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**THESIS**

**COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM POLICY IN  
THE UNITED STATES: ARE CVE PROGRAMS IN  
AMERICA EFFECTIVELY MITIGATING THE THREAT  
OF HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISM?**

by

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December 2017

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ARE CVE PROGRAMS IN AMERICA EFFECTIVELY MITIGATING THE  
THREAT OF HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISM?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite a continued threat of violent extremism, current efforts to develop and implement nationally led programming to counter violent extremism in the United States are ineffective. America's current countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy suffers from a lack of scale and foundational scientific support, and contains no system of metrics to evaluate its success. This thesis conducts a comparative policy analysis between the United States' and the United Kingdom's CVE strategies to identify their respective strengths and, in doing so, to determine which UK policies may be leveraged to improve the American CVE strategy. In furthering the discussion surrounding American CVE efforts, this thesis surveys several models from social science to demonstrate the value of incorporating scientifically supported research into future CVE policy discussions. Concluding the comparative analysis and discussion of scientific theory, the thesis closes with a series of policy recommendations and implementation plans for consideration. Based on the research presented, it is recommended that the United States adopt nationally led, locally implemented CVE policies like those found in the United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy, and that improved strategies are grounded in social science research.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|      |  |
|------|--|
| CVE  | countering violent extremism   |
| DHS  | Department of Homeland Security  |
| DOJ  | Department of Justice  |
| FBI  | Federal Bureau of Investigation  |
| GAO  | Government Accountability Office   |
| PIRA | Provisional Irish Republican Army  |
| RICU | Research, Information, and Communications Unite  |
| SIP  | <i>Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States</i> |
| SRC  | Shared Responsibility Committee (FBI)  |
| USAO | U.S. Attorney's Office   |

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, the United States initiated formal programming to counter violent extremism in three test cities, pursuant to the White House's countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy outlined in 2011's *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. Since the creation of the pilot program, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established the \$10 million CVE Grant Program to fund localized CVE initiatives, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created Shared Responsibility Committees to prevent individuals from further radicalizing. With the three-city pilot program stalled, the continuance of those DHS and FBI efforts are now in question. The United States continues to face enduring threats from violent extremism, yet the effort to develop and implement a functioning national CVE strategy remains ineffective. America's current CVE strategy suffers from a lack of scale and foundational scientific support, and contains no system of metrics to evaluate its success.

This thesis conducts a comparative policy analysis of the CVE strategies in the United States and the United Kingdom to identify their respective strengths to, in turn, determine which UK policies may be leveraged to improve the American CVE strategy. This study found that the United Kingdom's approach to CVE under the *Prevent* strategy has matured into a nationally led implementation plan that incorporates soft-power resources from the whole of government to augment the hard-power practices of counterterrorism. The United Kingdom's strategy affords communities the opportunity to choose the CVE programming and resources that best fit its needs while creating a referral process to connect individuals who are radicalizing to a variety of services. Additionally, the United Kingdom's Home Office has dedicated significant resources to countering extremist narratives and messaging in social media platforms to reduce domestic radicalization and recruitment efforts from abroad. The research finds promise in these strategies and supports their consideration into future policy discussion for American CVE efforts.

In furthering the discussion surrounding improved American CVE efforts, this thesis surveyed several models from social science to demonstrate the value of incorporating scientifically supported research into future CVE policy discussions. The research evaluated general strain theory, social identity theory, the radical puzzle model, and the stairway to terrorism model separately to discern a set of common interdisciplinary variables that underlie the root causes of radicalization and terrorism. This comparison found variables related to an individual's response to anger, subjection to prejudice, feelings of cultural isolation, and resentment of Western policy as positively correlated with radicalization. It is believed that incorporating decades of scientific scholarship into future CVE policy discussions will lead to impactful, evidence-based CVE policy in the United States.

Concluding the comparative analysis and discussion of scientific theory, the thesis closes with a series of eight policy recommendations and implementation plans for consideration. Based on the research presented, it is recommended that the United States adopt nationally led, locally implemented CVE policies similar to those found in the United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy. Furthermore, it is recommended the U.S. government create an office dedicated to countering the extremist narrative online, and to affirm its commitment to continuing the DHS CVE Grant Program to fund localized programs. This study also supports the inclusion of formal metrics and additional monitoring efforts to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of future CVE programming and to reestablish a non-coercive intervention strategy that redirects individuals away from extremist activities. Finally, this research argues that all future CVE policy considerations should be supported by scientific research.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The threat from violent extremism continuously evolves and confronts nations across the globe. After the 1995 attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, by far-right extremists and the tragedy of the jihadi attacks of 9/11, a number of reforms and programs have been implemented to reduce the threat of terror in the U.S. homeland. Despite these efforts and the painful lessons learned after 9/11, directed and inspired domestic extremists have continued to attack the United States in Fort Hood, Texas; Boston, Massachusetts; and Orlando, Florida. The over 100 individuals arrested by the FBI for other terror-related charges indicates that the threat of terror in the United States is not a series of isolated incidents.<sup>1</sup> These facts beg the question: What has the United States done to counter violent extremism and can these efforts be improved?

On December 2, 2015, Illinois-born Syed Farook and his wife, Pakistani-native Tashfeen Malik, entered the offices of Farook's employer at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California, during a holiday party. Dressed in dark, military-style gear, they began firing at Farook's coworkers, releasing more than 100 rounds from legally purchased semi-automatic rifles and handguns.<sup>2</sup> Law enforcement officers finally located the couple several hours later and engaged in a lethal gun battle, but only after the pair killed fourteen and wounded twenty-two.<sup>3</sup>

Farook and Malik met online and began a relationship before Malik entered the United States in July 2014 on a fiancée visa, and before she earned residency status in

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Countering Violent Extremism in the United States*, CRS Report No. R42553 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014); Adam Goldman, Jia Lynn Yang, and John Muyskens, "The Islamic State's Suspected Inroads into America," *Washington Post*, August 16, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/isis-suspects/>, accessed September 24, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Brazier et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2016), 1, <http://ric-zai-inc.com/Publications/cops-w0808-pub>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

2015.<sup>4</sup> Farook and Malik likely radicalized independently before they met each other.<sup>5</sup> While evidence indicates that both Farook and Malik had little interaction with foreign terrorist organizations, Malik pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Islamic State on social media the morning before the attack.<sup>6</sup> During a broadcast on its al-Bayan radio after the attack, the Islamic State quickly capitalized on the incident and described the couple as "supporters of the Islamic State."<sup>7</sup>

The *khilafa* (or "caliphate") is the establishment of an Islamic territory where *shari'a* law is instituted and maintained under an executive *khalifah* (caliph), who acts as the leader of the Muslim community within. The last *khilafa* ended in 1258; generations of Muslims since continue to live in countries that maintain political borders and whose governments deviate from the strict interpretation of the original precepts communicated by the Prophet.<sup>8</sup> In 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi spoke in the Great Mosque of al-Nuri and declared the reestablishment of the caliphate as a Muslim obligation, naming himself as the caliph. As *khalifah*, al-Baghdadi's interpretation of Islam requires that Muslims supporting the Islamic State and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as the caliph, are expected to perform *hijrah* when possible, declare *bay'at*, and follow the instructions of committing

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Barak and Devorah Margolin, "The San Bernardino Shooting 2/12/2015: What Do We Know?" International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, accessed December 7, 2012, 4, <https://www.ict.org.il/UserFiles/ICT-San-Bernardino-Shooting-Dec15.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Farook is believed to have previous associations with al-Nusra Front and al-Shabaab, and Malik is believed to have attempted to contact the Islamic State.

<sup>7</sup> Barak and Margolin, "The San Bernardino Shooting"; Peter Forster and Thomas Hader, "Combating Domestic Terrorism: Observations from Brussels and San Bernardino | Small Wars Journal," *Small Wars Journal*, July 18, 2016, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/combating-domestic-terrorism-observations-from-brussels-and-san-bernardino>.

<sup>8</sup> This would include those Muslims of the Shia faith. Graeme Wood writes, "The Islamic State regards Shiism as innovation, and to innovate on the Qur'an is to deny its initial perfections." The fall of the Ottoman empire may be seen by some as the last caliphate, while in 2014, al-Baghdadi argued that the last caliphate ended nearly 1,000 ago, meaning that the Prophet Muhammad's teachings had not been practiced fully since that time; "Islamic Caliphate," TimeMaps, accessed December 7, 2017, [www.time-maps.com/civilization/Islamic-Caliphate](http://www.time-maps.com/civilization/Islamic-Caliphate); Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic* (March 2015), [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/).

attacks in the lands of Western *kafir* (and, in the process, possibly becoming martyrs).<sup>9</sup> These obligations were outlined in statements from Islamic State spokesperson Abu al-Adnani and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (on September 21, 2014, and November 14, 2014, respectively); under these edicts, Islamic State supporters are obligated to comply or be judged to have committed apostasy, a charge punishable by death.<sup>10</sup>

For adherents to al-Baghdadi's authority, Malik's public *baya'a* (profession of allegiance) to the caliph was required under the authority bestowed upon him once he declared the caliphate's existence. To "die without pledging allegiance is to die *jahil* and therefore die a 'death of disbelief.'"<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, not proclaiming a *baya'a* when a caliphate and caliph exists equates to a (Sunni) Muslim failing "to live a fully Islamic life."<sup>12</sup> In acknowledging the authority of the caliph and the establishment of the Islamic State, the believer is then obligated to give *baya'a* under Islamic law. Malik's pledge to the caliph, then, may represent what she understood as her obligation under this interpretation of Islamic law; the attacks were therefore considered a duty because they answered the calls by the legitimate caliph.

The Islamic State routinely challenges believers to launch attacks against non-Sunni believers whenever and wherever possible. The number of attacks following al-Adnani and al-Baghdadi's statements may have created an additional impetus for the couple's direct action; the number of successful previous attacks reaffirms these behaviors and subsequently encourages future attacks. These attacks grant the Islamic State more legitimacy and authority within al-Baghdadi's community of followers while threatening Western powers' credibility to ensure security within their borders.

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<sup>9</sup> Jessica McFate, Harleen Gambhir, and Evan Sterling, "ISIS's Global Messaging Strategy Fact Sheet," Institute for the Study of War, December 2014, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/GLOBAL\\_ROLLUP\\_Update.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/GLOBAL_ROLLUP_Update.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

While this was not an attack directed by the Islamic State, the San Bernardino attack indicates that IS-inspired attacks present a continuing threat to the United States. Supporting this claim, *Dabiq*, the Islamic State’s magazine, called for Muslims to “use their deeds as a means to awake more [extremists] in America, Europe, and Australia.”<sup>13</sup> It follows that as the Islamic State and other extremist groups “continue to employ capable means to radicalize individuals and encourage directed and inspired attacks, the threat of homegrown attacks is unlikely to cease anytime soon.”<sup>14</sup> For these reasons, policymakers, counterterrorism researchers, and practitioners need to understand the causal variables and mechanisms of domestic violent extremist radicalization, as well as the program options available to reduce the associated risks in the United States.

#### **A. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Current American countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts may not be serving the country’s best interests. Domestic CVE efforts to respond to the potential threat of terrorism are both limited in scale and in need of review. Research supports the argument that the United States first established CVE programs in three test cities (Los Angeles, Minneapolis–Saint Paul, and Boston) and through programs administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) without much public discourse, political transparency, or scientific policy support.<sup>15</sup> Compared to the CVE initiatives in other democratic nations such as the United Kingdom, American CVE policy evaluation metrics are strangely absent. The ability to measure policy success is crucial in determining whether the United States is effectively countering the threat potential of terrorism.

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<sup>13</sup> “Foreword,” *Dabiq*, no. 13 (October 2015): 4.

<sup>14</sup> Forster and Hader, “Combating Domestic Terrorism,” 1.

<sup>15</sup> Bjelopera, *Countering Violent Extremism*; Faiza Patel and Meghan Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, 2017), [https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Brennan%20Center%20CVE%20Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Brennan%20Center%20CVE%20Report_0.pdf); In an effort to obtain background materials, criteria used for CVE funding, and the “beliefs or ideologies” underlying the American CVE efforts, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to obtain records in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in February 2016. See <https://www.aclu.org/cases/aclu-v-department-homeland-security-foia-lawsuit-seeking-records-countering-violent-extremism>.

Researchers have recently started to use criminological models to understand the crimes associated with radicalization in the United States. Examining terrorism as a set of criminal acts, criminologists have begun to explore the causal variables that underlie attacks. Social sciences may afford terrorism researchers and policymakers the opportunity to create an effective CVE strategy and to decide whether current CVE programs are an effective answer to counter the threat from homegrown violent extremists in the United States.

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTION**

This thesis explores whether the current American CVE program is the answer to counter homegrown violent extremism. Finding the American CVE program insufficient, the thesis outlines recommendations to improve the strategy through a comparative policy analysis with the United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy. This research finds stark contrasts between the American CVE policies and the United Kingdom's. The United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy, benefitting from several reviews and official revisions, takes a holistic approach to reducing the effects of violent extremism; the United States' plan, however, is relatively narrow in scope. The comparison raises questions: Is the United States delivering a responsive and effective CVE program? And are related program goals properly outlined and defined? If the policy framework was established without any scientific support—and if policy objectives are not clearly defined—then, definitionally, “success” can never be realized and the policy is inadequate. If current American CVE programs are not sufficient, what options are available and how can the current model be improved?

After reviewing the programs in the three test cities and the two program initiatives, research indicates CVE policy could benefit from decades of social science theory updated to examine radicalization and terrorism. This thesis contends that terrorism and crime share common variables and can therefore be similarly addressed with theoretical models such as general strain theory and social identity theory. This thesis argues that tackling the problem of CVE with a scientific approach may provide policymakers with a baseline from which to discuss the causation of and responses to

extremism, and can further provide a platform from which to establish a public counter-messaging campaign. Incorporating such research into the CVE construct may direct scientifically supported policies and create efficiencies with specific metrics.

### **C. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis uses the United Kingdom's *Prevent* program as a basis for analyzing current U.S. CVE policies. American CVE policy efforts are relatively new and, as of 2017, the FBI's Shared Responsibilities Committees and DHS's CVE Grant Program have been operating separately and concurrently with programs testing in Los Angeles, Minneapolis–Saint Paul, and Boston. The limited and available governmental reports from each test location are reviewed and discussed within the research.

#### **(1) Selection**

This thesis compares American CVE policy with the United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy. This document examines American CVE policy and discusses policy efficacy to provide a context for the American efforts in relation to another mature CVE policy, from another Western democratic government. Adding to this, evaluating the CVE efforts from criminological and sociological perspectives establishes a logical starting point from which to understand current and potential policy foundations. Studying these theoretical constructs provides an additional position to conduct formative and summative policy evaluations.

