purposes. Attempts to drive a wedge between violent extremists and the groups that they are seeking to co-opt may entail highlighting the costs imposed on local communities by the activities of violent extremists, and the lack of concrete, tangible assistance these extremists actually provide to the groups and communities whose cause they rhetorically embrace.

**b.** Efforts to address the core grievances of strongly aggrieved groups, so as to diminish the likelihood that these grievances can become hitched to the bandwagon of violent extremist organizations. Relevant programs comprise those that aim to reduce discrimination in hiring, employment, and access to basic services; that level the political playing field among groups and communities; and that, more generally, improve life opportunities for groups that may feel the victims of longstanding inequities or prejudice.

**c.** Conflict resolution and mediation efforts, including through the strengthening of relevant arenas and mechanism.

**d.** Encouraging inter-faith dialogue, conflict resolution education, and conflict prevention mechanisms, particularly among at-risk youth.

- e. Support ad hoc projects that involve collaborative efforts among groups that have a history of contentious relationships with each other.
- f. Establishing or developing civic education programs that promote tolerance, as well as an inclination and capacity to resolve disputes peacefully. Rely on civil society and the media to promote the values of compromise and civility.
- g. Legal aid and advocacy support for marginalized communities.
- h. Support for more equitable and effective power-sharing arrangements, especially those that would provide vulnerable youth with greater influence and recognition.
- i. Help reframe conflicts which protagonists have cast as all-encompassing, intractable struggles (over religion, cultural identity or existential issues) into resolvable contests over political and economic opportunities. Pursuit of this objective may entail support for moderate, pragmatic voices on both sides of the struggle involved.
- j. Strengthen the state’s capacity to monitor and interrupt the flow of conflict resources to protagonists;
- k. Support demobilization and reintegration programs (where relevant).

### **Endemic Corruption**

As discussed earlier, short of operating as an explicit grievance that motivates individuals to join violent extremist groups, endemic corruption may facilitate recruitment efforts by such groups as well as their overall operations. In particular, the ease with which local officials can be bribed may enable these groups to establish sanctuaries, or to engage in illicit activities (smuggling, trafficking) 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. Development interventions that may address these problems are similar to those outlined under the corruption heading (Driver 4) in Step One.

### **Social Exclusion and Marginalization**

As discussed in Step Two, social exclusion can be a source of explicit grievances by marginalized individuals angered at their being kept on the fringes of mainstream society. But less directly, it also can facilitate recruitment by violent extremist organizations, primarily through the idleness and boredom it generates. For one, youth with too much time on their hands are likely to be far more vulnerable to the lure of violent extremist ideologues and organizations. They also are more prone to become involved in illicit activities (smuggling, trafficking, extortion, kidnapping, and theft) that either are directly tied to violent extremist networks, or may pave the way for entry into them. Idleness also may fuel a search for adventure, fame, and/or “hero” status (with the same potential results as above). Finally, it may make youth far more receptive to the salaries and other material benefits which violent organizations may be able to provide.

Development interventions suited to countering social exclusion’s contributions to recruitment are similar to those outlined under Driver 1 in Step One. Special attention should be paid to establishing or strengthening organizations (e.g., youth clubs, sports leagues) and activities (e.g., summer camps, youth 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. To the extent that one core objective is to diminish the capacity of pre-existing social networks to pull friends, relatives, or neighbors into violent

organizations, support may be provided for moderate social networks that encourage engagement with the broader society, community and polity. Civic initiatives with a demonstrated capacity to draw in young people, particularly at-risk ones, and to link them to decision-makers, should be encouraged as well.

### **Lack of Legal Avenues for the Expression of Political Demands and Grievances**

Aggrieved individuals who operate in an environment in which legal vehicles and arenas for the expression of grievances are not readily available are more likely than others to be drawn into violent extremist organizations. They may not express or even perceive the lack of such avenues as a specific “grievance,” but they are more liable to join violent organizations to pursue their interests and articulate their demands if legal avenues to that effect are either missing or seriously flawed.

With this in mind, it is important for the assessment team to reflect on the extent to which, in the country being analyzed, it is possible for the legal opposition to influence policy-making by operating within the existing “rules of the game” (as set by the constitution, as well as by the laws that regulate political parties, elections, associations, public gatherings, and the media). If that is generally the case, the contribution of this variable to recruitment presumably is limited. If not, it behooves the team to determine those policy areas for which the ability of at-risk populations to influence policy-making is particularly limited, and to identify changes that would help remedy this situation while enhancing autonomous participation in political processes.<sup>31</sup> Rules that make it difficult for the legal opposition to affect decision-making in a meaningful way, that undermine the capacity of moderate opposition groups to press their demands by working within the system or that create a severely imbalanced political field between incumbents and challengers, should be altered. This may necessitate pinpointing relevant clauses in the constitution and the laws that govern elections, political parties, associations, public gatherings, and the media. Subsequently, efforts should take place to support coalitions ready to press for needed changes. These coalitions should involve both “softliners” within the state apparatus and reformers in society at large.

Having determined which of the previous (or other relevant) conditions play a significant role in facilitating recruitment, and having prioritized them according to their relative contributions, the team should turn its attention to other factors and processes that shed light on recruitment.

### **Government complicity or complacency**

Government complicity, inattention or weakness can ease recruitment by allowing extremist groups to recruit actively and openly. Ironically, while government repression may create grievances which feed extremism, repression can also be an effective short term tactic to limit recruitment, as in Egypt.

## **B. Recruitment Processes and Agents**

1. Since preventing or disrupting recruitment is a primary counter-extremism objective, the assessment team should determine whether recruitment is primarily a “top-down” or “bottom-up” affair. In other words, are individuals “recruited,” whether through formal or informal mechanisms, or do they “recruit themselves” by volunteering into the cause or the organization? How organized, systematically conducted, and centrally planned is recruitment?

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<sup>31</sup> “Autonomous” is understood here as independent from government control or manipulation.

a. **“Top-down” recruitment** refers to a process by which individuals already affiliated with a violent extremist organization enlist others into it. The extent to which such recruitment is conducted in a systematic and organized manner varies from case to case; at one end of the continuum, top-down recruitment is carried out by individuals (“recruiters”) who specifically are entrusted with this function, and who themselves operate within a specialized unit charged with this task. Some of them may scout locations known to constitute particularly fertile grounds for recruitment, in an effort to identify individuals who may be particularly vulnerable to violent extremist narratives. Where top-down recruitment is at work, it is assumed that individuals typically need at least some “convincing” or “nudging” before they join. When that is the case, the assessment team should seek to develop a better understanding of the following issues:

- Who are the recruiters? Is there a standard “recruiter profile”?
- Where are recruiters particularly active (see also section below on “recruiting spaces”)?
- How openly, as opposed to clandestinely, do they operate? Do the authorities or the surrounding society display a significant degree of complicity or complacency toward their activities? If so, why, and how might the intensity of that phenomenon be reduced?
- Which methods do they use for recruitment? How do they make contact and forge bonds with potential recruits? Which aspects of the environment facilitate their task? What might be done to reduce the environment’s permissiveness?
- Which arguments or narratives do they invoke, and which needs of potential members do they target? Do certain causes or events (e.g., the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the outbreak of the second intifada, or the American occupation of Iraq) significantly facilitate their task?

b. **“Bottom-up” recruitment**, by contrast, refers to a process by which individuals are mostly “self-enlisted” – i.e., they join (physically or virtually) a violent extremist organization or movement with, at the most, only limited direct physical intervention or deliberate organized efforts by others. They may end up carrying out attacks on their own, or with a handful of like-minded peers, but they will do so with only minimal specific guidance from more organized components of the organization or movement with which they have affiliated themselves. The primary ways in which they relate to that organization or movement is virtually (via the internet) or/and through a “gatekeeper,” to whom they have reached out on their own initiative.<sup>32</sup>

Bottom-up recruitment may take several forms. A single individual may reach out to a gatekeeper, or he/she may go operational directly, invoking the name of the broader movement to justify or give meaning to his/her actions. Alternatively, individuals bound together through personal relationships (based on friendship, tribal or family ties, occupation, or neighborhood-based solidarities, for instance) may come together, form a (more or less formally organized) cell, and either strike on their own or make contact with a better organized, broader network (national or transnational).<sup>33</sup> In this latter scenario

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<sup>32</sup> While a “gatekeeper” also may be found in “top-down” recruitment, he/she usually plays a far more proactive role. Instead of being “reached out to,” he/she reaches out to potential recruits, and is instrumental in their eventual joining.

<sup>33</sup> That, for instance, was the general pattern for al-Qaeda before 9/11, and it remains the case of that organization to a significant extent until today. Contrary to much conventional wisdom, al-Qaeda never invested much effort into a comprehensive recruitment drive. It, instead, waited until individuals or groups came to it, and at that point it would select those it felt most qualified to play a leading role in the global jihad. Prior to 9/11, much of that selection process took place in al-Qaeda’s training camps in Afghanistan. From there, those handpicked by the leadership of the organization would be dispatched to the other “fields of the jihad.” See Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

again, the role of a gatekeeper is critical. Without him, the cell will become increasingly isolated from the broader movement – both in terms of its outlook and with regard to the resources and expertise it can muster; in particular, it will lack access to the technical know-how and other forms of logistical support which that movement can provide. As a result, attacks are likely to be less carefully planned and deadly, and they may display the “amateurish” features which, for instance, have characterized many strikes carried out by “al-Qaeda wannabees” since 2001. Operatives directly connected to transnational networks also may be instrumental in providing encouragement at key junctures, in sustaining motivation, and in vindicating or reinforcing beliefs. They serve partly as inspirational figures and mentors, and partly as logistical facilitators. For many years, veterans of the war in Afghanistan performed such functions for al-Qaeda.

**2.** The potential role of foreign influences in recruitment also needs to be investigated systematically. The assessment team should determine how significant these influences are, and, if relevant, the specific contributions they make to recruitment. The contributions in question may include providing one or several of the following:

- a. Inspirational figures or “heroes” that galvanize individuals into joining.
- b. “Causes célèbres” (Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan) that perform the same function as above.
- c. Financial incentives that facilitate recruitment.
- d. Logistical facilities.