This document examines the American CVE doctrine as outlined in the 2011 and 2016 White House directives that created U.S. CVE programs. Additionally, this study reviews the existing CVE programs in the three test cities—Los Angeles, California; Minneapolis–Saint Paul, Minnesota; and Boston, Massachusetts—and the two federal CVE programs administered by the FBI and DHS.

#### **(2) Limits**

The research is focused only on the strengths and weaknesses of the American CVE policy initiatives and whether they can be improved considering the numerous social, legal, and program obstacles that can restrict its progress. The research is limited



in that official policy summative and formative metrics are likely classified and are therefore out of scope for purposes of this research. This thesis does not consider political-party platforms when recommendations are made, but it does recognize that the subject matter is highly politicized.

### (3) Type and Mode of Analysis

This research is a policy analysis. It incorporates both deductive and inductive approaches to understand the effectiveness and relevancy of American CVE policy. In first contrasting American and UK CVE policies, and then using sociological and criminological theory as a backdrop, the research uses a multi-goal policy analysis approach, as CVE policy maintains several goals that are difficult to quantify with a cost-benefit analysis. These theories were selected because researchers recently started to apply related scientific models to the study of terrorism.

### (4) Output

This thesis provides a clear discussion about the current landscape of American CVE policy and a defined set of recommendations toward policy improvement. The intended audience comprises criminologists, academic researchers, and homeland security policymakers who may begin to incorporate the social sciences into working policy.

This thesis explores whether current American CVE programs are effectively mitigating the threat of homegrown violent extremism and, if they are not, how they can be improved. To do so, this document details a comparative policy analysis across six chapters. This first chapter has introduced the problems associated with countering violent extremism in the United States, and provided an overview of the thesis question to be studied and the methodology to be followed. Chapter II reviews the relevant literature and expert opinions from government sources, law reviews, and social science fields. Chapter III is an overview of the development and current state of CVE efforts within the United States, and Chapter IV discusses the history and current state of the United Kingdom's counter-terrorism strategy for comparative purposes. Chapter V discusses the application of criminological and sociological models relevant to terrorism

research to support the idea that the United States should consider social science in future CVE policies. Finally, Chapter VI provides policy recommendations for the improvement of CVE in the United States based on the summations from each chapter.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses how a comparative policy analysis and social science research can better guide CVE strategy in the United States. It proceeds from the perspective that acts of terrorism are classified as crimes and that researchers and policymakers could advance their understanding of terrorism by examining previous literature on the causes of criminality and the advances in CVE policies found in the United Kingdom. The chapter surveys the foundations and evaluations of the CVE program in the United Kingdom to determine policy recommendations for the United States.

### A. CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON CVE PROGRAMS WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

Because domestic programming is still in its infancy, information on CVE programs within the United States is limited. Despite the recency of American CVE policy, there is a burgeoning body of generalized literature regarding CVE programs. Current CVE literature primarily falls into three categories: government documents, critiques of policy, and legal policy discussions.

In 2016, the White House published its *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the U.S.* This plan seeks to proactively “counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence” by establishing government and community partnerships, increasing governmental CVE expertise, and establishing a positive counter message, though the exact methodology is not presented.<sup>16</sup> Paralleling the White House strategy, findings from a 2016 National Institute of Justice project recommended that CVE programs (and policymakers) consider the benefit of training “peer gatekeepers” to recognize and

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<sup>16</sup> Executive Office President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, 2016).

understand when an individual is entering a pathway to radicalization, and to be trained to intervene and report these observations to authorities.<sup>17</sup>

Efforts to craft CVE policy are not without their critics. Critics of American CVE efforts, such as Brookings fellow Eric Rosand and legal scholar Faiza Patel, allege that current FBI efforts to establish the “Shared Responsibility Committee” (SRC) program, purportedly created as a referral program for “potentially violent extremists” in lieu of an arrest, is actually an intelligence-gathering operation.<sup>18</sup> Though supported by the White House strategy, critics at the Brennan Center for Justice and the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland argue that pilot programs established in three test cities were built without any supporting scientific evidence.<sup>19</sup>

In examining American CVE efforts from a legal perspective, scholars raise several notable objections. The Brennan Center for Justice argues that American CVE programs are discriminatory against Muslims, who are the “principal—if not [the] sole — target” of the program, and that the programs do not make any effort to reduce *other* types of radicalization or terrorism.<sup>20</sup> The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) argues that CVE programs are discriminatory and may not only undermine public safety by increasing tension between the government and communities, but may also lead to

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<sup>17</sup> Michael J. Williams, John G. Horgan, and William P. Evans, “Evaluation of a Multi-faceted, U.S. Community-Based, Muslim-Led CVE Program” (research report, U.S. Department of Justice, 2016); Robert Agnew, “Building on the Foundation of General Strain Theory: Specifying the Types of Strain Most Likely to Lead to Crime and Delinquency,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38 (2001): 319, doi:10.1177/0022427801038004001.351.

<sup>18</sup> “Letter Details FBI Plan for Secretive Anti-Radicalization Committees,” *The Intercept*, April 28, 2016, <https://theintercept.com/2016/04/28/letter-details-fbi-plan-for-secretive-anti-radicalization-committees/>; Patel and Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism*; Eric Rosand, “Fixing CVE in the United States Requires More than just a Name Change,” Brookings, February 17, 2017, [www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/02/16/fixing-cve-in-the-united-states-requires-more-than-just-a-name-change/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/02/16/fixing-cve-in-the-united-states-requires-more-than-just-a-name-change/).

<sup>19</sup> J. Wesley Boyd, “The Dangers of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programs,” *Psychology Today*, July 19, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/almost-addicted/201607/the-dangers-countering-violent-extremism-cve-programs>; Caitlin Mastroe and Susan Szmania, “Surveying CVE Metrics in Prevention, Disengagement and Deradicalization Programs” (report, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2016), [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_SurveyingCVE\\_Metrics\\_March2016.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_SurveyingCVE_Metrics_March2016.pdf); Patel and Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism*.

<sup>20</sup> Faiza Patel, “Countering Violent Extremism: Myths and Fact,” Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, November 2, 2015, <https://www.scribd.com/document/288251288/Countering-Violent-Extremism-Myths-and-Facts>.

directed surveillance that violates individual civil liberties.<sup>21</sup> These objections are made despite government officials' conscious effort to collaborate with prominent representatives from the Islamic community prior to the formulation of such policy.<sup>22</sup>

## **B. CVE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The United Kingdom was quick to appreciate the threat from violent extremism within its own border, especially since the watershed attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York City.<sup>23</sup> In response to this continuing threat, the Home Office developed a national counterterrorism strategy known as CONTEST. One of the four pillars of CONTEST is the *Prevent* strategy. The current *Prevent* policy, released in 2011, was shaped over the previous fourteen years and has evolved through three iterations of analysis and public debate. Because of this policy's history, research covering UK CVE polices is more available than research covering U.S. CVE policy. The literature concerning CONTEST falls into the same three categories as American CVE policy effort research: government documents, critiques of policy, and legal policy discussions.

Contrasting the American CVE efforts with the United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy is appropriate because both are Western democratic nations, and because the United Kingdom possesses an advanced CVE program. Differences between the two countries' approaches highlight, for instance, the United Kingdom's goal of all Britons collaborating to prevent radicalization, while America's CVE efforts continue to be centered on a law enforcement approach.<sup>24</sup> Framing these differences in another way, the

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<sup>21</sup> "Countering Violent Extremism: A Flawed Approach to Law Enforcement," American Civil Liberties Union, accessed January 14, 2017, <https://aclum.org/our-work/aclum-issues/freedom-of-expression-and-association/countering-violent-extremism-a-flawed-approach-to-law-enforcement/>.

<sup>22</sup> United States Attorney's Office District of Massachusetts, "A Framework for *Prevention* and Intervention Strategies: Incorporating Violent Extremism into Violence *Prevention* Efforts" (report, United States Attorney's Office District of Massachusetts, 2015), [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Boston%20Framework\\_1.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Boston%20Framework_1.pdf). In this case, representatives from the Anti-Defamation League, the Somali Community and Cultural Association, the Islamic Council of New England, and the Islamic Society of Boston are listed as having provided support and guidance in developing the respective CVE framework.

<sup>23</sup> Edgar Tembo, *US–UK Counter-terrorism after 9/11*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Adrienne Ou, "Hearts and Minds: A Comparison of Counter-radicalization Strategies in Britain and the United States," *Cornell International Affairs Review* 8, no. 5 (2016), <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1413>.

UK CVE efforts support the countering of any *ideology* that underlies radicalization and terrorism, while U.S. efforts focus attention toward prosecuting the “number of sympathizers and demobilized supporters.”<sup>25</sup>

First developed in 2003 and publicly released in 2006, the current version of the *Prevent* strategy was most recently updated in 2011. It outlines three objectives for responding to the ideologies leading to terrorism, preventing individuals from radicalizing, and establishing partnerships with stakeholders to identify risks.<sup>26</sup> Though *Prevent* has not been officially modified in six years, 2015’s Counter-Terrorism and Security Act placed this strategy on a “statutory footing” and requires specific public entities to report activities and behaviors related to radicalization.<sup>27</sup> The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act supports both the *Prevent* strategy and the subsequent UK Counter-Extremism Strategy (2015), the latter of which expands the types of extremist groups and ideologies targeted. A review of the *Prevent* strategy by the Joint Committee on Human Rights in 2016 provided unique insights regarding the strategy’s ethical and legal considerations and future changes to the doctrine.<sup>28</sup> While Her Majesty’s Government continues to consider additional CVE legislation under the Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill, it is important to consider the bill for contextual purposes of the prime minister’s future legislative desire to expand the scope of behaviors and ideologies addressed by CONTEST. Though the Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill is presently being challenged within Parliament, if the bill passes it will greatly expand the definitional and operational scope of the term “extremism” used by the United Kingdom’s CVE strategy, and may create numerous cascading effects.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> William McCants and Clint Watts, “U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, December 10, 2012, <http://www.fpri.org/article/2012/12/u-s-strategy-for-countering-violent-extremism-an-assessment>.

<sup>26</sup> Her Majesty’s Government (HM Government), *Prevent Strategy* (London: The Stationery Office, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, *Counter Extremism* (London: UK Parliament, 2016), 11, <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201617/jtselect/jtrights/105/10502.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Mark Townsend, “Theresa May’s Counter-terrorism Bill Close to ‘Sinking without Trace,’” *Guardian*, January 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jan/29/theresa-may-counter-terrorism-bill-sinking-without-trace-extremism-british-values>.

Critics and CVE scholars find room for improvement in the UK strategy, and continue their calls for efficacy standards to determine how, and *if*, programs are working.<sup>30</sup> Researcher Caitlin Mastroe finds that the United Kingdom has broken away from analyzing program effectiveness in terms of the number of policies and activities initiated in favor of standardizing a limited number of national programs (“Prevent Projects”) that retain flexibility for localized needs.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that the United Kingdom’s approach is not without potential negative effects. As CVE centralization expands, any increase in the claims of marginalization may decrease community support and erode the policy potential of CVE efforts overall.<sup>32</sup>

Comparing the UK and U.S. CVE efforts in his 2014 Naval Postgraduate School thesis, author Thomas Davis recounts the lessons learned during the history of relevant attacks. He describes attacks in Northern Ireland from the 1960s through the current al Qaeda and IS-inspired attacks as catalysts for the evolution and advancement of the United Kingdom’s CVE strategy.<sup>33</sup> Davis summarizes that the United States should implement the United Kingdom’s model of a strong and centralized national strategy that provides support and guidance to locally tailored initiatives—a strategy the United States currently lacks.<sup>34</sup> Once adopted, he argues that the strategy, as is done in the United Kingdom, should be reassessed at regular intervals. Brad Deardorff’s 2010 Naval Postgraduate School thesis also supports the notion that the United States should incorporate the *Prevent* strategy into its own model; Deardorff advocates that the United States adopt the “holistic, whole-government effort” that exercises soft-power tactics to counter extremist ideology, similar to those found in the United Kingdom.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Caitlin Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE: Understanding the Recent Changes to the United Kingdom’s Implementation of *Prevent*,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 2 (April 2016).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Thomas J. Davis, “Now Is the time for CVE-2: Updating and Implementing a Revised U.S. National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), 91–114.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>35</sup> Robert B. Deardorff, “Countering Violent Extremism: The Challenge and the Opportunity” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010), 119.

### C. CRIMINOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL MODELING RELATED TO CVE

The social science fields of criminology and sociology have supplied researchers with decades of empirical research that attempts to account for the origins of criminality.<sup>36</sup> Criminological and sociological models are important in understanding what may cause individuals to engage in the crimes associated with terrorism. It is perhaps through re-exploring this available science that we may discover the means to refine CVE efforts. While definitive studies relating criminological and sociological models to CVE have yet to be published, agencies such as the National Science and Technology Council and the United Kingdom's Home Office have joined the RAND Corporation in appealing for the inclusion of such theory into future CVE research.<sup>37</sup> This section briefly reviews the works of researchers Borum; Freilich and LaFree; Agnew; Brannon, Darken, and Strindberg; and Akers and Sellers.<sup>38</sup> These authors offer unique theoretical perspectives that help create a baseline understanding of how criminological theory can apply to terror studies.<sup>39</sup>

In 1985, criminologist Robert Agnew constructed his “general strain theory” in an attempt to explain criminal behavior through the presence of “deviance-producing

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<sup>36</sup> Craig Stewart, “Identifying the Commonalities of Radicalization and Terrorism in the United States: An Interdisciplinary Approach” (research paper, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, 2016), 15.

<sup>37</sup> National Science and Technology Council, *Combating Terrorism: Research Priorities in the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences* (Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2005), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=454862>; HM Government, *Countering the Terrorist Threat: Social and Behavioural Science—How Academia and Industry Can Play Their Part* (London: Home Office, 2010), [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97945/social-and-behavioural-science.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97945/social-and-behavioural-science.pdf); Paul K. Davis et al., *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND), 19, [www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG849.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG849.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 7–36, doi:10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.1; Joshua Freilich and Gary LaFree, “Criminology Theory and Terrorism: Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 1 (2015): 1–8, doi:10.1080/09546553.2014.959405; Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38 (2015): 958–975, doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1051375; Agnew, “Building on General Strain Theory,” 319; Ronald Akers and Christine Sellers, *Criminological Theories* (Los Angeles: Tweles, 2004), 159.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



strain.”<sup>40</sup> Agnew advanced the idea that the “failure to achieve positively valued goals” (such as financial success, or respect within one’s peer group or family), the “removal of [positive] valued stimuli,” (such as positive role models, the sudden loss of a family member or job, or personal tragedy), and finally “the presence of negative stimuli” (such as anger, fear, or frustration) were important variables in understanding crime.<sup>41</sup>

These factors play a central role in an individual’s involvement in crime, especially if perceived as “unjust, high in magnitude, or emanating from situations in which social control is undermined.”<sup>42</sup> Agnew described twelve factors that contribute to an individual’s involvement in criminality, some of which include: individual anger over perceived unjust treatment that is not in furtherance of a higher cause such as religion, the perception of incurred harm greater than what is publicly acknowledged, strain that is disrespectful of race or ethnicity, and ostracism from society.<sup>43</sup>

Agnew’s research supports that criminals have perceived “collective strains” from experiences they felt were intensely negative, perceived as unjust, or were inflicted by others in positions of power. These collective strains are positively associated as casual factors of sub-state terrorism in literature discussed later in this this thesis. When Agnew’s findings are compared against other theoretical models, several broad commonalities become clear. A discussion and summation of these findings can be found in Chapter V.