## **C. Recruitment Spaces**

Having examined the extent to which, and the ways in which, the overall context creates an environment that is conducive to recruitment, and having delved into recruitment processes, the assessment team should have accumulated significant information about “recruitment spaces” (i.e., where recruitment takes place) as well. For programming purposes, it is useful to summarize what is known about those spaces, since they may be where interventions need to occur, or they may need to be affected by the interventions involved, if recruitment is to be disrupted. Relevant questions, here, include:

- 1.** How much of the overall recruitment takes place domestically as opposed to overseas? What is the role of foreign recruits or fighters in the violence which the country experiences? How can the flow of those fighters and recruits be stemmed? How heavy is the traffic of violent extremist ideas and persons with foreign-based entities? Is there evidence that indigenous extremists are being indoctrinated or trained abroad, before they return to their home country? If so, how can that process be interrupted or disrupted?
- 2.** What are the respective roles of virtual as opposed to face-to-face, physical contacts in recruitment?
- 3.** Do particular institutions, arenas or venues operate as “pipelines” for recruitment into violent extremist organizations? If so, which ones, and which of their features enable them to play that role?<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Relevant institutions may include universities, or specific departments within them; schools; madrasas; mosques; youth groups and clubs; and prisons. Venues or arenas may include lectures and social occasions, informal study groups and gatherings, summer camps, and street-based activities.

4. Which particular types of activities (e.g., ideological indoctrination, military training, or the dispatching of recruits to flashpoints in and outside the country) take place within the institutions, or through the venues, that operate as recruiting grounds?

5. Do particular regions or types of areas produce a disproportionately large number of recruits? If that is the case, is it because of problems or characteristics inherent to those regions or areas,<sup>35</sup> or is it because recruitment mechanisms and agents are particularly active and/or effective in them? In both cases, which types of interventions might be particularly suited to disrupting recruitment in those regions or areas?

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<sup>35</sup> For instance, they may be neglected or disadvantaged zones, harbor longstanding historical grievances, and/or feature a disproportionately high percentage of individuals who are attracted to the ideology of violent extremist organizations, or tied to their leaders.

## STEP 4: UNDERSTANDING EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION

1. As the introduction noted, this document pays only limited attention to factors directly related to the manner in which violent extremist groups organize themselves. The rationale for doing so is twofold: such organizational variables are far less amenable to development interventions than those examined thus far, and this framework is aimed primarily at development practitioners. Still, and as was observed in the introduction as well, this framework also is intended to be useful to others responsible for the design and implementation of counter-extremism programs and activities. Since it is important for anyone involved in such programming) to proceed with the benefit of some understanding of the manner in which a violent extremist organization is structured, Step Four draws attention to some of the key organizational variables that should receive some systematic attention by the assessment team.

2. From an organizational perspective, a key issue consists of the manner in which cells relate to each other as well as to the broader movement with which they are affiliated, as well as the level of coordination among those cells. Do these cells operate as part of an organization that is relatively centralized and hierarchically oriented, with an identifiable chain of command? Or do they, instead, enjoy a significant degree of autonomy relative to each other, within what amounts to little more than an amorphous, fluid social movement, that is deprived of genuine command structures, and in which individuals and cells alike are brought together mostly by their shared adherence to a similar ideology or vision, and/or by the example set by an inspirational figure? At one end of the spectrum, therefore, one is confronted with a genuine organization made up of tightly connected units which, to a significant extent at least, implement a strategy set by the leadership. At the other end of that same spectrum, one is faced with what is, at best, a loose confederation of small cells or units, in which leaders are little more than symbolic figures that “galvanize the troops” by setting a powerful example and articulating a general philosophy. In this latter scenario, cells even may come together to accomplish a particular task, and then dissolve or scatter once it has been accomplished, in a pattern usually described as “swarming.”<sup>36</sup>

3. To illustrate the fundamental differences between the two ideal-types outlined above, Jessica Stern contrasts “commander-cadre organizations” (CCOs) and “virtual networks” (VNs).<sup>37</sup> She describes the prototypical CCO (e.g., al-Qaeda before 9/11) as follows:

- It has headquarters, leaders, a command structure, and training facilities.
- It is hierarchically organized, and made up of inter-connected and inter-dependent units, among which there is a division of labor.
- Its members are trained, and provided with housing and salaries. (In many cases, the organization will provide for their families if they die for the cause.)
- Power and decision-making are concentrated.
- In addition to providing inspiration, the leader of the organization sets its overall strategy, presides over its management, and issues orders and directives.

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<sup>36</sup> Jessica Stern describes swarming as “... widely dispersed but networked units converging on their targets from multiple directions. Networks must be able to coalesce rapidly and stealthily on the target and then disperse. But they must be ready to recombine for a new pulse almost immediately.” Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 151.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 141-145.

By contrast, Stern portrays a VN as follows:

- It has no headquarters.
- Groups are only loosely affiliated with the overall network, which lacks clear command systems. Communications take place primarily through the internet, and there is no central control over the many sources of information and guidance available to members.
- The leader's role is primarily inspirational.
- Power and decision-making are widely distributed. Operations tend to take place with little advanced planning or coordination among cells.
- The network is held together, first and foremost, by the fact that cells share a broadly similar vision or worldview, and they agree on the general objectives to be achieved. However, unlike in a CCO, disagreements over strategy and tactics can create a significant amount of tension among units within the network.

Hybrid entities, which display features of both CCOs and VNs, also can be found. A hybrid entity (an example of which is al-Qaeda after the US strike on Afghanistan in the Autumn and Winter of 2001) may consist of a CCO, around which gravitates a much broader social movement made up of cells loosely connected to each other and to the CCO itself. The CCO may operate both on its own and as a source of inspiration and ad-hoc logistical support for the cells and freelancers associated with the VN component of the hybrid entity. These cells and freelancers may be driven in part by local agendas, and in part by the transnational one with which the CCO may be identified.

In a hybrid entity, the command and control systems of the CCO exercise only limited authority over the various VN-affiliated cells. As far as these cells are concerned, the CCO leader's role is primarily one of inspiration – though, in some cases, cells affiliated with the VN will wait for, and act on, that leader's orders and directives. Changing political circumstances will shape the extent to which there is congruence, complementarity, or a significant disconnect between the CCO's agenda and the multiple agendas of the various cells affiliated with the VN; in some cases, the local dynamics that determine the behavior of the various cells affiliated with the VN will allow a CCO's potentially more transnational agenda to be grafted onto local struggles. In other instances, the predominantly local goals of the VN and the transnational orientation of the CCO (or vice versa) may be significantly at odds with each other.

**4.** Determining whether the violent extremist organization which one is analyzing approximates the model of a CCO, a VN, or a hybrid entity is important because the conclusions of that evaluation should affect the opportunities and challenges with which one is confronted from a counter extremism perspective. To understand why that is the case, it is useful to reflect on the respective strengths and weaknesses of each type.<sup>38</sup>

**a.** A CCO's main asset is its overall capacity, understood as the ability to carry out massive and logistically complicated attacks (such as those perpetrated on 9/11) that require cooperation among several units, as well as the harnessing of skilled operatives who benefit from significant support from centralized command systems. A CCO can do so precisely because of its complex organization and hierarchical structure, as well as the vast resources often at its disposal. Such attributes permit it to benefit from the advantages associated with the division of labor, organizational discipline, and coordination among multiple entities, each of which is endowed with significant capabilities.

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<sup>38</sup> The following discussion relies on Stern, *op. cit.*

On the other hand, a CCO is also less “resilient,” with resilience being understood as the ability to withstand the loss of its leader, or the disruption or infiltration of one of its units. To the extent that a CCO relies on the division of labor and collaboration among inter-connected and inter-dependent units, if one of those units is disrupted or penetrated by hostile forces, the entire organization, and its ability to strike, is endangered. When individuals within an organization know one another, their respective places in the organization, and where/how each of them can be contacted, the arrest of one member makes it easier to track down and apprehend others. Furthermore, to the extent that the operations and very survival of a CCO are highly dependent on the leader, the incapacitation of the latter (his death or arrest, for instance) may deal a fatal blow to the entire organization. In other words, the very attributes that account for the “high capacity” of CCOs are also those that make them less resilient.

**b.** By contrast, precisely because it is far less dependent on direct supervision and management by a leader, and because it entails neither close coordination nor a high degree of mutual reliance among various units, a VN is far more resilient to penetration or disruption by outside forces, and to the loss of its leader. Since units do not necessarily know or interact with each other, the arrest of an operative may not facilitate the apprehension of others. On the other hand, while those features enhance resilience, they also diminish capacity. The high level of redundancy among various units, the absence of a division of labor, and the inability to draw on the logistical support provided by headquarters and other elements in the organization all hinder a VN’s ability to plan and implement large-scale, complicated attacks.

**c.** From a counter-extremism perspective, being faced with a hybrid organization is the most problematic scenario. That is the case because such an organization combines the strengths of a CCO and a VN, while minimizing the weaknesses associated with both. For instance, when a hybrid organization consists of a core CCO around which a constellation of loosely connected cells gravitates, the organization will benefit from the advantages of a CCO, but the disruption of the latter’s operations will have only a minimal impact on the hybrid entity, since the cells affiliated with the VN part of that entity are largely self-supportive and will remain able to carry attacks independently.

**5.** Among the other organization-specific issues that may deserve some attention, those that relate to conditioning, fund-raising and external linkages should be noted. With regard to the former, relevant questions include:

- How do individuals within the organization or movement maintain commitment to the cause?
- Are individuals “self-conditioned,” conditioned by the intervention of others, or through group dynamics processes? What role do leaders play in conditioning (e.g., do they deliberately seek to exacerbate and harness feelings of humiliation, outrage, or victimhood)?
- Are certain techniques or mechanisms systematically used to maintain commitment and sustain membership? If so, which ones? (Options include: limiting interactions with the outside world; restricting the flow of information into the group; forcing members to take part in communal tasks or regular meetings; and encouraging individuals to monitor, and report on, each other).