Examining the effects of *society* on crime, social disorganization theorists such as Susan Fahey and Gary LaFree presuppose that the failure of society’s institutions and structure influence criminality. Fahey and LaFree’s research produced statistical support indicating that the variables of (perceived) anger, prejudice, and cultural isolation are important in understanding crime as well as in terrorism. Writing from this perspective, Fahey and LaFree found empirical support that indicated a “lack of institutional controls

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<sup>40</sup> Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, 179.

<sup>41</sup> Agnew, “Building on General Strain Theory,” 319.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*; Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, 180.

<sup>43</sup> Agnew, “Building on General Strain Theory,” 319.

and social networks” lead to anger and violence of those groups improperly judged as “inferior,” especially when a society fails to instill a sense of communal values in the overall population.<sup>44</sup> Fahey and LaFree’s argument that rapid or major societal disruptions may drive individuals toward radicalization could be important for CVE policy considerations in the United States.

The potential impact of this research is not limited to understanding domestic CVE policy. In examining the Global Terrorism Database (surveying attacks from 1981 to 2010), Fahey and LaFree’s study created implications for terrorism research beyond the borders of the United States that may afford Western nations with unique insights into the causes of global terrorism.<sup>45</sup> As an example, the study found that governments with political instability and social upheaval sustained higher numbers of terrorist attacks, indicating that causality may extend beyond religiosity and ideology and is likely impacted by socioeconomic conditions that require additional policy considerations.<sup>46</sup>

If one sets aside differences in governmental institutions and legal systems between constitutional republics and constitutional monarchies, it may be possible to implement a template for studying crime and terrorism in countries with varying legal protections, policy restrictions, or politically and culturally available response options to social problems and crime. While there may be differences between the types of governmental structures and their domestic and foreign policies that impact the level of radicalization within their respective borders, attempting to discover the root causes of extremist ideology will increase policy effectiveness.

To be sure, criminological models should not be considered the *only* methodology by which to understand terrorism. For instance, work from David Brannan, Kristin Darken, and Anders Strindberg that examines radicalization through social identity theory has expanded academia’s world view pertaining to the phenomena of terrorism. In 2014, Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg found that anger from dehumanizing behaviors

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<sup>44</sup> Susan Fahey and Gary LaFree, “Does Country-Level Social Disorganization Increase Terrorist Attacks?” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 1: 81–111, doi:10.1080/09546553.2014.972156.

<sup>45</sup> Stewart, “Identifying the Commonalities,” 25.

<sup>46</sup> Fahey and LaFree, “Country-Level Social Disorganization,” 101.

and racism, a sense of strain from cultural isolation, and resentment of Western policies (which generates a perception of cultural alienation) may be positively correlated with individuals responding with violence. Though their scientific methodology and construction differs from that of criminological models, they highlight several shared variables common to other research.<sup>47</sup> The convergence of common variables found within multiple scientific subfields further substantiates the need to examine terrorism from the perspective of multiple disciplines.

Hafez and Mullins' "radicalization puzzle" categorizes variables from an Islamic perspective in order to understand the perceived grievances, effects of social networks, ideologies, and relationships to enabling structures that affect Islamic extremists. Making a religious context central to their research, Hafez and Mullins take a holistic approach to understanding what may lead to acts of terrorism. They find variables such as feelings of victimization and cultural isolation, for instance, to be positively associated with radicalization.<sup>48</sup> Because their work is Islamic-centric, it is particularly relevant to the examination of CVE policy as it applies to homegrown violent extremism.

Despite the possible limitations associated with any theoretical model, several commonalities across these models are notable, especially considering the diversity in their respective scientific approaches and disciplines. Common to these models are causal variables of anger, prejudice, cultural isolation, and resentment of the West. These factors are integral to a multi-disciplinary study of terrorism and should be considered in any Western CVE program.

This review suggests these commonalities should form the basis for CVE programming. While criminological theories such as general strain theory and social identity theory are often established in conflicting scientific perspectives, the analytical leverage for understanding radicalization and terrorism lies in realizing shared

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<sup>47</sup> David W. Brannan, Kristen M. Darken, and Anders Strindberg, *A Practitioner's Way Forward* (Salinas, CA: Agile Press, 2014). Any discussion of psychology's potential contribution to terror studies should include mention of Fathali Moghaddam's "staircase to terrorism" model from 2005. This work considers similar variables as those discussed here.

<sup>48</sup> Hafez and Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle," 5.

commonalities before these findings are analyzed under the respective theoretical constructs.

A potential weakness in this belief is that equating acts of terrorism to crime does not consistently account for the influence of culture or religion frequently cited as a catalyst in terrorism studies. Arguably, terrorism scholars and CVE policymakers should consider all relevant findings from social sciences in future research. Terror researcher Randy Borum asserts that attempting to dissect terrorism is “not a task for a single theory or discipline” and that a multi-faceted approach may provide researchers with a greater breadth of understanding.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, a 2016 report from the European Union’s Global Center on Cooperative Security found that as the “CVE field develops, it continues to rely and build heavily on an existing body of knowledge, experience, and expertise in a number of related fields ... [to] enrich the CVE discourse.”<sup>50</sup>

To understand the United States’ future CVE needs, it is important to consider how current CVE policy has evolved. The following chapter discusses the development of the American CVE efforts from their inception after the attacks of September 11, 2001, to the challenges these policies face today.

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<sup>49</sup> Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism,” 8.

<sup>50</sup> Naureen Chowdhury and Rafia Bhulai, “Advancing CVE Research: The Roles of Global and Regional Coordinating Bodies” (report, CT Morse, 2016), 10, <http://ct-morse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Report-CVE-Mapping-Research.pdf>.

### III. COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Since the watershed attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States and “governments throughout the world have invested substantial resources aimed at devising countering violent extremism strategies.”<sup>51</sup> The American efforts to counter violent extremism, “if properly implemented, can help sway young people from radicalizing, thereby saving lives and enabling law enforcement to better concentrate on those who have made the leap into violent militancy.”<sup>52</sup> While the efforts put forth into CVE programs in the United States are expansive, the limited number of developed programs have not proceeded without challenges. The American CVE efforts continue to be stymied by criticisms from civil liberty and privacy advocacy groups, the politicization of CVE funding, and questions about how to measure program “success.” This chapter discusses the evolution of American CVE strategies and how they may be improved.

Prior to the White House’s first CVE strategy, published in August 2011, the threat of homegrown violent extremism was relatively low in a nation of 309 million.<sup>53</sup> Between the attacks of 9/11 and the creation of this formalized CVE strategy in 2011, the number of individuals charged or killed while engaging in jihadist terrorism or related activities averaged 18.6 per year; 2009–2011 were outliers, with 45, 35, and 25 incidents, respectively.<sup>54</sup> A review of data on domestic extremism from the U.S. Extremist Crime Database, which includes radical Islamist violent extremists and far-right violent activity, indicates that domestic extremists were responsible for 225 fatalities from September 12,

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<sup>51</sup> Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, “Countering Violent Extremism in America,” George Washington University Program on Extremism, June 2015, 1, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/extremism.gwu.edu/files/downloads/CVE%20in%20America.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.; “Quick Facts: United States,” U.S. Census Bureau accessed June 15, 2017, [www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216).

<sup>54</sup> Peter Bergen et al., “Terrorism Cases: 2001-Today,” New America, accessed August 15, 2017, <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/part-i-overview-terrorism-cases-2001-today/>.

2001, through December 31, 2016.<sup>55</sup> Adding to the public’s scrutiny was the publicity from Somali–Americans in Minneapolis traveling to join al-Shabaab, as well as the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013. The evolution and rise of the Islamic State and its ability to recruit from a worldwide audience using social media added to this scrutiny.<sup>56</sup> As the number of attacks—and subsequent media coverage of extremism—increased, a renewed interest in CVE programming surfaced.<sup>57</sup>

In response to increased domestic attacks within the United States and the growing frequency of extremist attacks around the world, the United States started three parallel program initiatives to counter violent extremism. The first was a “three city pilot [that] tasked authorities in those cities with developing local CVE frameworks aimed chiefly at Islamic State-related radicalization” in 2014.<sup>58</sup> The pilot frameworks proposed “three distinct approaches: Boston’s focused on radicalized individuals, Los Angeles’ on community engagement, and Minneapolis–St. Paul’s on societal-level concerns” that, if impactful, could be modeled across the United States.<sup>59</sup>

Concurrently, and in the wake of inspired extremist attacks domestically, the FBI initiated a program called the Shared Responsibilities Committee (SRC) to create “off-ramps” for radicalizing individuals. Through direct interventions, SRC efforts were designed to help disengage individuals from the path toward violence and to avert criminal prosecution.<sup>60</sup> Lastly, the most recent American effort to combat extremism is the Department of Homeland Security’s CVE Grant Program. Established in 2016 to fund locally initiated CVE efforts, under this program the federal government awards

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<sup>55</sup> Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Countering Violent Extremism: Actions Needed to Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts*, GAO-17-300 (Washington, DC, 2017), 3, <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-300>.

<sup>56</sup> Imran Awan, “Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media,” *Society* 54, no. 2 (April 15, 2017): 138–149, doi:10.1007/s12115-017-0114-0.

<sup>57</sup> Rosand, “Fixing CVE in the United States”; Vidino and Hughes, “Countering Violent Extremism in America,” 1–6.

<sup>58</sup> Vidino and Hughes, “Countering Violent Extremism in America,” 7.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>60</sup> Rosand, “Fixing CVE in the United States.”

competing jurisdictions portions of a \$10 million grant to empower the respective communities to tailor localized CVE efforts and to promote resiliency.

**A. EMPOWERING LOCAL PARTNERS—AUGUST 2011**

In August 2011, the White House published *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* to describe the government’s overarching strategy to counter all forms of violent extremism.<sup>61</sup> While acknowledging the government’s continued challenge to preserve civil liberties and safeguard a diverse nation, the document outlined the government’s framework to counter the threat of physical violence and the messaging of ideologically motivated violence, even when such messages are constitutionally protected.<sup>62</sup>

The White House promoted this strategy as the best measure to counter radicalization through “engaging and empowering individuals and groups at the local level to build resilience against violent extremism.”<sup>63</sup> This was to be achieved through establishing and continuing partnerships with the community and expanding law enforcement’s role in CVE.<sup>64</sup> In creating this approach, the White House acknowledged the complex challenges the United States faces when attempting to counter violent extremism. This new policy had to account for potential “backlash” from extremist groups who may rebrand the American CVE policy to fit their own narrative and to inflame tensions within the very communities the policies were designed to help.

Arguing that strong local communities are critical in countering the effects of violent extremism, the government sought to rely on and bolster a community’s ability to identify those who are being targeted or surrendering to extremist ideology.<sup>65</sup> The strategy argued that “the best defenses against violent extremist ideologies are well-

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<sup>61</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, 2011), [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/empowering\\_local\\_partners.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

informed and equipped families, local communities, and local institutions.”<sup>66</sup> In support of these new CVE efforts, the administration created three goals to support local communities and stakeholders: “1) enhancing engagement with and support to local communities that may be targeted by violent extremists; 2) building government and law enforcement expertise for preventing violent extremism; and 3) countering violent extremist propaganda while promoting our ideals.”<sup>67</sup>

These goals called for greater communication between community stakeholders regarding trends and resource needs, and described ongoing training programs for communities and law enforcement officers that are based on “intelligence, research, and accurate information about how people are radicalized.”<sup>68</sup> Lastly, the White House called for a public counter-narrative strategy to challenge “justifications for violence and by actively promoting the unifying and inclusive vision of ... American ideals.”<sup>69</sup> This strategy document precipitated the issuances of the *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners* documents in 2011 and 2016, and supports the development of both the FBI’s Shared Responsibility Committee as well as the DHS CVE Grant Program that followed.

## **B. STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN—DECEMBER 2011**

Following August’s *Empowering Local Partners* document, the White House released its follow-on *Strategic Implementation Plan* (SIP) in December.<sup>70</sup> While the SIP was created to address all types of extremism, the policy was specifically written with the priority of “preventing violent extremism and terrorism inspired by al-Qaida and its affiliates and adherents.”<sup>71</sup> The SIP outlined America’s nuanced path to countering

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<sup>66</sup> President of the United States, *Empowering Local Partners*, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.; President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*.

<sup>68</sup> President of the United States, *Empowering Local Partners*, 6.

<sup>69</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 4; The quoted material specifically targets al Qaeda’s particular type of Islamic extremism, as this group was the dominant threat in 2011. For contextual purposes, it may be helpful for continuity of the argument to replace “al Qaeda” with “violent Islamic extremism.”



violent extremism through six “major and long-lasting” steps that were to be realized through the plan’s implementation:

1. There will be platforms throughout the country for including communities that may be targeted by violent extremists for recruitment and radicalization into ongoing federal, state, and local engagement efforts;
2. The Federal Government will support that engagement through a task force of senior officials from across the federal government;
3. Community-led efforts to build resilience to violent extremism will be supported;
4. Analysis will increase in depth and relevance, and will be shared with those assessed to need it, including Governor-appointed Homeland Security Advisors, Major Cities Chiefs, Mayors’ Offices, and local partners;
5. Training initiatives for Federal, State, tribal, and local government and law enforcement officials on community resilience, CVE, and cultural competence will improve, and that training will meet rigorous professional standards; and
6. Local partners, including government officials and community leaders, will better understand the threat of violent extremism and how they can work together to prevent it.<sup>72</sup>

In calling for increased support from local communities, the White House policy sought to (re)create the “If You See Something, Say Something” program model for CVE while offering citizens a “range of government and nongovernment resources that can help keep their families, friends, and neighbors safe.”<sup>73</sup> This plan also facilitated the creation of the national CVE Task Force to “synchronize and integrate whole-of-government CVE programs and activities,” conduct strategic planning, and “assess and evaluate these CVE efforts.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

### C. THE INTERAGENCY CVE TASK FORCE

The CVE Task Force was established in 2015 after an internal assessment found the U.S. government’s organizational capacity and ability to counter violent extremism insufficient.<sup>75</sup> The federal government created the interagency Task Force with experts from DHS, the Department of Justice (DOJ), FBI, and the National Counterterrorism Center to “coordinate investments in and dissemination of research and analysis, enhance engagement and technical assistance to diverse stakeholders, support the development of innovative intervention models, and cultivate communications and digital strategies” based upon the national strategy outlined in the SIP.<sup>76</sup>

The Task Force works contemporaneously with the DHS Office of Community Partnerships and their constituent “trusted communities” for domestic efforts, and the Department of State’s Global Engagement Center to administer a CVE message abroad.<sup>77</sup> The Task Force supports the national CVE strategy by coordinating and leveraging research and funding from the federal government and channeling resources to localized initiatives and stakeholders to support at-risk families and individuals. Led by the DOJ and DHS, the Task Force directs the CVE program and expands local community engagement through concerted efforts between each of ninety-four U.S. Attorneys’ Offices (USAOs).<sup>78</sup> The USAOs are in a unique position, as senior law enforcement officials, to partner with U.S. Departments of State, Education, and Health and Human Services to help convene and manage resources, and to cultivate relationships to counter violent extremism.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*, 2.

<sup>76</sup> “What is CVE?,” DHS, accessed March 22, 2017, [www.dhs.gov/cve/what-is-cve](http://www.dhs.gov/cve/what-is-cve).

<sup>77</sup> Stephanie Condon, “White House Creating New Counter-terrorism Task Force,” CBS News, January 08, 2016, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/white-house-creating-new-counter-terrorism-task-force/>.

<sup>78</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*, 2; Officials from DHS, DOJ, FBI, National Counterterrorism Center, and other agencies comprised the CVE Task Force; Vidino and Hughes, “Countering Violent Extremism in America,” 6.

<sup>79</sup> David Schanzer and Joseph Eyerman, *United States Attorneys’ Community Outreach and Engagement Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism: Results from a Nationwide Survey* (report, Duke University, 2016); President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*, 10.

The Task Force supports this national CVE strategy under four distinct avenues: research and analysis, engagement and technical assistance, interventions, and communications and digital strategy.<sup>80</sup> DHS advises that the related CVE efforts are “informed by a rigorous, evidence-based approach to research and analysis that addresses all forms of violent extremism.”<sup>81</sup> Based on the work of “academic researchers, analysts, and program implementers,” the Task Force set out to understand the narratives, behaviors, and precursor activities in the radicalization and mobilization processes to violence.<sup>82</sup> This whole-of-government framework includes community outreach efforts from the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, DOJ efforts to distribute literature to raise awareness about discrimination and civil rights protections, and a DHS–DOJ partnership to expand the Building Communities of Trust Initiative, which is designed to align these national directives with local law enforcement agencies and state fusion centers.<sup>83</sup> According to the SIP, these efforts should be guided by “academia, think tanks, and industry, and exchanges with international allies to identify best practices.”<sup>84</sup> This information is to be disseminated from DHS components, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the FBI to CVE policy stakeholders, designed to help those stakeholders create CVE policy.<sup>85</sup>

In addition to understanding the current dynamics associated with radicalization and extremist violence, the Task Force seeks to synthesize the existing research and analysis and to leverage the information for future projects while filling analysis gaps and distributing CVE information to trusted stakeholders.<sup>86</sup> Underlying these initiatives are mandates to develop metrics that show accountability and progress, and that ensure

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<sup>80</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*; “Countering Violent Extremism Task Force,” DHS, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/cve/task-force#research-analysis>.

<sup>81</sup> DHS, “Countering Violent Extremism Task Force.”

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*, 11.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*; While these plans were presented in the document, there is no known public evidence indicating that such information was delivered during policy considerations in developing the American CVE program.

<sup>86</sup> DHS, “Countering Violent Extremism Task Force.”

“CVE efforts enhance our Nation’s ability to prevent and counter violent extremism.”<sup>87</sup> The SIP recommends implementing evaluative efforts into all the CVE programs before they are launched.<sup>88</sup> To facilitate this, the Task Force convenes regularly to coordinate future CVE efforts and to work to streamline research agendas before incorporating the research into training opportunities.<sup>89</sup>

The Task Force’s mandates to direct CVE programming and to coordinate efforts with the USAOs are evidenced through the continuation of the three-city CVE pilot program, first initiated in 2014. In channeling program and resources to local stakeholders, the Task Force began to test federally supported community outreach efforts.

#### **D. THREE-CITY CVE PILOT PROGRAM**

In 2014, the DOJ announced a determined effort to counter violent extremism; through community outreach in three test locations, the effort involved engaging local communities to “improve awareness and educate communities about violence risk factors in order to stop radicalization to violence before it starts.”<sup>90</sup> A collaboration between the DOJ, DHS, and the National Counterterrorism Center, the program designated three cities as pilot locations to begin implementing a new CVE strategy. This federal collaborative selected Los Angeles, Boston, and Minneapolis–Saint Paul as pilot locations based on their respective successes in establishing locally driven and government-led community partnerships. The goal of promoting these locations as testbeds for CVE efforts was to “broaden the base of community leaders and key stakeholders involved at the local level in order to help eliminate conditions that lead to alienation and violent extremism, and to empower young people and other vulnerable communities to reject destructive

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<sup>87</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>90</sup> “Pilot Programs Are Key to our Countering Violent Extremism Efforts,” Department of Justice, February 18, 2015, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/pilot-programs-are-key-our-countering-violent-extremism-efforts>.

ideologies.”<sup>91</sup> Building and expanding upon the previously created community program models in these pilot locations, the pilot programs were established without a predetermined end date in hopes of creating a CVE template that could be modeled across the United States.

### **1. Los Angeles**

Los Angeles’ community–government collaborative successes began in 2008 following an efficacious partnership between the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, and numerous faith-based community groups.<sup>92</sup> These were followed by a subsequent partnership in 2011 between the city of Los Angeles and the DHS Office for Strategic Engagement to build community resilience and enhance government–community relationships. Capitalizing on these successes, in 2013, Los Angeles officials created an interagency coordination group as an umbrella organization that partnered local police agencies, DHS, the USAO, and the FBI with numerous non-government organizations and community stakeholders across the jurisdiction. Together, the interagency coordination group set out to build resilience through joint workshops, conferences, programs, and public briefings.<sup>93</sup> This community resilience platform, it was believed, would “encourage an environment in which precursor elements of violent extremism cannot take root” while addressing a “broad spectrum of extremist ideology that promotes violence and criminal activity.”<sup>94</sup>

As outlined in 2015’s “The Los Angeles Framework for Countering Violent Extremism,” the Los Angeles CVE effort is built upon three distinct pillars: prevention, intervention, and interdiction. For “prevention” efforts, the Los Angeles framework classifies expanding government–community relationships under categories of “awareness,” “community inclusion,” and, “participation of women and youth.”

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<sup>91</sup> Department of Justice, “Pilot Programs.”

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.; Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, “The Los Angeles Framework for Countering Violent Extremism,” (report, DHS, 2015), <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Los%20Angeles%20Framework%20for%20CVE-Full%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>93</sup> DOJ, “Pilot Programs.”

<sup>94</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, “Framework for CVE,” 1.

Collectively, the “prevention” plans are designed to promote civic participation, inclusiveness, and networking and resource opportunities for at-risk populations.<sup>95</sup> The framework outlines the “intervention” pillar as an effort to identify individuals who are becoming radicalized toward violence, and affording them “off-ramps”—opportunities to access a full range of social and mental health services that can deter extremist-based violence.<sup>96</sup> While this localized, ambitious effort may be laudable, the “intervention” pillar programming remains in the initial planning phase as questions of scientific support, liability, and available resources remain unanswered.<sup>97</sup> The “interdiction” pillar of Los Angeles’ framework relates to enforcement and prosecution of individuals who violate the law. While described as “critical to stopping individuals who are intent on committing violence,” the framework places emphasis on the two previous components and makes law enforcement action the last resort to alleviate the new program’s strain on existing police resources.<sup>98</sup>

Overall, the framework seeks to address a broad spectrum of extremist ideology, yet throughout the supporting documentation it is evident that Islamic extremism is the only focus of the whole-of-community effort. The examples of community-led initiatives are predominately American Muslim-based and do not target other types of extremism. This narrow focus has led to numerous complaints of discrimination and violations of civil liberties by notable advocacy groups and researchers such as the Council on American–Islamic Relations, the Brennan Center, and the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism.<sup>99</sup>

As the prevention and interdiction components of the Los Angeles framework continue in place and intervention efforts stall, questions and objections about this

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<sup>95</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, “Framework for CVE,” 4–7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>99</sup> “Brief on Countering Violent Extremism,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, July 2015, <https://www.cair.com/government-affairs/13063-brief-on-countering-violent-extremism-cve.html>; Patel and Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism*; Stevan Weine, Ahmed Younis, and Chloe Polutnik, *Community Policing to Counter Violent Extremism: A Process Evaluation in Los Angeles* (report, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2017).

complex framework remain and challenges persist. Despite the program’s public nature, it has undergone little open-source review or analysis, which has created a significant gap in research. Beyond the generalized legal and civic criticism discussed in Chapter II, program-specific reviews are currently non-existent. Government officials and the public must address the program’s persistent challenges: how to prioritize resources and engage responsible network stakeholders while raising communal inclusiveness, especially for stigmatized at-risk communities.<sup>100</sup>

## 2. Minneapolis-Saint Paul

Al-Shabaab began recruiting from Minneapolis–Saint Paul, Minnesota’s, extensive Somali population as early as 2007.<sup>101</sup> Recruitment efforts gained national attention in 2008 when Shirwa Ahmed, having fled the United States for Somalia with nineteen others, became the first American suicide bomber, detonating a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device at a government compound in Puntland, Somalia.<sup>102</sup>

This attack, along with a growing number of arraignments in the U.S. District Court on terrorism-related charges and the Islamic State’s growing—and innovative—recruitment efforts, have exposed a dangerous source of potential extremism in Minnesota communities.<sup>103</sup> To address the drivers of violent extremism in Minneapolis–Saint Paul, the community joined forces with the USAO in 2015 to create a pilot program

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<sup>100</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, “Framework for CVE,” 10.

<sup>101</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Minnesota, “Building Community Resilience Minneapolis-St. Paul Pilot Program: A Community-Led Local Framework” (report, DOJ, 2015), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/file/642121/download>.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 1; Andrea Elliott, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America,” *New York Times*, July 11, 2009, accessed May 2, 2017, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/us/12somalis.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/us/12somalis.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all).

<sup>103</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Minnesota, “Building Community Resilience,” 1; Mukhtar Ibrahim, “ISIS Trial in Minnesota: What You Need to Know,” Minnesota Public Radio News, May 6, 2016, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2016/05/06/isis-trial-minnesota-faq>; Paul McEnroe and Allison Sherry, “Minnesota Leads the Nation in Would-Be ISIL Terrorists from U.S., Report Finds,” *Star Tribune*, September 29, 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-leads-the-nation-in-would-be-isis-terrorists-from-u-s-report-finds/329942131/>.

called “Building Community Resilience,” designed to disrupt pathways to radicalization from the Islamic community.<sup>104</sup>

Based on these factors, Minneapolis–Saint Paul was selected to expand its existing CVE community engagement efforts under the pilot program. Planners cited the strategy from both 2011 White House documents *Empowering Local Partners* and the *Strategic Implementation Plan*: “Our best defenses against violent extremist ideologies are well-informed and equipped families, local communities, and local institutions.”<sup>105</sup> Because the officials in Minneapolis–Saint Paul had previously fostered trusting and growing relationships within the Somali community, they were able to join federal representatives to meet with local religious leaders and community stakeholders to discuss research and then develop plans to prevent radicalization.<sup>106</sup>

During these discussions, leaders and community members identified a “deepening disconnect between youth and religious leaders,” “internal identity crises,” “community isolation,” and a “lack of opportunity—including high unemployment, lack of activities for youth, and few mentors” as root causes of radicalization.<sup>107</sup> Independent academic research had previously identified many of these issues as systemic problems in the study of criminality and terrorism. To attempt to address these shared concerns, the Minneapolis–Saint Paul CVE framework was built upon three community-driven components—engagement, prevention, and intervention—to build community resiliency against radicalization.<sup>108</sup>

The CVE engagement component continued the existing practice of hiring Somali police officers and expanded the outreach connections within the Somali community. Community leaders continue to seek to leverage federal entities such as the Transportation Security Administration and Customs and Border Protection to facilitate

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<sup>104</sup> Philip Marcelo, “Boston Pilot Program Shows Attempts to Recast Anti-extremism Efforts,” *Telegram*, August 26, 2016, <http://www.telegram.com/news/20160826/boston-pilot-program-shows-attempts-to-recast-anti-extremism-efforts>.

<sup>105</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan*, 1; *Empowering Local Partners*, 1.

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Minnesota, “Building Community Resilience,” 3.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–7



transparency and to foster discussion about a variety of social issues impacting the Somali community.<sup>109</sup> Minneapolis–Saint Paul’s prevention component is designed to bring “after-school activities and mentor programs, higher education scholarships and job opportunities” to the under-served Somali community.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the community-led intervention component comprises two tandem programs: a school-based model and a community model, with the former “bridging the gap between youth, their parents, and the school system” during and after school hours. The community model promotes access to faith-based organizations and mental health professionals for members of the Somali community.<sup>111</sup>

While it shows a degree of promise, this pilot program has yet to become fully implemented and there have been no attempts to measure the program’s success. The most recent outline of the Minneapolis–Saint Paul framework, released in 2015, indicates that committees are still needed to continue the initial plan’s efforts, and localized stakeholder resources and funding still need to be secured.

### **3. Boston**

Like Los Angeles and Minneapolis–Saint Paul, Boston was selected as a CVE pilot program location based on its prior successes in “developing robust comprehensive violence prevention and intervention strategies” to reduce crime.<sup>112</sup> Partnering with the DOJ, FBI, DHS, and National Counterterrorism Center to expand their local collaborative efforts, officials from Boston’s CVE program worked with non-government organizations and community leaders to create the pilot program.<sup>113</sup> Branded as

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<sup>109</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Minnesota, “Building Community Resilience,” 4.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Massachusetts, “Prevention and Intervention Strategies,” 1.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 1; Boston’s CVE program was rebranded as “PEACE” (Promoting Engagement, Acceptance, and Community Empowerment) in August 2016; Marcelo, “Boston Pilot Program.”