Insofar as fund-raising is concerned, the assessment team should seek to pinpoint the primary channels through which extremist organizations raise money. Options include:

- Soliciting donations on the Internet
- Soliciting donations from or in particular institutions (e.g., houses of worship)

- Raising funds from wealthy diasporas
- Raising funds from sympathetic foreign governments or wealthy individuals overseas.
- Using NGOs and charities as “front” for fundraising operations.
- Links to illicit businesses, organized crime, and/or smuggling networks.
- Engaging in kidnappings and/or extortion.

To the extent that aspects of programming may aim at disrupting fund-raising capabilities, it is important that the origins and conduits for those capabilities be identified. For the same reason, the nature and scope of external linkages should be investigated systematically. Relevant questions, here, include:

- Which role do gatekeepers and the internet play in sustaining international connections?
- In which respects do international connections matter most (e.g., fundraising, access to technological expertise, provision of information)?
- How intertwined are the organizations being investigated with organizations and individuals in other countries? Do they display links to terrorist or violent extremists organizations of another nature (akin, for instance, to IRA ties to radical Palestinian organizations during the 1970s)?

**6.** Affecting extremist group organization and operation will be the response of the government to these groups. Some governments may be supportive and complicit in extremist activity, perhaps most usually when home-grown groups are exporting violence or resources for violence to other countries, particularly if it fits well with the government’s own agenda (one case in point might be support for Pakistani extremist groups operating in Kashmir). Others strive to capture and punish such groups and suspected supporters severely; innocents may get caught in the government net, leading to new converts and revenge as a motivation (discussed in Step 2) for participating in extremist activity. Other government will take legal action against extremist groups but will calibrate their response more carefully, lest they exacerbate the very problem they are trying to diminish. Analysts should assess in the first instance how a given government understands the threat (the analysis of government officials and ruling elites may be very different from that of a USAID assessment team) and then secondarily how it has responded to the threat over time. Both the interpretation and response not only affect directly the organization and operation of such groups but also the possibilities for any USG involvement and response, including on the development assistance side.

- Does the government see violent extremist groups as a threat to its own power or as a tool to advance its interests?
- Does the government covertly or openly provide resources or support to extremist groups or do factions of the government not fully under the control of leaders do so? What forms of support are provided and for what reasons? Is the government or ruling elite divided on the issue?
- The government may contribute to shaping public opinion relative to extremist groups and activity and may also be somewhat constrained by public opinion (particularly in more democratic environments). What views do government leaders and media propagate? Do these views resonate with the public?
- If the government tries to impede, constrain or stop extremist groups from organizing and operating, how effective is it? If it is ineffective, what constrains it (corruption, divided opinions

in the leadership, rogue elements, weakness and lack of capacity in key institutions such as the police and judiciary, resources, limited presence, etc.)?

- How do the government's views and actions affect development assistance programming options and priorities?

## STEP 5: TRENDS IN THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE THREAT

Prior to settling on a programmatic response, analysts should determine the patterns at work over the last several years and then assess the following:

- The overall direction of change (the problem is becoming more or less severe)
- The rate of change (escalating sharply, growing slowly, stable, disappearing gradually, etc.)
- Changes in the type of extremist activity and violence.
- Changes in population and geographic coverage affected by or susceptible to the extremist threat.

Relevant questions include:

- Is the threat posed by violent extremist organizations growing or declining, and, if so, where, why, and in which respects? Is extremist activity escalating rapidly, extending to more parts of the country than previously? What factors seem involved in such escalation?
- Is there evidence of changes in the overall profile of recruits? Are certain populations becoming more vulnerable? If so, which ones, and why? How should this situation affect programming?
- Are certain grievances or motivations becoming more salient (or, conversely, are some becoming less so), and, if so, which ones? Does this situation significantly affect the programmatic implications drawn from Step Two, and, if so, how?
- Is there a marked deterioration in the quality of governance or in the projection of government power into particular regions? Has the government's response to extremist organizations and activities changed or is it changing?
- What is the likely trend line for significant local conflicts?
- Is there evidence of notable changes in the nature of permissive conditions, in recruitment processes, or in the manner in which extremist groups are organized, and how might those changes impact on the nature of relevant programming?

If the threat is escalating, and escalating rapidly, it becomes very important to determine which of those elements discussed in Steps One through Four are most responsible for the rate of change. Those particular elements would form key factors that should be addressed in any programmatic response. Once the threat reaches insurgency or near insurgency proportions, it becomes very difficult to address. Alternately, if the threat is low and stable (or even declining), can we safely project that it is likely to remain so, permitting scarce resources to be spent elsewhere? If the risk is declining, can we determine why that is the case, in order to support or shore up those factors that seem most responsible (or apply the lesson elsewhere)?

## STEP 6: PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

Throughout this framework, in each of the steps, suggestions have been made concerning programmatic responses that might mitigate key factors contributing to the threat or actuality of violent extremism.

While we will discuss those ideas again in this section, a few preliminary points are in order:

- Budget realities are likely to require careful prioritizing and targeting of interventions. Yet the nature of the phenomenon, the broad populations that might be at risk, and the variety of needed responses might make it very difficult to prioritize as well as to reach any critical mass that will substantially dampen risk. There may be trade-offs between the breadth of interventions that are required and the depth of any single intervention/program.
- Many priority interventions may be oriented toward longer-term structural changes in governance (e.g., improving the rule of law, diminishing corruption) that produce little visible impact in the short run. It is possible of course that even modest improvements will be seen by citizens in a hopeful light, and that these improvements will then have some impact in diminishing extremism risk, but programmers in the counter extremism arena must explicitly consider (and seek some balance between) shorter term and longer term gains. Even if not ultimately sustainable or scalable (the two “Holy Cows” of development assistance), interventions may be merited if they have a quick impact on risk.
- Communications strategies that advertise gains or progress, particularly in addressing key grievances of susceptible populations, are particularly important in the counter-extremism arena. If progress is made in improving access to justice for example, but the at-risk population does not know it, no counter extremism benefit will have been secured. It is equally important to monitor and attempt to counter communications from extremists that relate to key objectives/programs.
- Other USG entities or donors may be strongly engaged in supporting interdiction in countries where the host government is reasonably opposed to extremism. If they are not so engaged or have few resources at their disposal, development assistance activities that address interdiction, such as money laundering, banking regulations, and border and customs control, may be important if those factors are critical in creating risk.
- While poor governance and the alienation that results from it may be a factor contributing to support for and recruitment to violent extremist groups, building isolated pieces of infrastructure here and there (wells, schools, health units) in the absence of ensuring that such infrastructure is fully functional (e.g., teacher in place, materials and equipment available, students learning, teachers not charging extra fees for outside lessons) may produce little CT impact. It is also not entirely clear how much governance improvement is enough (i.e., one health unit or well for drinking water might seem likely to do little to remove the alienation that can result from across-the-board marginalization).
- When analysts find that a particular factor or variable recurs throughout the analytical steps discussed previously, it may be particularly important to construct a development assistance intervention to address that factor.
- Programmers must calculate how the host government’s attitudes toward and actions hampering or facilitating the operation of extremist groups affect USAID’s programmatic choices.

- It is important to note that this analytical framework makes assumptions about what might reduce terrorism risk. While there are some empirical data related to terrorism drivers, there are almost none concerning development strategies that substantially diminish risk, particularly in environments where extremism/terrorism has taken serious hold. It is perhaps easier to extrapolate from the evidence about drivers for the purposes of prevention – if the characteristics that have driven terrorism in other environments have not yet done so in a given country environment, then reducing or removing that characteristic may increase that society’s resilience against terrorism.
- For key program priority areas discussed below, illustrative results frameworks (RF) are presented. Subordinate results in each of the separate RFs represent a *menu* of strategy approaches for achieving the main result. Field implementers will need to adapt relevant RFs to country circumstances and available resources. Missions could, for example, adopt a lower level result from one of the generic frameworks as their highest level result, given the challenge of making progress in a given environment with a modest budget. It may be difficult in some target countries to address some causal factors, especially those related to injustice, repression and corruption. In addition, there may be ways to formulate a country-specific RF that is fully integrative and that then appears very different from any of the topical frameworks that follow. The RFs do not address a particular time frame, and the graphics do not distinguish between more urgent and less urgent results since prioritization will differ across countries.

**A. Addressing Drivers One and Two: 1) Social isolation, alienation and marginality and the personal relationships, networks and group dynamics that often develop in response to these phenomena; and 2) Unmet expectations and relative deprivation**

A strategy focused on youth, as laid out in the RF below, suggests a general approach to dealing with this cluster of drivers. A strategy to reduce the risk of youth being attracted to terrorist organizations differs in some ways from a more standard USAID strategy addressing the needs of youth. If the risk is viewed as substantial, then the strategy should target those youth most at risk; in many instances, these will be primarily young males in the age range of 15 to 30. The strategy may need to address the perceived needs of the somewhat better educated (secondary and tertiary level students and graduates) as opposed to the least well educated but this will depend on the recruiting profile. Somewhat better educated youth may be more likely to feel that their actual opportunities are out of sync with their aspirations and expectations, while those who are poorest and most deprived are pre-occupied with survival.

A good counter-extremism strategy might be as concerned with providing social and cultural opportunities as with skill-building and jobs. It might also focus more on the needs of dislocated rural to urban migrants, who are more likely to feel isolated and to be searching for connections and meaning. In addition, urban youth have better access to information and may be more likely to have the discretionary time needed to explore radical ideas. There is some evidence to suggest that urban populations are more likely to hold extremist views than rural ones though this may differ from country to country.

A relevant youth strategy might be focused on empowerment. If youth feel that they have a place in their community, are respected, have a good future, have productive social networks, can bring change by working within the system, and can earn a decent living, then they will feel rooted in existing structures and relationships and will be less attracted to counter-system messages.

Subordinate result 1 addresses the need for youth clubs and programs and for more social opportunities for youth in order to replace potentially malign networks with positive ones. Such networks can also serve as a safety net when misfortunes occur.

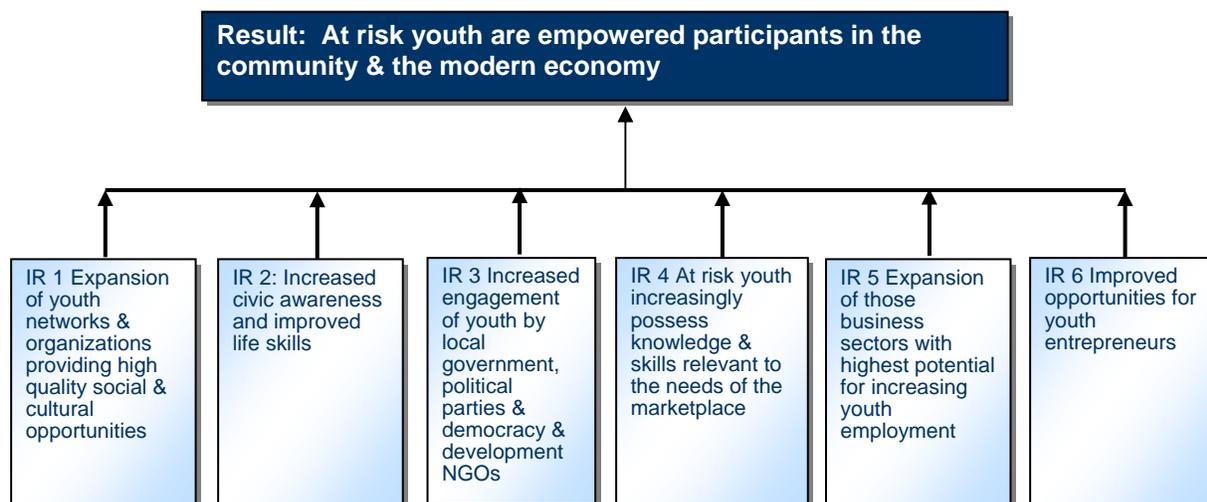
Subordinate result 2 concerns the need for instilling civic participation attitudes, skills and knowledge, include values of tolerance and respect for diversity, and life skills such as critical thinking and communication and negotiation skills. Such skills are important to resolving conflicts and allowing youth to assume a respected place in the community. Education systems in at-risk countries often do not develop such skills which can be vital to evaluating extremist messages and finding ways of resolving conflicts that do not involve violence.

Subordinate result 3 reflects the need for greater youth involvement in a range of formal and informal institutions that participate in decision making. Youth are often excluded from a role in more traditional societies.

Subordinate result 4 targets employment-related knowledge and skill building. This result is largely focused on enabling youth to join the modern economy. Activities might include curriculum reform at the secondary or tertiary level, opportunities for those who missed completing formal education to return to school or enroll in alternate centers, vocational training, and provision of other skills that modern economy employers might require. Strategies may need to address the content of education, not just enabling more youth to complete secondary school. In addition, promoting formal education without establishing a link to vocational training and job placement may simply lead to larger numbers of disgruntled youth and could be counter-productive from a counter-extremism standpoint.

Subordinate result 5, calling for an expansion of those business sectors most able to absorb at-risk youth, seems to call for a standard economic growth strategy. This in fact may be required in environments where economic growth and FDI are very low and where there are far more youth seeking jobs than the economy might accommodate, even if those youth had better skills. Depending on the openness of the economy, it might be possible to focus a counter extremism strategy only on direct assistance to a few business sectors where it is possible both to expand exports or domestic sales *and* increase employment.

Subordinate result 6 is a necessary corollary to 5 when it is clear that private sector will not be fast enough. The focus should be on opportunities that provide adequate income and some potential for growth. Such opportunities will be more easily identified in urban than rural areas.



## **B. Addressing Driver Three: Government Repression and Gross Violations of Human Rights or Civil Liberties**

Addressing this driver requires increasing the perception of citizens that the justice system is willing and able to apply the law equally and to protect the security and rights of all its citizens. There are four main subordinate results – related to fairness, civil society defense of rights, law reform to better protect rights, and institutional efficiency and effectiveness. Of these results, improving fairness is likely to be the most important priority while efficiency might be the lowest priority.

Result 1 speaks to justice sector institutions (judges, prosecutors, police, prisons) becoming fairer, applying the law equally regardless of class, ethnicity, religion or position, and actively respecting and protecting the rights of all systems. No mission is likely to have the resources to affect all these institutions so choices will need to be made relative to justice sector problems that are most linked to terrorism risk. However, trying to secure improvements in institutional behavior in an environment where reform champions cannot be identified is generally a recipe for a failed program.

Result 2 requires that citizens, civil society & the media are more active in defending citizen rights and in trying to hold the institutions of justice accountable for delivering justice. This is the demand side of the equation. It may be difficult to make progress under result 1 without pressure on justice sector institutions to conform to the law. Being active includes monitoring government behavior, disseminating findings broadly, advocating for change, defending individual citizens, and increasing citizen knowledge of rights and how to pursue them.

Result 4 calls for strengthening or expanding specific rights in the law. In some countries, the law itself is faulty and does not adequately protect citizen rights (e.g., due process rights), so law reforms may be required to address substance or process. Creating a cadre of public defenders for the disadvantaged, placing limits on pre-trial detention, or reforming the criminal procedures code are examples of possible reforms.

Result 4 is a very aggregate result that focuses on needed improvements in the internal efficiency and effectiveness of key justice sector institutions such as the courts, prosecution and police. Efficiency concerns are not of the highest priority unless backlogs and case processing times contribute substantially to the sense that the system is fundamentally unjust and unfair. Lengthy case processing times can enable elites, for example, to mount frivolous cases and take advantage of those less well positioned to sustain a lengthy court battle; these cases can contribute to the sense that the system is rigged and unfair.

Effectiveness is a more important consideration than efficiency but cannot come at the expense of respect for citizen rights. Improving the effectiveness of a police force with a record of physically abusing citizens would not be a good policy choice. On the other hand, the ability of the police to investigate an assassination and collect and preserve evidence as well as the ability of the prosecutor to put together a convincing case could be very important to increasing the sense that justice prevails.

Result 5 specifies the need to improve the independence of the judiciary. This is likely to be critical to improving fairness. If the judiciary is under the control of the Executive branch, it will be used to pursue the ruling elite's agenda. In less democratic countries, the judiciary may well be turned into another instrument of state repression. Formal independence may also not be identical to the degree of independence the judiciary chooses to exercise; the judiciary may have adequate protections of its independence in the constitution and other provisions of law but not take advantage of them. Independence is a priority result.

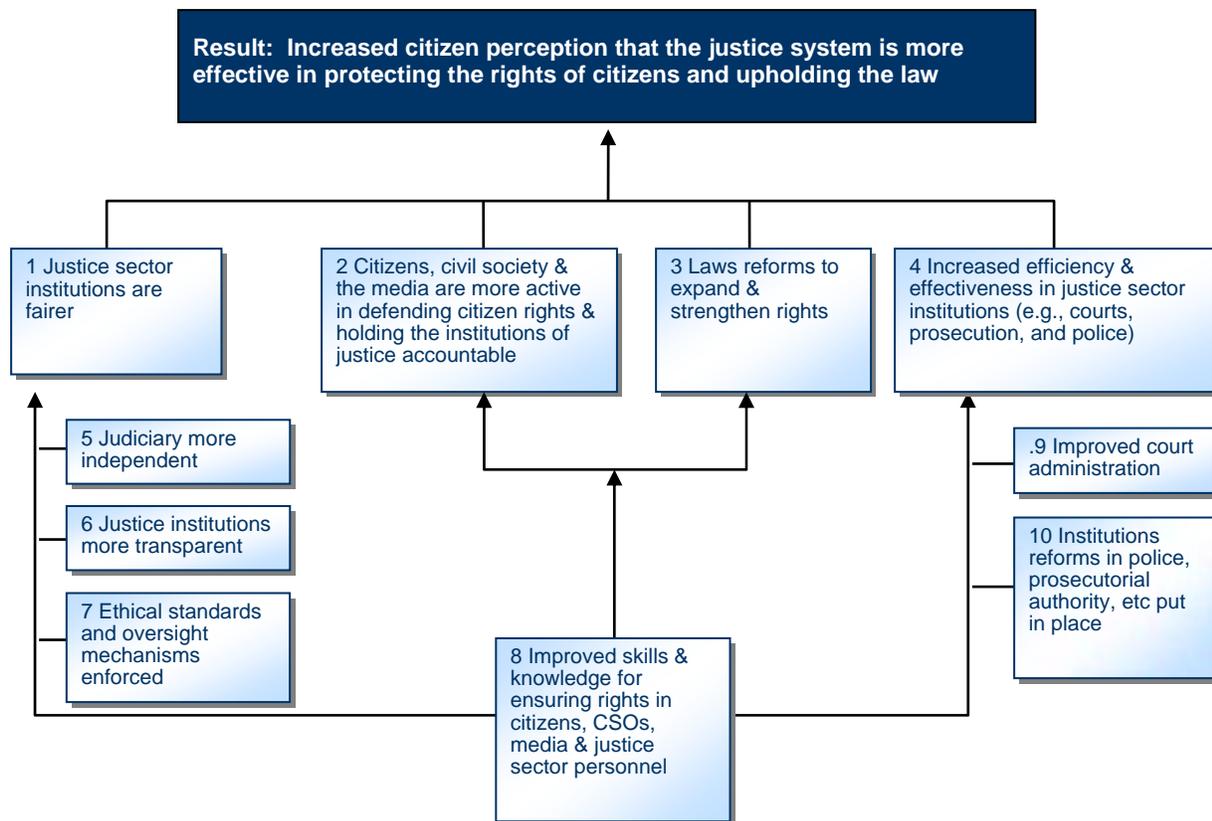
Result 6 targets improvements in justice system transparency – judges’ decisions are published, court hearings are for the most part open, etc. Transparency creates pressure for fairness because actions are not hidden from public view. Problems can also more easily be identified and corrected.

Result 7 focuses on ethical standards and oversight mechanisms for judges, police, prison personnel, prosecutors and public defenders (should the latter exist). These are important for minimizing the risks of corruption, patronage, inappropriate meddling by government officials and politicians, and influence peddling.