“PEACE,” Boston’s program was designed to counter violent extremism and build community resilience through “prevention and intervention approaches.”<sup>114</sup>

Much like the test program in Minneapolis–Saint Paul, and unlike Los Angeles’, Boston’s pilot program strategy does not include a formal suppression or securitization component.<sup>115</sup> The Boston framework begins by distinguishing that “law enforcement suppression strategies fall under counterterrorism efforts ... [that take place after] an individual has begun to prepare for or engage in ideologically-motivated violence to advance their cause.”<sup>116</sup> “This is an important distinction to make,” the framework notes.<sup>117</sup> This difference is not present in the Minneapolis–Saint Paul or Los Angeles frameworks; in much of the professional and academic CVE literature, however, CVE efforts are typically focused on prevention efforts, while topics such as suppression or deradicalization typically fall under the counterterrorism efforts that occur after an extremist has radicalized and is planning to commit, or has committed, violence. While this separation may appease some critics U.S. CVE policy critics, as discussed in Chapters V and VI, holistic CVE strategies may require a formal counterterrorism strategy as a necessary component to reduce the continuing threat of terrorism.

Boston’s CVE efforts were created from the understanding that the path to violent extremism is non-linear and there are limitations to accurately predicting who may act on constitutionally protected viewpoints.<sup>118</sup> Boston’s pilot program does not advocate “surging resources to specific communities, who have not directly asked for assistance,” as this may “stigmatize those communities [and] create further isolation, alienation and disenfranchised individuals.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Massachusetts, “Prevention and Intervention Strategies,” 1; Marcelo, “Boston Pilot Program.”

<sup>115</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Massachusetts, “Prevention and Intervention Strategies,” 1–2.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

Instead, the framework seeks to expand the number of resources and service providers available while empowering community members to reach out to at-risk individuals.<sup>120</sup> In structuring the framework this way, Boston’s CVE program seeks to “protect vulnerable individuals from engagement in and the nation from violent extremism” by increasing capacity and resiliency.<sup>121</sup> While Boston’s pilot program literature identifies seven general challenges to implementing the program, these challenges are not unique to Boston. The city’s CVE document acknowledges program difficulties such as continued recruitment efforts by violent extremists through social media, the cascading effects of U.S. foreign policy and subsequent impact on the radicalization process, and the need for “specialized support and services” for those involved in terrorism-related activities.<sup>122</sup> While the goals of Boston’s PEACE program represent an advancement of CVE strategy in the United States, the pilot program must overcome a series of policy challenges and support hurdles before it begins in earnest.

All three pilot programs continue to face similar challenges. As components of the three localized pilot programs began to languish, the federal government has continued to develop programming to counter violent extremism in the United States. Similar to the intervention or “off-ramp” strategies described in the Los Angeles and Minneapolis–Saint Paul pilot programs, and much like the *Prevent* strategy discussed in the next chapter, the FBI created the Shared Responsibility Committee (SRC) program to redirect individuals who may radicalize.

#### **E. FBI SHARED RESPONSIBILITY COMMITTEES**

In November 2015, the FBI established the SRC program as a classified program to identify and redirect radicalized individuals within unidentified communities across the United States.<sup>123</sup> According to open-source reports, the premise behind the SRCs is to

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<sup>120</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Massachusetts, “Prevention and Intervention Strategies,” 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>123</sup> Murtaza Hussain and Jenna McLaughlin, “FBI’S ‘Shared Responsibility Committees’ to Identify ‘Radicalized’ Muslims Raise Alarms,” *Intercept*, April 9, 2016, <https://theintercept.com/2016/04/09/fbis-shared-responsibility-committees-to-identify-radicalized-muslims-raises-alarms/>.

“have social service workers, teachers, mental health professionals, religious figures, and others interdict young people they believe are on a path toward radicalization.”<sup>124</sup> In 2016, *The Intercept* published a letter allegedly from the FBI that outlined the program’s intent to have confidential, FBI-trained community members from SRCs work with the FBI to identify radicalizing individuals and attempt to steer them away from violence and to avoid potentially unnecessary prosecution.<sup>125</sup> In the letter, the FBI explained that “potentially violent extremists” may be referred to the SRCs by the FBI, with the expectation that the SRC would then tailor a multidisciplinary intervention plan that influences the subject to disengage from the “social and psychological process” that leads to violence.<sup>126</sup> The plan outlined resources that could facilitate disengagement, such as mentoring support, anger management, cognitive or behavioral therapies, education skills, career building and support, engagement and exposure with perceived adversaries, and mental healthcare to facilitate this disengagement.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, the letter mentioned the possibility of the FBI conducting a concurrent criminal investigation and possibly sharing information received from the SRC for purposes of prosecution.<sup>128</sup>

Despite efforts to create a non-prosecutorial “off-ramp” for potential extremists, the SRC concept has been the source of many public complaints from a spectrum of experts and advocacy groups, reflecting a convergence of objections to CVE programs in general and the FBI’s SRC plan specifically. The legal director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee claims the SRCs “are expanding the informant program under the guise of an intervention program, which it is not.”<sup>129</sup> Citing the parallels between the SRC concepts and the United Kingdom’s Channel program, described in the next chapter, a director at the New York School of Law’s Brennan Center argues that perceived failure(s) of the Channel program show that a program such as the SRC will

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<sup>124</sup> Hussain and McLaughlin, “Shared Responsibility Committees.”

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*; Ryan Tate, “FBI-SRC-Letter,” Document Cloud, April 9, 2016, [www.documentcloud.org/documents/2815794-FBI-SRC-Letter.html#document/p1](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2815794-FBI-SRC-Letter.html#document/p1).

<sup>127</sup> Tate, “FBI-SRC-Letter.”

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Hussain and McLaughlin, “Shared Responsibility Committees.”

fail in the United States. She argues, “It is completely contrary to the experience of the U.K., where about 80 percent of Channel referrals are rejected as unfounded.”<sup>130</sup>

This criticism is not necessarily without merit; the FBI letter reiterates a growing consensus in social science that there is not yet a definitive set of predictors indicating who may or may not commit violence based upon extremist ideals.<sup>131</sup> This generates questions about what criteria would underlie referrals to the SRC. Furthermore, if the FBI cannot positively identify traits leading up to an attack, how would non-law enforcement professionals make this determination? Moreover, if such criteria are absent, those responsible for enforcement may alienate an at-risk population which many argue is already unfairly scrutinized under present CVE pilot programs. Additionally, the SRC program, it is argued, may be perceived as “an extension of law enforcement,” providing “another set of intrusive eyes and ears in an already marginalized community.”<sup>132</sup>

In an era when the American public is clamoring for government transparency, the secretive nature and non-disclosure partner agreements of the SRC program are additional sources of criticism. In 2016, the CATO Institute equated the SRC program to the “loyalty” investigations by the American Protective League (APL) of the early 1900s. According to the report, “the SRCs are the new covert version of the APL, based on the same discredited notion that entire groups of people are potential threats based simply on their religion, race, or national origin.”<sup>133</sup>

In the fall of 2016, the FBI quietly abandoned the SRC program after continued pressure from the Congress and Muslim-based advocacy groups.<sup>134</sup> As of October 2017, it is unknown if the SRC program has been completely abandoned or if it has been rebranded into another program, but the 2016 update to the White House’s SIP discusses

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<sup>130</sup> Hussain and McLaughlin, “Shared Responsibility Committees.”

<sup>131</sup> Tate, “FBI-SRC-Letter.”

<sup>132</sup> Hussain and McLaughlin, “Shared Responsibility Committees”; Patrick G. Eddington, “The FBI Is Ramping up Use of Informants to Snoop on Muslims,” Cato Institute, May 6, 2016, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/fbi-ramping-use-informants-snoop-muslims>.

<sup>133</sup> Eddington “FBI Informants.”

<sup>134</sup> Rosand, “Fixing CVE in the United States.”

DOJ-led “local intervention teams” charged with “ensuring that at-risk individuals have the resources needed to be redirected from violence [and these teams] can be led by a variety of practitioners” that include those mentioned in the SRC program.<sup>135</sup>

While the FBI SRC program received apparently fatal opposition, the FBI “deserves credit for recognizing the need to develop new tools to deal with the range of violent extremist challenges it is now facing.”<sup>136</sup> To assuage privacy groups and civil-rights advocates, the FBI will need to find a public mechanism to help at-risk communities without commingling these with enforcement actions. In absence of SRCs (or local intervention teams), the FBI and federal prosecutors are relegated to taking enforcement actions against individuals instead of strengthening communities.<sup>137</sup> Now, it appears that an enforcement entity such as the FBI should not be expected to both empower and prosecute the same groups simultaneously.

In 2016, with the SRC concept abandoned and American CVE efforts in stasis, the Obama administration revised the SIP. The 2016 SIP remains the most current CVE strategy document for the United States and was updated to account for the changes to the violent extremist landscape.

#### **F. STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN—2016 UPDATE**

In 2016 the White House updated and replaced the SIP from 2011 to account for the evolving dynamics of violent extremism while retaining the overall goal of preventing “violent extremists and their supporters from inspiring, radicalizing, financing, or recruiting individuals or groups in the United States to commit acts of violence.”<sup>138</sup> The revised SIP outlines the importance of building “strong and resilient” communities where

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<sup>135</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, 2016), 11, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016\\_strategic\\_implementation\\_plan\\_empowering\\_local\\_partners\\_prev.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016_strategic_implementation_plan_empowering_local_partners_prev.pdf); Waqas Mirza, “How Will Obama’s Counterterrorism Program Fare under the Trump administration?,” Mud Rock, January 12, 2017, [mudckrock.com/news/archives/2017/jan/12/obamas-CVEtrump/](http://mudckrock.com/news/archives/2017/jan/12/obamas-CVEtrump/).

<sup>136</sup> Rosand, “Fixing CVE in the United States.”

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan 2016*, 1.

“violent extremists routinely meet disinterest and opposition and where recruitment attempts regularly fail,” countering the messages from radical ideologies, and “addressing causes and driving factors” of radicalism as the primary goals of the government’s CVE strategy.<sup>139</sup> Unlike its 2011 predecessor, the revised SIP defined countering violent extremism as the “proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence.”<sup>140</sup> Using this definition as the basis to build America’s CVE strategy, it sought to counter all forms of violent extremism.

The 2016 SIP strategy declares three area priorities: “enhancing engagement with and support to local communities,” “building government and law enforcement expertise for preventing violent extremism,” and “countering violent extremist propaganda while promoting [American] ideals.”<sup>141</sup> These comprehensive strategic goals were designed to support existing public programs and to empower local stakeholders, who “are most likely to be able to address the drivers of violent extremism or interact with someone who needs support to avoid becoming radicalized to violence.”<sup>142</sup>

As designed, the current CVE strategy calls for increased coordinated efforts between federal, local, and individual levels to be managed through the aforementioned Task Force in a multi-tiered national CVE framework. In an effort to further support localized CVE programs, the White House began sponsoring a number of funding initiatives designed to empower local communities to develop their own tailored programs to reduce the threat of terrorism. The CVE Grant Program was introduced as a new CVE program administered in 2016 by DHS.

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<sup>139</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan* 2016, 2.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*; The 2016 SIP defined “violent extremists” as “individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals.” See President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan* 2016, 1.

<sup>141</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan* 2016, 2.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

## G. DHS CVE GRANT PROGRAM

The White House's 2016 SIP advocates "building government and law enforcement expertise for preventing violent extremism" as a tenet of the Obama administration's efforts to prevent violent extremism from spreading in the United States.<sup>143</sup> In furtherance of this strategy, the White House leveraged a number of funding mechanisms to spur the creation and continuance of locally initiated directed CVE programs across the country.<sup>144</sup> While the SIP discusses the added potential from the State Homeland Security Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative to fund such CVE programs, the newly formed DHS CVE Grant Program was introduced as the primary source of CVE funding for locally inspired initiatives.<sup>145</sup>

Beginning in 2015, Congress granted DHS' CVE Grant Program with \$10 million in funding to support "state and local governments, universities and non-profit organizations in order to assist local communities in their own efforts to counter violent extremism."<sup>146</sup> In July 2016, DHS began accepting program applications for the first awards, ranging from \$20,000 to of \$1,500,000, across five focus areas: developing resilience, challenging the (extremist) narrative, training and engagement, managing intervention activities, and building capacity.<sup>147</sup>

DHS sought to promote the most successful programs as templates for local communities across the United States.<sup>148</sup> A partnership between the DHS' Office for Community Partnerships, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Office for Civil Rights and Liberties, and the CVE Task Force assessed the applications based on innovation and cost efficiency matrices before submitting the nominated

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<sup>143</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan* 2016, 1.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> "DHS Countering Violent Extremism Grants," DHS, accessed July 9, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/cvegrants>.

<sup>147</sup> "Fact Sheet: FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Grants," DHS, July 6, 2016, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/07/06/fy-2016-countering-violent-extremism-cve-grants>.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*



applications to the secretary of homeland security, “who retains the discretion to consider other factors and information” before making final grant decisions.<sup>149</sup>

On January 13, 2017, during the waning days of the Obama administration, then-DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson announced the first round of awards under the grant program.<sup>150</sup> Thirty-one agencies from across the United States were awarded various levels of DHS funding, as were programs from the cities hosting the three pilot programs.<sup>151</sup> While many of the awards went to programs structured to counter the narratives of the Islamic State and al Qaeda, one awardee, Life After Hate, was “devoted to the rehabilitation of former neo-Nazis and other domestic extremists in this country.”<sup>152</sup> The array of programs recognized by the awarding of funds is reflective of what former Secretary Johnson described as a “homeland security imperative” to address a wide scope of violent extremism present in the United States.<sup>153</sup> These advances in American CVE policy arrived at the end of one presidential administration and before the transition to another; the election that followed was especially contentious, and frequently fell along deeply divided racial lines and political spectrums.

Then-Secretary Johnson announced the award recipients one week before the swearing in of the newly elected Trump administration; when the new administration took over, officials began to revise policy directives and to replace key cabinet positions such as the secretary for homeland security. Soon after the new administration assumed office, the White House placed a hold on the previous administration’s promised disbursement of funds from the DHS CVE Grant Program to review the recipients’ plans.<sup>154</sup> In February 2017, shortly after the presidential inauguration and the

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<sup>149</sup> DHS, “Fact Sheet.”

<sup>150</sup> “Statement by Secretary Jeh Johnson Announcing First Round of DHS’s Countering Violent Extremism Grants,” DHS, January 13, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/01/13/statement-secretary-jeh-johnson-announcing-first-round-dhss-countering-violent>.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “DHS Strips Funding from Group That Counters Neo-Nazi Violence,” *Foreign Policy*, June 27, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/26/dhs-strips-funding-from-group-that-counters-neo-nazi-violence/>.

administration's decision to review the list of recipients inherited from the previous administration, four grant recipients from Muslim-based organizations voluntarily rejected their awards under protest of the administration's "rhetoric of the travel ban" and "current political climate."<sup>155</sup>

After it became public that the new administration was considering changing the name of the DHS Grant Program to an "iteration of 'countering radical Islamic extremism,'" discussions about the program became contentious.<sup>156</sup> Unmoved by the rebuke from Muslim-advocacy groups, the new administration amended the criteria DHS used to evaluate applications. According to DHS, the new criteria considered "whether applicants for CVE awards would partner with law enforcement, had a strong basis of prior experience in countering violent extremism, had a history of prior efforts to implement prevention programs targeting violent extremism, and were viable to continue after the end of the award period."<sup>157</sup>

On June 23, 2017, General John F. Kelly (ret.), who was at that time the secretary of homeland security for President Trump's administration, announced that, after a careful review, the list of thirty-one recipients under the previous administration was updated to twenty-six, and excluded eleven previous designees.<sup>158</sup> One notable exclusion was the Life After Hate program, whose funding was stripped under the new administration. This removal fueled further allegations of the administration's efforts to redirect "the CVE program to focus more on Islamic extremism."<sup>159</sup> DHS reiterated that law enforcement agencies are to be granted priority and that "16 out of the 26 selected

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<sup>155</sup> "Fourth Muslim Group Rejects Federal Grant to Fight Extremism," Fox News, February 11, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/02/11/fourth-muslim-group-rejects-federal-grant-to-fight-extremism.html>; Andrew Glazzard and Eric Rosand, "Is It All Over for CVE?" *Lawfare* (blog), June 13, 2017, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/it-all-over-cve>.

<sup>156</sup> Fox News, "Fourth Muslim Group"; Glazzard and Rosand, "Is It All Over for CVE."

<sup>157</sup> Jennifer Hansler, "DHS Shifts Focus of Funding against Extremism," CNN, July 4, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/07/01/politics/cve-funding-changes/>.

<sup>158</sup> "DHS Awards Grants to Counter Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in U.S.," DHS, June 23, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/06/23/dhs-awards-grants-counter-terrorist-recruitment-and-radicalization-us>; Hansler, "DHS Shifts Focus."

<sup>159</sup> Allen-Ebrahimian, "DHS Strips Funding; Faiza Patel, "The Trump Administration Provides One More Reason to Discontinue CVE," *Just Security*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.justsecurity.org/42998/trump-administration-reason-discontinue-cve>.

projects ‘address all forms of violent extremism, including domestic political violent extremism and white supremacist violent extremism.’”<sup>160</sup> The recognized priority funding for law enforcement over community groups has intensified the debate about the balance of securitization typically found in counterterrorism efforts and in discussions of interventions before one radicalizes or exhibits behaviors believed to lead to violence.<sup>161</sup>

## **H. A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATE OF CVE IN THE UNITED STATES**

American efforts to counter violent extremism face persistent challenges from a continued lack of funding and significant resistance from the Muslim community and civil libertarians across the country. These continuing challenges have seemingly stalled the fledgling programs that have yet to produce a working nationally driven CVE effort that empowers local communities despite the promise of three distinctly different approaches underway in the pilot programs.<sup>162</sup>

Undoubtedly, the DHS Grant Program awarding \$10 million for local program initiatives can be positively impactful for the recipients, yet this amount represents only one-fifth of DHS’ \$50 million 2016 appropriation to “address threats from violent extremism and from complex, coordinated terrorist attacks.”<sup>163</sup> While \$10 million was dedicated to the competitive grant program, an additional \$39 million was to be awarded under the Homeland Security Grant Program and another \$1 million for Joint Counterterrorism Workshops; though these are not well publicized, they do serve other CVE interests nationally.

Although locally initiated CVE programs have afforded communities the opportunity to pursue private and corporate revenue streams, there remains a striking imbalance between the level of federal guidance and the amount of federal funding made

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<sup>160</sup> Allen-Ebrahimian, “DHS Strips Funding.”

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Vidino and Seamus, “Countering Violent Extremism in America,” 1; President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan 2016*, 10.

<sup>163</sup> GAO, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 12.

available to support nationally directed CVE programming.<sup>164</sup> Likely exacerbating this imbalance, the White House’s fiscal year 2018 budget “proposes eliminating funding for ... Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)/Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attack (CCTA)” programs, explaining that other funding mechanisms are already available for programs under the overlapping State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative.<sup>165</sup> If this budget is signed into law without changes, the elimination of CVE funds may have a cascading and chilling effect on CVE programming at national and local levels.

### **1. Continuing Objections**

Today, the 2016 CVE strategy documents have been archived; an updated strategy has yet to be published by the Trump administration. The fate of the FBI-led SRC program remains unknown.<sup>166</sup> The FBI has not publicly commented on anecdotal evidence, which suggests that the program is either suspended, cancelled, or is under evaluation at this time. There has been considerable pushback from legal and community groups claiming a lack of transparency and that CVE program parameters are “extraordinarily overly inclusive” of the types of behaviors and characteristics used to identify radicals.<sup>167</sup> While the three pilot programs continue to operate under the direction of the USAOs, numerous public and private groups argue the American CVE programs are counterproductive and intensify the causal variables that lead to radicalization. As previously discussed, terror scholars and legal consortiums have levied serious legal and ethical objections to the current American CVE strategy. Non-governmental organizations argue that the current CVE strategy often “confuses conflict

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<sup>164</sup> Rosand, “Fixing CVE in the United States”; Vidino and Hughes, “Countering Violent Extremism,” 18.

<sup>165</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States, *Major Savings and Reforms: Budget of the U.S. Government Fiscal Year 2018* (Washington, DC: Office of Management and Budget, 2017).

<sup>166</sup> Kristin McCarthy, “Is the FBI’s Flawed Terrorist Intervention Program Really Cancelled? There’s Reason to Believe ‘Shared Responsibility Committees’ Are Still Alive,” Arab American Institute, November 3, 2016, [http://www.aaiusa.org/is\\_the\\_fbi\\_s\\_terrorist\\_intervention\\_program\\_really\\_cancelled](http://www.aaiusa.org/is_the_fbi_s_terrorist_intervention_program_really_cancelled).

<sup>167</sup> “Arjun Singh Sethi of the Sikh Coalition Critiques the FBI’s ‘Shared Responsibility Committees,’” Cato Institute video, February 1, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/multimedia/cato-audio/arjun-singh-sethi-sikh-coalition-critiques-fbis-shared-responsibility>.

violence with terrorism; fails to deliver on its promise to ‘tame’ militarized and other hard-security approaches to counterterrorism; prioritizes Western security concerns over the needs of its supposed beneficiaries; stigmatizes targeted communities; and are constructed on a remarkably weak base of evidence.”<sup>168</sup>

## 2. Measurability of Efforts

Substantiating additional criticisms, a 2017 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found serious fault with the American CVE efforts. After conducting a qualitative analysis, the GAO found that less than half of the forty-four tasks originally outlined as core program objectives in the 2011 SIP have been completed; the report also indicated that the strategies do not have measurable outcomes, and that the federal government does not have a “cohesive strategy or process for assessing the overall CVE effort.”<sup>169</sup> Though the Task Force is formally positioned to coordinate the nation’s CVE plans across the whole of government and to direct stakeholders toward a unified strategy with measurable outcomes, the lack of matrices within the American CVE program is concerning.<sup>170</sup> Unfortunately, American CVE efforts have not fared well when direct reporting data has been available.

An independent review published in 2016 by the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security at Duke University surveyed self-reported performance by the USAOs regarding America’s CVE efforts. Ninety-nine percent of all USAOs reported spending an average of only fifteen hours per month on outreach and engagement efforts.<sup>171</sup> Additionally, 82 percent of the responding USAOs reported these hours were spent providing information on “anti-discrimination, hate crime, and fraud” and explaining how the USAOs worked, rather than working on activities they considered directly related to CVE.<sup>172</sup> In contrast, only 34 percent of the USAOs “arranged for

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<sup>168</sup> Glazzard and Rosand, “Is It All Over for CVE.”

<sup>169</sup> GAO, *Countering Violent Extremism*.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> Schanzer and Eyerman, *Outreach and Engagement Efforts*.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

cultural awareness training or outreach and engagement training for law enforcement officers” with similar findings in the areas of offering “training to community members ... [or] ways to prevent recruitment of individuals by ... terror groups.”<sup>173</sup> Additionally, the USAOs reported receiving no additional staffing, funding, or training in support of their CVE mission.<sup>174</sup> Because of these unsupported mandates, the USAO will likely struggle to fulfill any measurable obligations to create lasting community partnerships, or to raise awareness in the long term.

CVE efforts in the United States continue to sustain undermining criticism from Muslim communities, legal scholars, and civil liberties advocacy groups. When these criticisms are coupled with those from the GOA and independent researchers, as well as budgetary limitations, they reinforce the idea that CVE strategy in the United States is seriously deficient.

## **I. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Based on the White House’s SIP, the government’s current strategy to counter the threat from violent extremism is based on “three core areas of activity: 1) enhancing engagement with and support to local communities that may be target by violent extremists; 2) building government and law enforcement expertise for preventing violent extremism; and 3) countering violent extremist propaganda while promotion our ideals.”<sup>175</sup>

In furtherance of these efforts, the National Security Council, with input from the DOJ, DHS, FBI, and the National Counterterrorism Center, established three locations (Los Angeles, Minneapolis–Saint Paul, and Boston) as pilot programs, under the direction of USAOs, to build “locally-driven framework[s].”<sup>176</sup> After the pilot programs were created, the DOJ initiated the SRC program. As created, the SRC program involved unnamed community members who would independently assess individuals referred by

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<sup>173</sup> Schanzer and Eyerman, *Outreach and Engagement Efforts*.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> President of the United States, *Empowering Local Partners; Strategic Implementation Plan*.

<sup>176</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office District of Massachusetts, “Prevention and Intervention Strategies,” 1.

FBI-trained evaluators for tailored intervention programs to “build community resilience and foster greater community trust.”<sup>177</sup> While the SRCs may have been shuttered, the concept *may* have evolved into the Local Intervention Teams discussed in the 2016 SIP, but no further action on this subject has officially occurred.

In 2016, the White House updated the SIP and then expanded the role of the CVE Task Force, now charged with coordinating and advancing this national strategy.<sup>178</sup> As established, this task force coordinates the nation’s CVE efforts with four areas of focus: “research and analysis, engagement and technical assistance, interventions, and communications and digital strategy.”<sup>179</sup> In addition to its leading role in the CVE Task Force, DHS began distributing monetary grants under the CVE Grant Program in 2016. According to DHS, “these new grants will provide state, local, and tribal partners and community groups—religious groups, mental health and social service providers, educators and other [non-government organizations]—with the ability to build prevention programs that address the root causes of violent extremism and deter individuals who may already be radicalizing to violence.”<sup>180</sup> Despite these considerable efforts to create a national CVE program in the United States, a working program to counter violent extremism has yet to be realized. As discussed here and in Chapter II, the pervasive legal objections and ethical questions may limit both development and public support for American CVE policy. Criticisms of CVE efforts are strengthened when coupled with the lack of underlying scientific support for American policy. As presented in Chapter V, despite a wealth of data available to create an evidence-based policy, an American CVE policy grounded in scientific support has not yet been produced. Until these concerns are adequately addressed, CVE efforts in the United States remain in a state of disarray and

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<sup>177</sup> “White House Introduces 2016 CVE Plan,” Brennan Center for Justice, last modified October 19, 2016, <https://www.brennancenter.org/press-release/white-house-introduces-2016-cve-plan>; Cora Currier and Murtaza Hussain, “Letter Details FBI Plan for Secretive Anti-radicalization Committees,” *Intercept*, April 28, 2016, <https://theintercept.com/2016/04/28/letter-details-fbi-plan-for-secretive-anti-radicalization-committees>. See also <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2815794-FBI-SRC-Letter.html#document/p1>.

<sup>178</sup> President of the United States, *Strategic Implementation Plan 2016*, 2.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> “FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Grant Program,” DHS, August 16, 2016, <https://www.dhs.gov/cvegrants>.

uncertainty. To better understand where American CVE policy can improve, policymakers and researchers need to study CVE policies that have matured through multiple public iterations. The closest example of such a strategy is the United Kingdom's, which is called *Prevent*.



#### IV. COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Compared to the United States, the United Kingdom has an extensive history of combating the causes and effects of radicalization and terrorism. The United Kingdom has long been subjected to domestic terrorism and political violence. Many Britons still recall the violence during the thirty years of “The Troubles” that spilled into England beginning in 1971 and the lessons learned by British citizens continue to be studied by counterterrorism scholars today.<sup>181</sup>

Despite the formal cessation of ethno-nationalist violence between the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the United Kingdom in 1998, the PIRA continued to deploy truck bombs, improvised explosive devices, and mortars against Britons as late as November 2001.<sup>182</sup> Though Usama bin Laden gave public interviews with London-based newspapers as early as 1996, the scourge of al Qaeda was not as readily known as the PIRA at that time, despite the news of an exposed jihadist plot in late 2000.<sup>183</sup> The continued stream of violence and casualties from PIRA attacks were disrupted when sixty-seven UK nationals fell as casualties in the attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> James Dingley, *The IRA: the Irish Republican Army*, 1st ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2012); The Troubles are regarded as an ethno-nationalist conflict between Irish republican paramilitaries, Ulster loyalists, and the United Kingdom regarding the constitutional state of northern Ireland from approximately 1968 through 1998.

<sup>182</sup> “Bomb Blast in Birmingham,” BBC News, November 4, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/1636919.stm>; “Car Bomb in West London Injures Seven,” BBC News, August 3, 2001, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/3/newsid\\_2527000/2527065.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/3/newsid_2527000/2527065.stm).

<sup>183</sup> David Omand, “The Terrorist Threat to the UK in the post-9/11 decade,” *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 3, no. 1 (July 2012), doi:10.15664/jtr.412; In November 2000, Moinul Abedin was arrested by UK authorities after traces of the explosive HMTD and equipment to manufacture explosives were located at a bomb-making factory in Birmingham. Abedin was convicted in 2002 for committing an act with intent to cause an explosion. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/feb/28/stevenmorris>.

<sup>184</sup> “British Victims of September 11,” *Guardian*, September 10, 2002, [www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/10/september11.uk](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/10/september11.uk).

Although the United Kingdom has reassessed its counterterrorism methods since the mid-1990s, the watershed attacks of 9/11 in the United States “provided a new impetus” for the United Kingdom to review its CVE approach.<sup>185</sup> While the tactics employed by al Qaeda had evolved beyond those used by PIRA forces, they were not that dissimilar to the targeted attacks against the Embassy of Israel by the Black September Organization in South Kensington in 1972 or the assassination of the Israeli ambassador in Dorchester by Sabri Khalil al-Banna’s Fatah in 1982. However, unlike the challenges presented to UK forces by the PIRA during The Troubles, al Qaeda demonstrated a willingness to deliver, without warning, indiscriminate suicide attacks with the goal of killing as many people as possible.<sup>186</sup> In 2002, counterterrorism authorities were still in the early phases of evaluating the nature and scope of the evolving terrorism threat from radicals within the United Kingdom, previously believed to emanate only from overseas.<sup>187</sup> Any uncertainty about UK-based operatives of a foreign terrorist organization was removed when, in 2002, “the first real indication since 9/11 of operational terrorist activity” was discovered in Norfolk when chemical precursors and components for the manufacture of ricin and cyanide were located in Wood Green, England.<sup>188</sup> Intelligence officials quickly realized that the risks associated with terrorism not only came from abroad, but from within the borders of the United Kingdom itself.