Result 8 addresses improvements in the skills & knowledge of citizens, CSOs, media & justice sector personnel for ensuring rights. This supports results 1–4. Citizens need to know their rights and how to pursue them; the media also needs to understand citizen rights as well as the duties and obligations of justice system personnel. It also needs to understand judicial processes if it is to be an effective monitor and advocate. The same is true for civil society groups. Strengthening human rights advocates and institutions that advocate for victims of state-perpetrated abuses may be particularly important. Finally, justice sector personnel (and particularly the police) often receive inadequate training and have a low level of knowledge and skills. For example, in many countries police lack investigation skills, cannot gather and preserve evidence, and have limited access to poorly equipped forensic labs – this can lead to torture of suspects in an attempt to gain a confession in order to prosecute. In addition, establishing a stronger sense of professionalism due to greater competence and pride can lead to some diminution in corruption. It is particularly important to ensure that training is provided to ensure knowledge of new laws.

Result 9 specifies improvement in court administration. This might include process reengineering and computerization. Such changes can make the courts more efficient, with faster case processing times, quicker responses to requests for information, and fewer lost files. Changes can lead to a more user-friendly system that helps court users understand procedures and complete forms more easily.

Result 10 targets similar kinds of improvements in other justice sector institutions such as the police, prisons, public defenders and prosecutors. The choices made should be associated with the justice problems that pose the greatest terrorism risk, as well as where there is some momentum for reform. Trying to secure institutional changes in an environment where there are no reform champions is generally a recipe for a failed program.



### C. Addressing Driver Four: Systemic Corruption, especially Grand Corruption, and Impunity for Well-Connected Elites

Approaches addressing this driver might focus on increasing citizen perception that the government is more successful in limiting corruption and reducing the impunity of elites who break integrity laws. It would be most important to emphasize those forms of corruption that generate the most anger and that most incline citizens to pay attention to anti-system rhetoric. We might speculate that for those who become terrorists, grand corruption and elite impunity are the major issues, while in terms of community support, petty, everyday corruption might be the most corrosive. Survey research could demonstrate which kinds of corruption most feed citizen anger (thereby helping establish a program focus); the rhetoric of extremist groups may also suggest areas of concentration.

Subordinate result 1 addresses the need for making and implementing organizational reforms in key public sector agencies – such reforms would decrease the opportunities for corruption. Reforms could include changes in how government agencies procure goods and services, streamlining of processes for obtaining documents and licenses, and establishing financial disclosure requirements for staff.

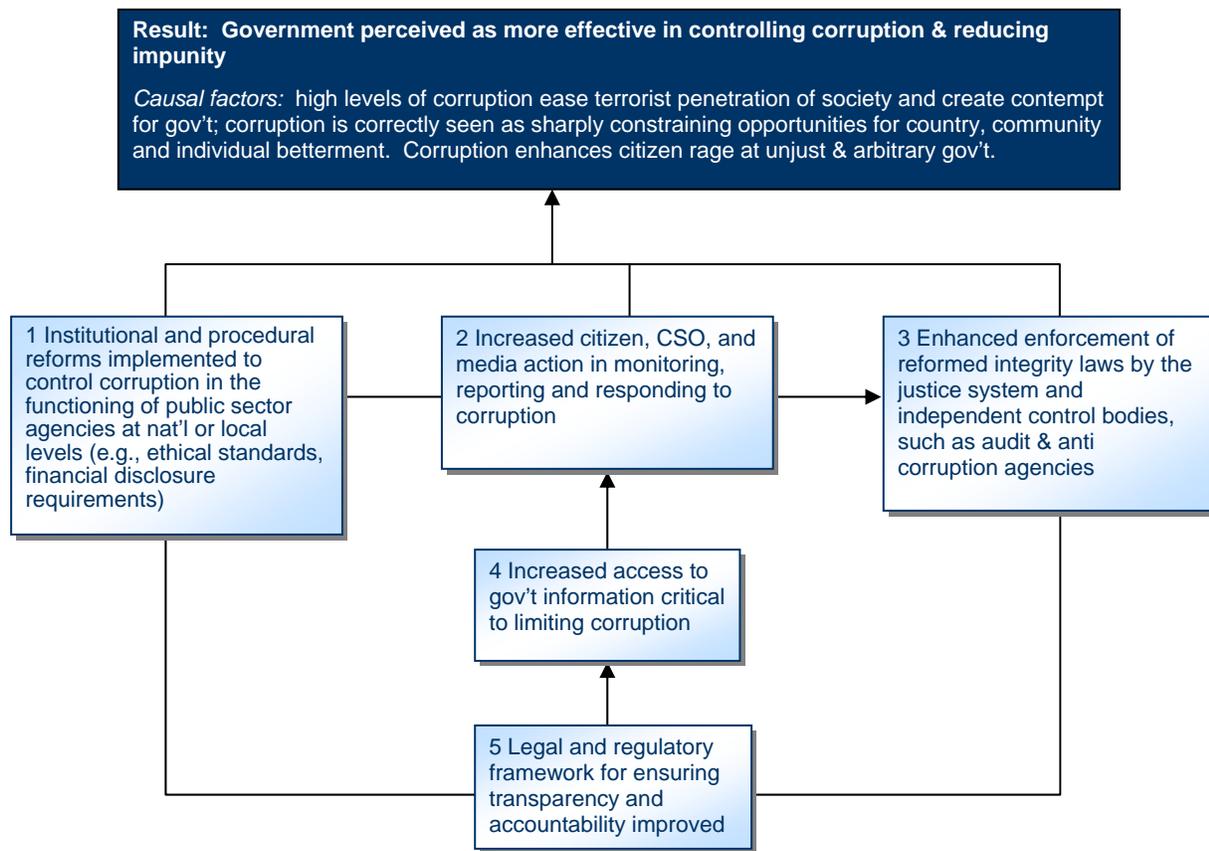
Subordinate result 2 ensures that citizens, civil society groups and the media are active in monitoring, reporting and disseminating information about government behavior and in combating corruption. The result requires that citizens recognize that corruption is a problem and believe that they can (and should) address it. This result supports the achievement also of subordinate results 1 and 2 by placing pressure on the government to implement reforms and prosecute the guilty.

Subordinate result 3 specifies an approach that strengthens independent “control” agencies and the justice system in combating corruption and prosecuting the corrupt. These bodies monitor the behavior of other

public sector entities and hold them to account; they can also help provide redress to victims. There is of course an overlap between this result and the justice framework in result 2.

Subordinate result 4 ensures that citizens, NGOs and the media obtain the information they need from the government to be effective in their actions against corruption. Important information could include the schedule of fees at health units, the contacts for filing complaints about requests for bribes, the funds allocated to one’s local government for education or roads, expenditure reports from different levels of government, the criteria for awarding a contract or the like.

Subordinate result 5 focuses on legal and regulatory reforms required for the achievement of results 1 and 3. One such reform might be a Freedom of Information Act.



#### D. Addressing Driver 5: Political Exclusion

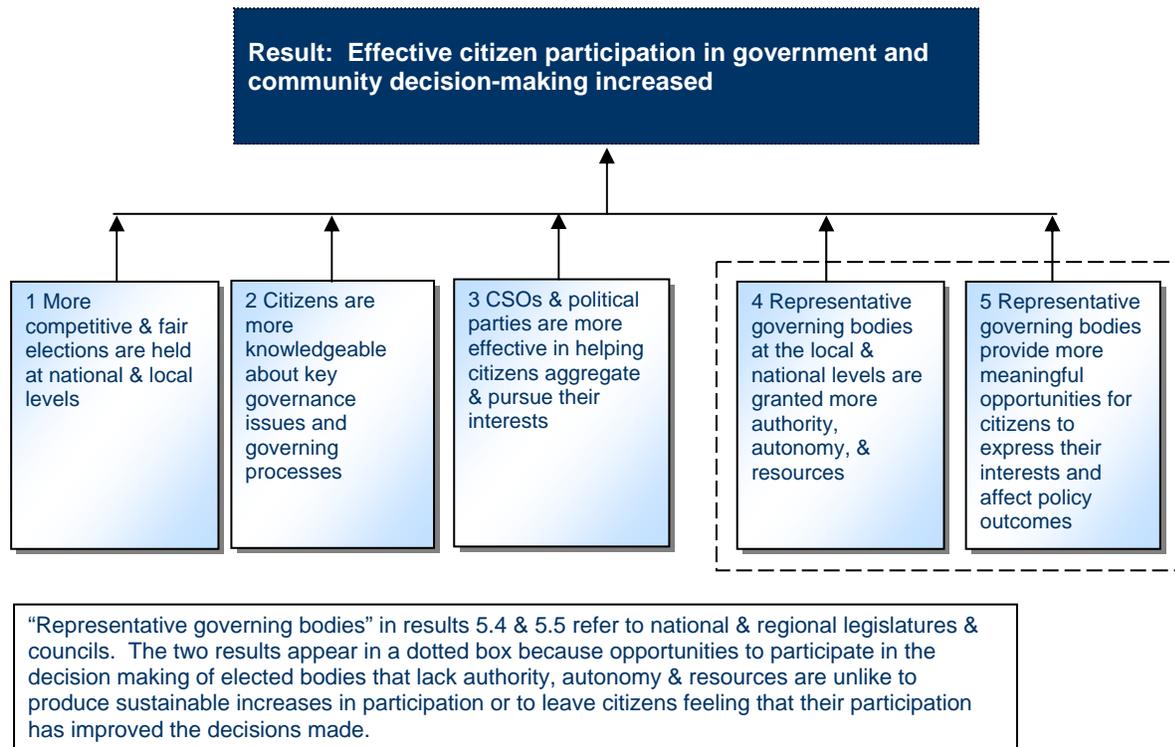
Addressing this driver requires an emphasis on effective participation. The RF given below assumes that citizens are interested in participating in decision making and will choose to do so in a more conducive environment. Subordinate result 1 addresses ensuring that elections are free, fair and genuinely competitive. Because election events are infrequent, this result is likely to be inadequate on its own, especially where exclusion is a serious problem and is deeply resented.

Subordinate result 2 ensures that citizens understand governing processes, such as registering to vote or how to interact with a local government over a budget, as well as know something about the key issues facing their community or country. Both process and substance are important to securing “effective” participation. This result is irrelevant if the problems addressed by results 1 and 3-5 are severe. Once

there are opportunities to participate, citizens will not be able to take advantage of them or will be easily manipulated unless they have substantive and procedural knowledge and possibly also skills for effective communications.