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<sup>185</sup> Tembo, *US-UK Counter-terrorism after 9/11*, 38.

<sup>186</sup> Peter Clarke, “Learning from Experience—Counter Terrorism in the UK since 9/11,” Scribd, April 24, 2007, 3, <https://www.scribd.com/document/86184038/Peter-Clarke-Learning-From-Experience#>; According to Clarke, IRA and PIRA generally maintained a set of operating parameters that generally mitigated civilian casualties and involved conventional weaponry directed at English targets. Additionally, the perpetrators avoided arrest and did not use suicide attacks, unlike those of al Qaeda and other inspired attackers.

<sup>187</sup> Clarke, “Learning from Experience, 3.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.; John Steele and Sue Clough, “From the Taliban Camps to the Poison Factory over a North London Chemist’s,” *Telegraph*, April 14, 2005, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1487758/From-the-Taliban-camps-to-the-poison-factory-over-a-north-London-chemists.html>.

The apprehension and pressure experienced by the United Kingdom's intelligence apparatus increased as al Qaeda's "strategy to attack the 'Far Enemy' in our own homelands" was realized.<sup>189</sup> Compounding this pressure was intelligence indicating that U.S. and UK joint military actions and foreign policy decisions in Iraq in 2003 coincided with an uptick in reports of local activists contacting extremists in the United Kingdom.<sup>190</sup> These events precipitated a period of "serious [al Qaeda]-facilitated terrorist plots" by extremists actively working within and against the United Kingdom.<sup>191</sup> Though the earlier plots were unsuccessful, on July 7, 2005, a group of four Islamic terrorists comprising three Pakistani-British citizens and one Jamaican-born convert successfully detonated triacetone triperoxide (TATP) explosives in a coordinated suicide attack against civilians that killed fifty-two and injured nearly 800; it was the country's first Islamic suicide attack.<sup>192</sup> Two weeks later, on July 21, a separate group of four Ethiopian and Somali-born British terrorists working with al Qaeda unsuccessfully attempted to replicate the earlier attack in the London Underground.<sup>193</sup>

The coordinated attacks came as a surprise to many in the intelligence community, especially from within the Somalian and Eritrean UK communities; attacks from terrorists from Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula had yet to present themselves as direct threats in the United Kingdom. Because the attacks followed public assurances from members of Parliament that "there was no reason to believe that an attack was imminent," they created insecurity within the general population.<sup>194</sup> In a press conference shortly after the July 21 bombing suspects were arrested, then-Prime Minister

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<sup>189</sup> Omand, "The Terrorist Threat to the UK"; Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>192</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism* (London: The Stationery Office, 2009), 11.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>194</sup> Ewen MacAskill and Ian Cobain, "7/7 Seemed to Herald a New Era of Terror on UK Soil—One that Did Not Materialise," *Guardian*, July 7, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jul/07/london-bombings-new-era-terror-uk-did-not-materialise-mi5-mi6-gchq>.

Tony Blair stated, “Let no one be in doubt ... the rules of the game have changed.”<sup>195</sup> The Prime Minister’s statement foreshadowed significant changes to the United Kingdom’s counterterrorism strategy.

#### A. DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEST, 2001–2006

According to the first UK Security and Intelligence Coordinator and Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office Sir David Omand, when officials began to develop the strategy to counter the rising tide of terrorism after the September 11 attacks, they debated “whether its ends should be couched in terms of defeating or eliminating terrorism.”<sup>196</sup> They concluded that “such an aim was unrealizable since terrorism would inevitably remain an asymmetric tactic of choice for violent extremist groups, and no government can ever give a complete guarantee to the public that terrorists might not at some point be able to slip below the security radar however sophisticated it is.”<sup>197</sup>

To counter the threat of al Qaeda-driven terrorism within the United Kingdom, policymakers adopted a risk-management approach to their national security strategy.<sup>198</sup> Focusing on how to counter terrorists’ attempts to “shock and disrupt and thus erode public confidence in the ability of government to protect them,” the United Kingdom formulated a strategy of “fortitude and resilience, setting the objective as a vigorous, collective and communal effort to sustain the normality of everyday life.”<sup>199</sup> The United Kingdom’s national strategy became known as “CONTEST” (COuNter-TErrorism STRategy), and was created with a formal goal of reducing “the risk from terrorism so that people can go about their normal life freely (that is, with the rule of law upheld and

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<sup>195</sup> MacAskill and Cobain, “New Era of Terror on UK Soil.”

<sup>196</sup> David Omand, “Securing the State: National Security and Secret Intelligence,” *Prism* 4, no. 3 (September 2013): 2.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

without the authorities having to interfere with individual rights and liberties) and with confidence.”<sup>200</sup>

The United Kingdom operationalized CONTEST as a national counterterrorism strategy in 2003 and revealed it publicly in 2006. While the United Kingdom’s National Security Strategy highlighted the government’s responsibility to protect national interests against foreign aggression, CONTEST was established to show the government’s further responsibility to anticipate and account for the threat of terrorism before “it is too late.”<sup>201</sup> The British government recognized external jihadist groups’ growing and complicating capabilities to influence and inspire specific domestic populations within the United Kingdom. These groups were also able, the United Kingdom observed, to incite acts of terror by those already harboring radicalized ideologies and by radicalizing “clean skins” who had no previous exposure to extremist ideals, especially through the use of encryption technologies and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat. To challenge the extremists’ efforts, CONTEST seeks to account for the total risks associated with the “likelihood, vulnerability, initial impact, and duration of disruption” of an attack through a multi-faceted program approach.<sup>202</sup>

## **B. COUNTERING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: CONTEST, 2006**

The United Kingdom’s counterterrorism strategy was published in July 2006. As stated in the 2006 strategy document—and verified through a recently declassified Cabinet Office presentation from April 1, 2004—the United Kingdom’s CONTEST strategy was secretly operationalized in 2003.<sup>203</sup> The 2006 CONTEST strategy identifies the primary national threat as “radicalized individuals who are using a distorted and

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<sup>200</sup> HM Government, *CONTEST—The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2015* (London: The Stationery Office, 2016), [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/539683/55469\\_Cm\\_9310\\_Web\\_Accessible\\_v0.11.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539683/55469_Cm_9310_Web_Accessible_v0.11.pdf); Omand, “Securing the State,” 1–4.

<sup>201</sup> Omand, “Securing the State,” 3.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>203</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 1; “Whitehall Releases 2003 Counter Terrorism Strategy,” Scotland Against Criminalising Communities, December 13, 2016, <http://www.sacc.org.uk/press/2016/whitehall-releases-2003-counter-terrorism-strategy>.

unrepresentative version of the Islamic faith to justify violence.”<sup>204</sup> The United Kingdom established CONTEST to counter such terrorism through four separate, yet interconnected, component efforts: *Prevent, Pursue, Protect, and Prepare*.<sup>205</sup>

To protect the United Kingdom, individual programs and policies that fall under each component were designed to enable the government to prosecute individual actors, protect the country’s infrastructures and public spaces, and to discourage individuals from radicalizing. As set forth in CONTEST, these strands are described as:

- (1) *PREVENT*: Concerned with tackling the radicalization of individuals (*before* they radicalize) by:

Tackling disadvantage and supporting reform—addressing structural problems in the UK and overseas that may contribute to radicalization, such as inequalities and discrimination;

Deterring those who facilitate terrorism and those who encourage others to become terrorists—changing the environment in which the extremists and those radicalizing others can operate; and

Engaging in the battle of ideas—challenging the ideologies that extremists believe can justify the use of violence, primarily by helping Muslims who wish to dispute these ideas to do so.<sup>206</sup>

- (2) *PURSUE*: Concerned with reducing the terrorist threat to the UK and to UK interests overseas by disrupting terrorists and their operations by:

Gathering intelligence—improving our ability to identify and understand the terrorist threat;

Disrupting terrorist activity—acting to frustrate terrorist attacks and to bring terrorists to justice through prosecution and other means, including strengthening the legal framework against terrorism; and

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<sup>204</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 1.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> HM Government, *Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom’s Strategy* (London: The Stationery Office, 2006), 1–2, <http://www.iwar.org.uk/homesec/resources/uk-threat-level/uk-counterterrorism-strategy.pdf>.

International cooperation—working with partners and allies overseas to strengthen our intelligence effort and achieve disruption of terrorists outside the UK.<sup>207</sup>

- (3) *PROTECT*: Concerned with reducing the vulnerability of the UK and UK interest overseas by addressing a range of issues including;

Strengthening border security—so that terrorist and those who inspire them can be prevented from travelling here and we can get better intelligence about suspects who travel, including improving our identity management;

Protecting key utilities—working with the private sector;

Transport—reducing the risk and impact of attacks through security and technological advances; and

Crowded places—protecting people going about their daily lives.<sup>208</sup>

- (4) *PREPARE*: Concerned with ensuring that the UK is as ready as it can be for the consequences of a terrorist attack. The key elements are:

Identifying the potential risks the UK faces from terrorism and assessing their impact;

Building the necessary capabilities to respond to any attacks; and

Continually evaluating and testing our preparedness—e.g., by frequently exercising to improve our response to incident and learning lessons from incident that do take place.<sup>209</sup>

In developing CONTEST, the United Kingdom created a formidable strategy to mitigate the risks associated both with homegrown terrorism and with threats emanating from foreign countries.<sup>210</sup> The whole-of-government approach outlined in this strategy

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<sup>207</sup> HM Government, *Countering International Terrorism*, 1–2.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Amy Bonanno, “Deterring Violent Extremism in America by Utilizing Good Counter-radicalization Practices from abroad: A Policy Perspective” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), 26.

represents an evolution in UK counterterrorism strategy; from a decades-old strategy that focused on fighting domestic terrorism from Northern Ireland, CONTEST is the beginning of a continuing process of evaluation and refinement designed to meet the modern and evolving threat of terror.<sup>211</sup> The United Kingdom has long been recognized for its established an efficient methodology in pursuing and prosecuting threats and in defending its infrastructure; these elements were incorporated into CONTEST's *Pursue*, *Protect*, and *Prepare* components. Decades of building intelligence capacity and refining police and military tactics has certainly served the United Kingdom well in developing policies to harden targets and in prosecuting extremists.

*Prevent* is perhaps the largest departure from experience-led progress and is therefore the most innovative aspect of the United Kingdom's CVE efforts. In recognizing the science behind the "experiences and events in a person's life [that] cause them to become radicalized, to the extent of turning to violence to resolve perceived grievances, are critical to understanding how terrorist groups recruit new members and sustain support for their activities," the United Kingdom's approach to *Prevent* radicalization and counter violent extremism is multidimensional and comprehensive.<sup>212</sup>

### C. CONTEST, 2009 REVISION

On March 24, 2009, the newly appointed policy lead for CONTEST, the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Home Office, published a revised CONTEST strategy.<sup>213</sup> This 2009 strategy "recognizes that partnerships are vital to success" and that "CONTEST depends not only on policing, the agencies ... [but] upon the support of communities, industry, academia and everyone who lives" in the United Kingdom.<sup>214</sup> The new CONTEST echoed the 2009 National Security Strategy, which asserted that the threat from international terrorism is the "most significant immediate security threat to

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<sup>211</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 2–5.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.



the United Kingdom.”<sup>215</sup> Expanding the focus of al Qaeda-driven terrorism from the previous version of CONTEST in 2006, the update highlighted four continuing international threat trajectories; these trajectories stemmed from individuals who maintained “religious justification for their actions”:

1. Al Qaeda leadership and their immediate associates located in Pakistan and Afghanistan;
2. Al Qaeda-affiliate groups in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Yemen;
3. “Self-starting” networks, or even lone individuals, motivated by an ideology similar to that of Al Qaeda, but with no connection to that organization; and
4. Terrorist groups that follow a broadly similar ideology as Al Qaeda, but which have their own identity and regional agenda.<sup>216</sup>

Using these threats as the basis for the updated CONTEST strategy, the United Kingdom highlighted four strategic drivers of terrorism: “unresolved regional disputes,” “violent extremist ideology associated with al Qaeda,” and groups that use “modern technologies [that] facilitate terrorist propaganda, communications, and terrorist operations.”<sup>217</sup> Additionally, these groups use these radicalization processes as separate threat vectors that reinforce one another and threaten the United Kingdom.<sup>218</sup> To combat these persisting threats and complicating strategic factors, the 2009 CONTEST update restructured objectives under the *Pursue, Prevent, Protect, and Prepare* workstreams and included a cross-cutting chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) component within each to account terrorist actors’ increasing use of

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<sup>215</sup> HM Government, *The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Terrorism* (London: Home Office, 2010), 5, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100416130418/http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/cbrn-guidance/strat-countering-use-of-CBRN?view=Binary>.

<sup>216</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 11–36; *Strategy for CBRN*, 5.

<sup>217</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 40.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

improvised explosive devices.<sup>219</sup> The United Kingdom was forced to modernize its CVE policy to counter the evolution of terrorism tactics.

The 2009 CONTEST update contained several significant departures from the 2006 version. The update recognized that countering terrorism and violent extremism would require the infusion of significant community involvement. Because the public was calling increasingly for transparency, CONTEST set out to build community involvement and to expand public participation by featuring a “full and as open an account as possible of why and how [policymakers] are tackling this threat” through an in-depth discussion of hard- and soft-power capabilities related to the four workstreams.<sup>220</sup> Four times the length of its 2006 predecessor, the government’s expanded strategy provided detailed information about the capabilities and plans of arrest and prosecution under *Pursue* and efforts to strengthen infrastructure protections and responses under *Protect* and *Prepare*.

Recognizing that its counterterrorism strategy needed to “tackle the causes as well as symptoms,” the government affirmed to the public that “neither conventional law enforcement, nor security or military operations will be sufficient to address the threat” associated with terrorism.<sup>221</sup> Hence, a “completely revised strategy for *Prevent*, based on ... new analysis of the causes of radicalization [in the UK] and overseas and on contribution from a wide range of Department, agencies and community organizations” was developed.<sup>222</sup> These soft-power strategies were developed to cultivate the public support and involvement needed to sustain the governmental efforts to counter extremism

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<sup>219</sup> Frank Gregory, “CONTEST (2009): An Evaluation of Revisions to the UK Counter-Terrorism Strategy with a Special Focus on the CBRNE Threat,” Elcano Royal Institute, November 9, 2009, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_en/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=%2FElcano%2FElcano\\_in%2Fzonas\\_in%2FARI130-2009](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=%2FElcano%2FElcano_in%2Fzonas_in%2FARI130-2009); HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 55. It should be mentioned that the discussion of CBRNE was withheld from the 2009 strategy document as it was classified, but was discussed in the 2010 annual CONTEST report.