Subordinate result 3 focuses on the effective aggregation of citizen interests by parties, NGOs and CBOs. These are essential intermediary organizations since it is difficult for any political system to deal with a mass of views from isolated individuals. Where parties are seriously weak and the political system constrains party effectiveness, it will be more viable to focus on NGOs.

Subordinate results 4 and 5 are joined together in a larger dotted box to suggest that they need to be achieved together. One without the other is insufficient. The two results concern the provision of authority, resources and autonomy to elected national, regional and local legislatures and of opportunities for citizens to engage with them. These results include decentralization approaches as well as programs that strengthen the national assembly. If a target geographic region or area is being addressed, working with local governments could be more vital than with the national legislature. If there is limited decentralization and the political system cannot be persuaded to disperse power, then parallel efforts with community leaders, apart from formal structures, may provide a partial replacement but the sustainability of such efforts and any gains made may prove problematic.



### E. Addressing Ideologically Driven Extremist Rhetoric

Development assistance can potentially support local actors who have the credibility to challenge extremist arguments and who want to present more peaceful alternate worldviews. Interventions could include support for alternate channels of communication (internet chat rooms, community radio, school based or youth programs, public debate, workshops) as well as for message and program development. Some groups may be willing to take on debunking the ideas and actions of extremists and exposing their

criminal activities as well as the damage their violence has done to society. In some countries, this will be dangerous and there will be few prepared to make a direct verbal assault on extremist ideology; key issues will need to be approached more elliptically. In others, local groups will be willing to take this on but not with support from US entities for fear that that support will encourage charges that the agenda pursued is a US agenda.

## **F. Approaches to Counter Perception of an Existential Threat to Islam and that the International System Discriminates against Muslim Societies and Peoples**

It is difficult to address this perception in a compelling manner via development assistance. None the less, care can be taken in formulating and communicating aid programs to ensure that interventions do not exacerbate these perceptions and that they convey respect for Islam and are consistent with the ideals and values that have particular resonance in Muslim societies. Prospects for working through and with moderate religious leaders and organizations should be explored. If possible, indigenous voices that articulate a more confident and positive view of Islam's role and prospects of Muslim societies in the modern world should be encouraged. Care may need to be taken in the more conservative, tribalized societies in terms of how programs promoting secularism, individual rights, and women's equality are implemented and presented.

## **G. Addressing Economic Motivations**

When the lure of salaries and other economic benefits represents a significant part of the appeal of violent extremist groups, traditional development activities aimed at improving economic conditions among vulnerable populations should be considered. Particular efforts should be made to create jobs for those viewed as most susceptible, improve access to basic services linked to employment, expand micro grants, and facilitate self-sustaining growth in at-risk communities. Where smuggling, trafficking, money laundering and/or extortion rackets play a sizable role in supporting the activities of violent extremist groups, the usual battery of measure 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 more particularly affected). Where and when there is evidence that violent extremists are motivated primarily by greed, subtle outreach campaigns designed to enhance awareness of that situation among particularly vulnerable populations may have merit. Such campaigns need to be implemented by groups/sources with credibility; such sources may not include agencies linked to the USG. Finally, when prisons seem to operate as conduits between criminality and violent extremism, prison reform should be a priority.

## **H. Addressing a Permissive Environment and Factors that Ease Recruitment and Operation by Extremist Groups**

### **1. Ungoverned and Lightly Governed Spaces**

Approaches addressing this factor could attempt to improve governance in chaotic and insecure environments, perhaps with an emphasis urban and peri-urban slums where there appears to be growing risk of terrorist recruitment or activity. Improved governance may be provided by the institutions of the state, community mechanisms or both. The precise strategy will depend on the particular problems afflicting target areas. Approaches addressed earlier in this section dealing with the youth, justice, participation, and corruption may have value if this is the key problem addressed. It is likely that a youth program would be a major component of a strategy addressing ungoverned spaces in urban or rural settings.

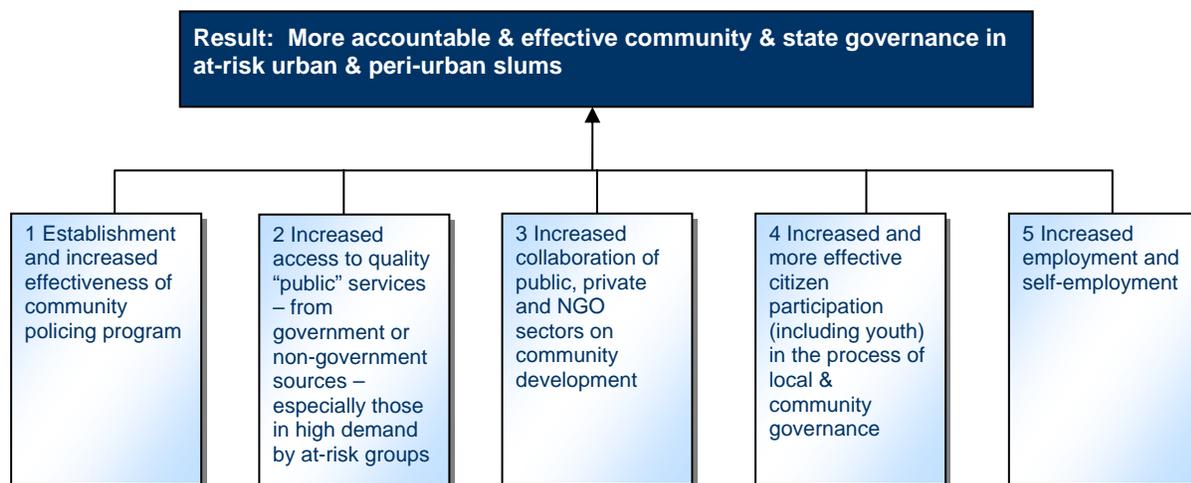
The results framework included below focuses on peri-urban slum areas where the risk of extremism may be highest but could be adapted for rural areas. Subordinate result 1 relates to improving security and reducing illegal behavior by putting in place effective community policing programs. The emphasis is on community policing because strengthening policing without a focus on human rights and ethical behavior could be counter-productive. This result is a high priority from the standpoint of tracking and responding to illegal activity as well as reducing conflict. Many slum areas witness high levels of violence.

Subordinate result 2 suggests that improvements in the quality and amount of services, the inadequacy of which adds greatly to citizen grievances against the government (and the attractiveness of anti-system groups) may be important to achieving the overall result. The focus here should be not simply on services that are needed but on those that are mostly fueling citizen anger and despair. “One-stop shop” service centers where a number of documents and licenses can be applied for and obtained and complaints bureaus may be particularly good interventions in urban slum settings.

Subordinate result 3 recommends improved and greater amounts of practical collaboration between civil society, the private sector and the government in improving the community. Engaging moderate religious leaders and institutions could be an important component. This result in turn supports the achievement of 2 and overlaps slightly with 4.

Subordinate result 4 creates the space and opportunity for slum dwellers to take part in decision making processes that affect the welfare of their families and community. This result may imply a decentralization strategy or a more informal strategy for citizens to make decisions about how their community will operate on their own. Elements of the participation framework presented earlier in this section may be viable here. It may be particularly important to improve skills for non violent communication, conflict resolution and tolerance in both local leaders and citizens.

Subordinate result 5 suggests that improvements in citizen livelihoods through jobs and entrepreneurship may be a vital strategy component. The connection between this result and more effective governance may be more tenuous than between some of the other subordinate results and the higher result of more effective governance. However, slum residents may be less inclined to participate in criminal activity when they have legitimate employment. In addition, full time employment reduces the amount of discretionary time youth have for getting into trouble. Greater wealth in the community also allows citizens to address on their own some service needs (rather than waiting for government). It increases the community’s stake in lawful behavior.



## 2. Local Conflicts

If diminishing the space for recruitment and operation is an objective, it may be critical to develop a strategy to mitigate serious inter-group conflicts that provide an opening for transnational terrorists. It may not be necessary or even possible to resolve the conflict; it may be sufficient to dampen elements of the conflict. Not all inter-group conflicts heighten the risk of transnational terrorism. Christian-Muslim tensions in Kenya and northern Nigeria or Hindu-Muslim conflict in India raise the risks; pastoralist conflicts over water in the Horn of Africa do not. The results framework presented below is not a generic one for addressing conflict per se; it tries instead to focus on facets of conflict that would produce counter extremism gains. An appropriate counter extremism strategy might often target an aggrieved or marginalized group but that will not always be the case. If one side in a cynical power struggle is trying to attract support from a terrorist group to advance its own interests, a development assistance strategy may not provide much help.

Subordinate result 1 suggests that actions must be taken to alleviate the grievances that target groups feel most strongly. Such grievances could range from access to public sector jobs or education to use of one's language, power sharing arrangements or greater autonomy. Progress may not be needed on all grievances, just the ones felt most sharply. The approaches for reducing different kinds of grievances may be very variable and some may be very ambitious. If power sharing is an important objective, programmers could separate this out from the grievance result and could specify a result formulated along the lines of: *More equitable and effective power sharing arrangements provide marginalized groups with greater political influence and recognition. Adequate representation is not the sole concern; representation without real influence will not assuage aggrieved groups.*

Subordinate result 2 calls for assistance to be directed toward ensuring that the framing of conflicts between groups is done in such a way that the differences seem to be negotiable and resolvable rather than existential, with one group feeling that its culture, religion, and very existence are threatened by another group. This can be accomplished by supporting moderate voices and groups. Politicians may of course be prone to exaggerating risk to shore up their own power; it is also possible that a group's existence is genuinely threatened, in which case this would not be a viable result.

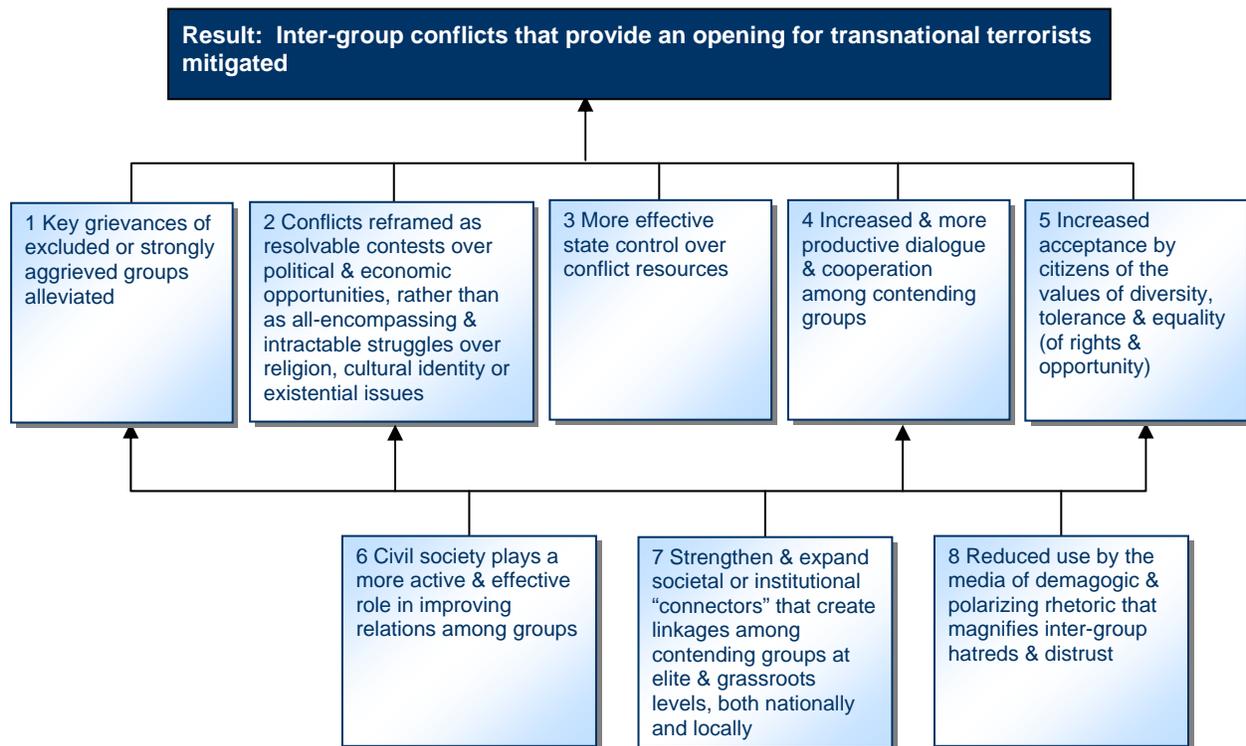
Subordinate result 3 requires that the state exercise control over resources that can be used to fuel the conflict. Such resources might include minerals, drugs, and smuggling routes. State control also denies access to such resources to transnational terrorist groups, unless the state has allied itself with such groups.

Subordinate result 4 focuses on enabling productive dialogue among contending groups. Dialogue may need to occur at different levels, including Track 1 and 2 diplomacy as well as exchanges at the community level. It may be important to involve religious as well as civil society or political groups. This result also focuses on greater cooperation between groups; for example, peace-building programs at the community level often focus on cooperation over local development goods and services. The hypothesis posited here is that the more positive inter-action that occurs among contending groups, the more these groups are likely to develop trust and understanding and to see that conflicts can be resolved peacefully. While not highlighted in the framework itself, effective dialogue may require better communication and conflict resolution skills in individuals at different levels in society.

Subordinate result 5 addresses the need to change values so that citizens appreciate diversity, are more tolerant of those who are different, and embrace equality of rights, opportunity and treatment by the state. Result 8.4 does support accomplishment of this result, but it is also the case that changes in attitudes and

beliefs will help win changes in behavior. Results 8.4 and 8.5 are inter-locking and form a positive feedback loop.

Three lower level results, 6 – 8, provide support for the achievement of the second tier subordinate results. They involve a civil society (including moderate religious groups) that is active in promoting improved relations between groups, the strengthening and expansion of societal or institutional “connectors” (see the “Do No Harm” literature for an elaboration on connectors), and a reduction in the use of polarizing rhetoric by the media. Societal and institutional connectors may include shared resources (such as schools), common festivals and traditions, political parties that include diverse groups and the like. With respect to the media, while it would be helpful for the media to make a positive contribution to resolving conflict, all that may be needed from a counter extremism perspective is for the media not to magnify inter-group distrust and hostility.



## I. Approaches to Strengthening Government Interdiction of Violent Extremist Groups

Development assistance activities can help governments improve their monitoring of and response to violent extremist groups. Improving policing (e.g., special terrorism investigation units, improving investigation and forensic skills, setting up specialized forensic labs, community policing to strengthen information networks in at-risk localities); strengthening legislation to enhance government action; training prosecutors and judges; tackling corruption at the border, in customs and in other relevant government agencies (discussed previously); prison reform; and reducing the opportunities for money laundering and improving banking regulation/supervision may all be relevant components of such a strategy. Care needs to be taken in interrupting the flow of resources to religious charities that are seen as legitimate and that provide services valued in the community; actions need to be explained and substitute financing should be identified lest the host government and the USG be blamed for abandoning orphans or the like. In addition, strengthening government interdiction in already repressive regimes risks exacerbating other drivers of extremism.

## ANNEX A.

### KEY DEFINITIONS

#### **(POLITICAL) EXTREMISM**

“Extremism” refers to political opinions and/or behavior that deviate markedly from “mainstream” political views and conduct. It is characterized by a lack of tolerance toward other viewpoints. Extremism frequently is accompanied by a condoning of, and/or reliance on, violence for political ends, though that is not necessarily the case.

#### **RADICALIZATION**

“Radicalization” refers to the process by which an individual, a group, an organization, or an entire society previously characterized by “mainstream,” “moderate,” or “centrist” political opinions drifts toward more extreme viewpoints and associated forms of behavior. Radicalization is frequently accompanied by support for violence, but that is not necessarily always the case.

#### **TERRORISM**

“Terrorism” refers to premeditated, politically-motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents. Those who employ terrorism, regardless of their specific secular or religious objectives, strive to subvert the rule of law and effect change through violence and fear. These terrorists also share the misguided belief that killing, kidnapping, extorting, robbing, and wreaking havoc to terrorize people are legitimate forms of political action. (*National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 2003, 1).

#### **INSURGENCY**

An “insurgency” is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.

#### **ISLAMISM**

“Islamism” refers to the broad variety of political movements and parties that share the belief that principles or values drawn from the Islamic tradition should have substantial influence on the public sphere and on the manner in which a society conducts or organizes its political life.

#### **SALAFISM**

In current usage, “Salafism” refers to a highly conservative, rigid, dogmatic and backward-looking religious outlook that advocates the need to return to the “pure Islam” practiced under Prophet Muhammad and his first four successors as leaders of the Muslim community (632-661).<sup>39</sup> Salafism revolves around issues of personal morality and piety. It is concerned first and foremost with preserving Muslim faith and identity against the forces of “unbelief” and “heresy.” It emphasizes the need for individuals to abide by a strict code of conduct based on a rigid interpretation of the *sharia* (Islamic law) and a literal interpretation of the founding texts of Islam. Salafism sees impiety and deviations from the letter of the *Quran* and the *hadiths* (sayings and deeds of the Prophet) as the fundamental cause of all evil.

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<sup>39</sup> The word “Salafism” (*al-salafiyya* in Arabic) is derived from the expression *al-salaf al-salih*, meaning the “virtuous forefathers,” which refers to the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors, known as the four “rightly guided” caliphs.

It seeks to propagate its puritanical and inflexible vision of Islam through proselytizing and societal pressure, and it increasingly has come to be associated with reliance on violence as well.

### **SALAFI JIHADISM**

“Salafi Jihadism” refers to the merging of a Salafi outlook and a jihadi call to violence. Salafi jihadist groups are motivated by a mix of religious and political objectives; they embrace a strict, literal interpretation of Islam, and combine it with an emphasis on *jihad*, understood here as holy war. They view jihad as the primary instrument through which their Salafi desire to “return” to the original message of Islam will become reality. Unlike first-generation radical Islamists, they approach jihad as a global struggle that knows no borders and that focuses on combating the West, in general, and the United States in particular. They form an amorphous, transnational movement and ideology that is fundamentally hostile to modernity, to the secular, democratic nation-state, and to the logic of globalization and the peaceful coexistence of different cultures and religions.

## ANNEX B.

### MAPPING DRIVERS: AN EXAMPLE FROM MAURITANIA<sup>40</sup>

An abbreviated counter extremism risk assessment in Mauritania, where a USAID counter-extremism program is on-going, in May 2008 pointed to six key drivers behind the phenomenon. The drivers were divided into “push” (four drivers) and “pull” (two drivers) factors. The action and interaction of the push and pull factors is summarized in Figure 1 – “Mapping Extremism-Motivated Violence in Mauritania” shown below.

- a. Push factors comprise those characteristics of the societal environment that are particularly apt to thrust vulnerable individuals onto the path of violence.
- b. Pull factors, by contrast, refer to individuals, ideologies, organizations or networks that seek to attract at-risk individuals (most often, but not always, among those whom push factors already have rendered susceptible to violence).

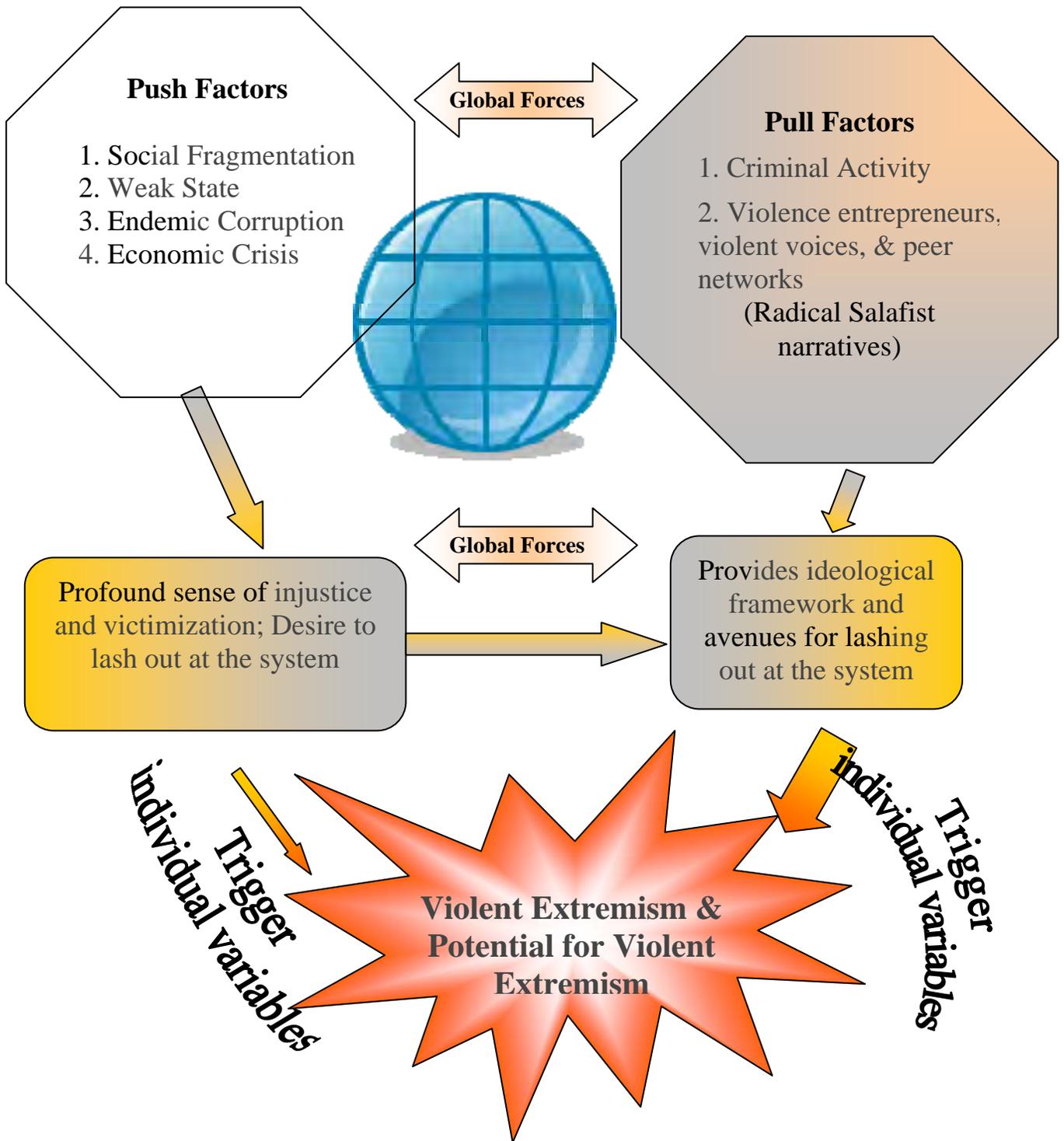
The previous section suggests that the push factors consist of: (a) high levels of social fragmentation and societal decay in vulnerable areas; (b) widespread resentment at the perceived dysfunctional and ineffective nature of the Mauritanian state; (c) moral outrage and anger at pervasive corruption; and (d) economic failure (especially the inability of the Mauritanian economy to generate enough jobs and opportunities for vulnerable, alienated and frustrated youth).

The two key pull factors are (a) the pervasiveness and appeal of criminal networks and activities, and (b) the existence of “violence entrepreneurs” and “violent voices” (e.g., radical Salafi preachers) who prey on youth. Criminality, as discussed earlier, often operates as a pathway into violent extremism. For their part, “violence entrepreneurs” perform a series of key functions (see Figure 1):

- a. They not only tap into, but also deliberately endeavor to strengthen and magnify, the deep sense of injustice and victimization that vulnerable populations feel, both as a result of the “push variables” mentioned above (which consists of forces and dynamics that are internal, though influence by global trends), and because of the perceived inequities of the international and regional systems.
- b. They provide an ideological framework that enables this powerful but diffuse sense of injustice to be more clearly conceptualized and articulated, and that identifies those forces and actors responsible for it.
- c. They provide a roadmap, through violence, for redressing injustices – and, by doing so, they help empower marginalized and neglected constituencies, and make them feel as if they had regained at least a degree of control over their own lives and destinies.
- d. They articulate the vision of a different and better world, where the injustices and other dysfunctions that characterize the present order are missing.

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<sup>40</sup> Drawn from the draft report *Mauritania Pilot: CT and Development*, May 30, 2008, by Guilain Denoeux (MSI) and Zeric Smith (USAID).



**FIGURE 1 - MAPPING EXTREMISM MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN MAURITANIA**

Figure 1 also shows that global forces and trends feed into vulnerable populations' sense of injustice, both indirectly (by impacting "push" factors) and directly (because of the perception that the current international system discriminates against Muslims, and that it relegates Muslim societies to a subordinate and humiliating position in global affairs). Figure 1 also reflects the fact that external influences have played an important role in sustaining "violence entrepreneurs" and "violent voices." Ways in which they have done so include: infiltration into Mauritania of Wahhabi/Salafi ideas, some of which have contributed to extremist behavior; training in the Gulf (especially Saudi Arabia) of radical preachers, who then have returned to Mauritania to disseminate their ideas (several of which can be used to justify violent extremism); and influx into Mauritania of Gulf (especially Saudi) funding that has supported violent voices, violence entrepreneurs, and extremist causes and institutions.

Ultimately, as Figure 1 suggests, the turn to violent extremism reflects individual-specific variables that cannot be predicted; consequently, being affected by the same contextual variables (push factors) and being exposed to the same pull variables (e.g., radical preaching, criminal networks) will lead some individuals to turn to violence, while others will not. Nonetheless, this document assumes that, other variables being kept equal, the more individuals are exposed to the drivers highlighted here, the greater their propensity for violent extremism.

As is also reflected in Figure 1, some individuals may turn to violent extremism as a result of both push and pull factors, while others may do so under the influence of primarily push or pull factors. For instance, merely being subjected to the push factors noted above may be enough to prompt particularly aggrieved youth to lash out at the system. But that assumption is not reflected in the profile of that handful of Mauritanian violent extremists who have come not from broken homes and disadvantaged backgrounds, but from relatively cohesive and respected middle class families. In the case of those youth, who are not particularly disadvantaged, but who nonetheless are angry and alienated, the lure exercised by violent religious-political narratives, or by charismatic radical *shuyukh*, or the impact of their prior involvement in criminality, may be sufficient to push them toward violent extremism. All in all, however, the profile developed earlier suggests that, in most cases, both push and pull factors are at work: violent extremists tend to be particularly affected by social fragmentation and economic failure; they are driven in part by their anger at corruption and at a government that has failed them; they have been exposed to radical preaching and ideas (through physical contacts as well as virtually); and they have been drawn into criminality, as is reflected in the frequency with which the turn to delinquency predates, and seems often to pave the way for, the turn to violent extremism.

When asked to single out the most decisive drivers behind violent extremism, every single interviewee stressed the importance of resentment at corruption and perceived impunity. All our sources also pointed out that the scope and visibility of corruption have grown significantly in the past decade. They noted that corruption and trafficking are not hidden, but conducted in the open, in the face of a state either unable or unwilling to stop it. They argued that corruption is generating enormous frustration among impoverished youth, enraged at the contrast between the appalling living conditions that exist in their residential areas and the ostentatious wealth that is on display elsewhere in Nouakchott. One should note that, unless specific measures are taken to reverse it, this trend might worsen in the next few years (as, presumably, will its attending negative consequences), as a result of anticipated rising revenues from extractive industries.

Although this is not reflected directly in Figure 1, the four push variables are inter-connected and mutually reinforcing, as is true of the two pull variables. Push and pull variables also feed into one another in ways that exacerbate their respective destabilizing effects. While this is not the place to engage in a detailed discussion of the manner in which all six drivers are inter-related, a few illustrations of the connections among them may be appropriate.

- a. Social fragmentation is related to the other three push factors, as well as to global forces, in that economic failure, the resentment at corruption and at the dysfunctional state, and the radicalizing effects of global influences are felt with particular intensity in those peri-urban areas where social disintegration and societal decay are noticeably high. It is there that all six drivers are most likely to combine to trigger a powerful desire to lash out at “the system.”
- b. The push factor of economic failure is related to the pull factors of “violence entrepreneurs,” “violent voices,” and criminality primarily through the idleness which joblessness creates among disaffected youth. Youth with too much time on their hands, who cannot find their niche in society, and who are looking for meaning and a sense of direction are more likely than others to ask themselves existential questions and/or to get themselves in trouble with the law. They also become more prone to surf jihadi websites, and/or to congregate around mahadras (madradas) and other places where extremist ideas may be readily available. Many among them will drift into criminality.
- c. Pervasive corruption contributes to what the Figure 2 refers to as a “weak state” and “economic failure” in a variety of ways. It leads to large-scale diversion of public resources (some analysts estimate that as much as one-third of the government budget may be misappropriated), and thereby saps government capacity – including its ability to address the considerable social and economic problems that fuel violent extremism. Corruption also intensifies the competition for access to state coffers among various personalities, clans, and ethnic groups; it thus weakens the coherence of the state and its action, and thereby plays an important part in the country’s economic failure. Conversely, the dysfunctional state makes large-scale, institutionalized corruption possible, to the extent that it translates into key political actors viewing the state not as an entity with a will and a mission of its own, but merely as a source of rent. As a result, corruption becomes institutionalized – it is built into a system that perpetuates a weak state and economic failure, and that renders extremely difficult the design and implementation of coherent policies to address the negative consequences of social fragmentation. Endemic corruption and the dysfunctional state also are related in that one of the manifestations of the latter is the absence within the state apparatus of effective control mechanisms and institutions to combat corruption.
- d. The weak and dysfunctional state (as a push factor) renders the struggle against criminality and trafficking (as pull factors) far more difficult, especially in light of the extent to which security agencies and the military are themselves penetrated by corruption. And, in turn, a state rendered dysfunctional through corruption, and that is widely known to operate primarily as a vector for the redistribution of the rent, lacks the moral authority and legitimacy required to enable it combat effectively violence, both through coercive measures and through the capacity to articulate a logic that can compete with that of violence and extremism.

## ANNEX C.

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