<sup>220</sup> Jacqui Smith, as quoted in HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 7.

<sup>221</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 56; HM Government, *Countering the Terrorist Threat*, 12.

<sup>222</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 58.

while ensuring the protections of human rights and discouraging people from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism.<sup>223</sup>

The expanded *Prevent* workstream was created with five objectives:

1. To challenge the ideology behind violent extremism and to support mainstream voices,
2. To disrupt those who promote violent extremism and support the places where they operate
3. Support individual who are vulnerable to recruitment, or have already been recruited by violent extremists
4. Increase the resilience of communities to violent extremism, and
5. To address the grievances which ideologues are exploiting.<sup>224</sup>

As part of the revised strategy, the United Kingdom expanded engagement with Muslim and faith-based community leaders beyond the “Preventing Extremism Together” working group and “The Radical Middle Way” programs under the 2006 *Prevent* strategy.<sup>225</sup> The revised *Prevent* strategy incorporated contributions “of policing; aims to link local and international delivery; is based on better metrics; and has a significantly larger budget.”<sup>226</sup>

In broadening the objectives of *Prevent*, the United Kingdom greatly expanded its whole-of-community collaborative efforts to build social cohesion, community empowerment, and race equality.<sup>227</sup> These efforts were predicated on coordinated involvement from local authorities from the “education, health, cultural, and social services,” much of which was outlined in the 2008 “*Prevent* Guide for Local Partners” and “*Preventing Violent Extremism: Next Steps for Communities*” provided to local communities.<sup>228</sup> This development was not intended to discount the important role of

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<sup>223</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 56–82.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

policing or intelligence and analysis in the *Prevent* initiatives; under the revised plan, new structures empowered *Prevent* staff to work with neighborhood policing teams to identify and share information about those attempting to recruit others into extremist networks.<sup>229</sup> Lastly, the government recognized a need to create metrics to measure policy success under *Prevent*, but as authorities had a multitude of policy changes and new mandates thrust upon them, critics argued that any performance measures beyond “generic ‘tick-boxes’” were not considered.<sup>230</sup>

In 2009, then-Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism Director-General Charles Farr countered,

You create, as we are able to, an intelligence baseline to establish how much radicalisation is going on in those places at the moment, you then look at the programmes you are trying to introduce in those areas to stop radicalisation, and then you check your intelligence the following year, you can get an idea, albeit an imperfect one, of whether the risk of radicalisation in those areas ... has reduced or increased.<sup>231</sup>

While debate regarding performance measures continues, it is clear that policymakers considered how to develop performance standards to evaluate *Prevent*'s successes.

#### **D. CONTEST, 2011 REVISION**

After a national election and a subsequent strategy review by the new government in 2010, the United Kingdom made additional CONTEST revisions and re-conceptualized the scope of the *Prevent* strategy in 2011.<sup>232</sup> Citing the 2009 version's failure to “confront the extremist ideology at the heart of the threat we face and in trying to reach those at risk of radicalization,” the new government outlined its effort to target both non-violent *and* violent forms of extremism through three primary objectives: to “respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism,” prevent “people from being drawn

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<sup>229</sup> HM Government, *Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare*, 87.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 86; Gregory, “CONTEST (2009).”

<sup>231</sup> House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, “Project CONTEST: The Government's Counter-terrorism Strategy,” Ninth Report of Session 2008–09 (HC 212, July 7, 2009), 26, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/212/212.pdf>.

<sup>232</sup> Tembo, *US–UK Counter-terrorism*, 47; Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

into terrorism,” and to encourage collaboration between “sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalization.”<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, *Prevent-2011* emphasized directing anyone was at risk for radicalization to the multi-agency-intervention “Channel” program through private partnerships with educators, healthcare providers, leaders from the faith communities, and the criminal justice system.<sup>234</sup> Lastly, the new government formalized the effort to develop evaluative metrics to measure *Prevent*’s program efficacy and to determine future funding levels.<sup>235</sup>

The new government outlined the context for its expanded strategy in the *Prevent-2011* document published in June of that year. While the strategy’s primary aim of preventing individuals from engaging in or supporting terrorism remained unchanged, the government reaffirmed the practice of prioritizing resources based on the level of threat. The strategy reiterated that the most serious terrorist threat still emanated from ideological challenges from “al Qaeda, its affiliates and like-minded organizations.”<sup>236</sup> According to the new strategy, the dangers associated with this threat are intensified by both the appeal of extremist ideology and by the propagandists’ use of that appeal to exploit personal vulnerabilities and to deepen personal and societal grievances for recruitment purposes.<sup>237</sup> To mitigate the risks associated with the draw from extremist ideologies, *Prevent-2011* called for intervening means to redirect these individuals away from the influence of extremist groups; to do so, the government would work with sectors and institutions to identify and refer potential extremists.<sup>238</sup> Additionally, *Prevent-2011* described a correlation between the support for terrorism and the “rejection of a cohesive,

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<sup>233</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 1–7.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*; Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

<sup>235</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 1.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

integrate, multi-faith society and of parliamentary democracy” as a basis for governmental efforts to increase a sense of belonging and adoption of British values.<sup>239</sup>

Coordinated by the Home Office’s Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, the *Prevent* strategy continues to support the United Kingdom’s national CONTEST strategy by countering violent extremist organizations. The strategy promotes integration within the UK, supports legislation against religious and racial hatred, and introduces civic challenges to any extremist ideology legitimizing terrorism.<sup>240</sup> In addition to these CVE efforts, the new *Prevent* strategy formalized efforts to deradicalize individuals through the Channel program, a forerunner to the U.S. FBI’s Shared Responsibility Committee concept. The Channel program is designed to identify individuals who are susceptible to radicalization, assess the individuals’ degree of risk, and then afford them an opportunity for individualized support to “dissuade them from engaging in and supporting terrorist-related activity.”<sup>241</sup>

The 2011 *Prevent* strategy also authorized the Research, Information, and Communications Unit (RICU), formed in 2007, to coordinate with local and national organizations to provide messaging to counter extremist ideologies through “professional counter narrative products” and campaigns on social media and online outlets.<sup>242</sup> RICU efforts are entirely consistent with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence’s (ICSR) recommendations for countering online radicalization. The ICSR advised governments to commit to a strategy of “detering the producers of extremist materials,” “reducing the appeal of extremist messages,” and “promoting

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<sup>239</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 5. The *Prevent* document defines British values as “democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind.” This definition was amended in 2015 to include “democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs ... calls for death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas” in HM Government, *Channel Duty Guidance—Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism: Statutory Guidance for Channel Panel Members and Partners of Local Panels* (London: Home Office, 2015), 3.

<sup>240</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 24.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 56; Channel Guidance, 5.

<sup>242</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 46–52.

positive messages” aimed at countering extremism.<sup>243</sup> Seemingly supporting these strategy recommendations, reports indicate that RICU efforts are responsible for the removal of 75,000 pieces of unlawful [online] terrorist material, and the distribution of 200,000 leaflets and posters to counter violent extremism.<sup>244</sup>

The United Kingdom allocates approximately £40 million annually to fund *Prevent* efforts across multiple government departments, with the primary stewardship of *Prevent*’s counterterrorism funding residing within the Home Office and its social integration programs administered by the Department of Community and Local Government.<sup>245</sup> *Prevent-2011* shifted funding from a centrally (Home Office) directed, Muslim-based population prioritization toward one administered by local authorities and based on an assessment of radicalization risk.<sup>246</sup> This transition provides greater autonomy for local authorities to work with *Prevent* stakeholders and enables communities to tailor CVE programming that considers the “local context.”<sup>247</sup>

The decoupling of such efforts follows the government’s effort to decentralize a degree of *Prevent* programming to empower localized decision making and to assuage complaints of overreach in terms of “covert spying” and sharing of personal identifying information at the local levels.<sup>248</sup> Pursuant to these efforts in *Prevent-2011* is what is described as “localism.” Localism was seen “first and foremost as an opportunity to use the knowledge, access, and influence of people and [local] communities to challenge extremist and terrorist ideology.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> United Kingdom, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), *Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action*, by Tim Stevens and Peter Neumann (London: King’s College, 2012).

<sup>244</sup> Frank Gardner, “Prevent strategy: Is it Failing to Stop Radicalisation?” BBC News, March 06, 2015, accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31756755>.

<sup>245</sup> Gardner, “Prevent Strategy.” It should be noted that *Prevent* programming maintains an overseas element, facilitated through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. While these efforts are important to the United Kingdom’s counterterrorism program, it is not necessarily germane to this comparative discussion.

<sup>246</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 34.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

Building on this concept of localism, police reform reshaped the roles of police and crime commissioners as well as the chief constables in England and Wales. The reform was designed to provide greater autonomy to the police and to leverage their intimate knowledge of crime and the population base in order to combat crime while facilitating an “appropriate local strategy for *Prevent* policing in their area.”<sup>250</sup>

#### **E. CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF *PREVENT* 2011**

Despite the lengthy history of success in countering terrorism both inside its own borders and from terrorist groups abroad, the UK government understands that the evolution of terrorism “poses a challenge that cannot be solved solely by arrests,” and that future efforts must reduce the pool of potential terrorists *before* they act.<sup>251</sup> The UK police force and intelligence communities continue to tenaciously prosecute a number of foiled terrorist plots under CONTEST’s *Pursue* workstream through the Terrorism Acts of 2000 and 2006, which, without question, reduce the domestic terror threat by removing extremists from the threat landscape.

Other than a single terror-related fatality during the period following the July 2005 bombing attacks—and until a resurgence of attacks in 2017—the United Kingdom had not seen a successful domestic attack for a decade. The Islamic State’s supplantation of al Qaeda, and the group’s ability to leverage social media and encryption software to inspire and direct attacks within the United Kingdom, poses evolving challenges for police and intelligence. Additionally, the 2017 attacks coupled with reports of British citizens traveling to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq to join forces with the Islamic State

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<sup>250</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 33.

<sup>251</sup> Vidino and Hughes, “ISIS in America,” 33; Richard Walton, “We Cannot Arrest Our Way out of Terrorism—It’s Time to Tackle the Ideology,” *Telegraph*, June 5, 2017, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/05/cannot-arrest-way-terrorism-time-tackle-ideology/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/05/cannot-arrest-way-terrorism-time-tackle-ideology/). Similar sentiments were expressed by former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell in a 2015 interview with Norah O’Donnell—see [https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;\\_ylt=AwrTcd.kKclZCD0AmtYnnIIQ?p=michael+morell+interview&fr=yhs-mozilla-001&fr2=piv-web&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-001#id=22&vid=742e4f3073bcdafbac866e117631068c&action=view](https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;_ylt=AwrTcd.kKclZCD0AmtYnnIIQ?p=michael+morell+interview&fr=yhs-mozilla-001&fr2=piv-web&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-001#id=22&vid=742e4f3073bcdafbac866e117631068c&action=view).



and al Qaeda has refocused national attention toward the effectiveness of CONTEST and the efforts to “utilize non-violent tactics” to counter violent extremism under *Prevent*.<sup>252</sup>

Expanding the strategy under *Prevent*, the Counterterrorism and Security Act of 2015 places a “statutory responsibility on all local authorities in England and Wales.”<sup>253</sup> The Act mandates that concerned stakeholders from the housing, prisons, religious, criminal justice, healthcare, and educational communities must safeguard minors and adults before propagandists can exploit their vulnerabilities and direct them to a path of radicalization. The Act requires entities and individuals to alert a Channel Police Practitioner or police coordinator to the presence of an at-risk individual, who is then referred to a multi-agency panel of local authorities.<sup>254</sup> If authorities assess that the individual is at risk to him or herself or his or her community, the panel then makes a “referral” to diversionary activities such as anger management, cognitive or mental health services, housing support, and family support measures, which act as off-ramps to draw the individual away from the early stages of radicalization.<sup>255</sup>

According to National Police Chiefs’ Council, there were approximately 7,500 referrals made in the calendar year following the enactment of the Counterterrorism and Security Act of 2015.<sup>256</sup> Of these, 10 percent of the cases resulted in a services referral, and no action was needed for 37 percent of the reports.<sup>257</sup> As of June 2017, approximately 25 percent of the referred individuals were deemed “vulnerable,” though not to terrorist activities, and 28 percent remained under consideration.<sup>258</sup> Interestingly, half of these referrals involved Islamic extremism and another 10 percent involved far-

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<sup>252</sup> This single fatality was the murder of British soldier Lee Rigby on May 22, 2013. In June 2016, Labour MP Jo Cox was murdered in what was originally labeled a terror attack, but the presiding judge in the case determined it to be politically motivated. From January 1, 2017, through September 15, 2017, five terror-related attacks in the cities of Westminster, Manchester, and London resulted in numerous fatalities and serious injury. Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

<sup>253</sup> Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

<sup>254</sup> HM Government, *Channel Duty Guidance*, 5.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>256</sup> BBC News, “Reality Check.”

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

right extremism.<sup>259</sup> However, increased referrals from far-right extremists following the 2017 attacks in France and Belgium have accounted for nearly half of the total referrals.<sup>260</sup> During this period, the UK government reported that its counter-radicalization programs reached more than 42,000 people, 250 mosques, and 50 faith groups, and that approximately 150 individuals were redirected from traveling to conflict zones.<sup>261</sup> Despite this level of reported outreach and the increased referrals under *Prevent*, the strategy faces pervasive criticisms.

Much like American CVE efforts, the United Kingdom's counterterrorism strategy, specifically the *Prevent* workstream, has garnered a significant amount of criticism from legal scholars, community groups, academia, and government officials. As public debate over *Prevent* continues and the United Kingdom refines its controversial strategy and implementation plans in response to the evolving risks associated with terrorism, it is expected that criticism will continue.<sup>262</sup> Collectively, critics point out that the strategy stigmatizes and ostracizes specific communities, lacks metrics supporting efficacy, and challenges free speech.

The *Prevent* strategy—intended to safeguard the United Kingdom from the risks associated with radicalization and terrorism through a community-driven approach—has been the source of considerable opposition from the British Muslim community.<sup>263</sup> According to the *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, “Although the policy is not intended to be discriminatory, many in the community have seen the ‘magnifying glass’ that it has placed on British Muslims as widening the ‘schism between the Muslim ‘us’ and the British ‘other.’”<sup>264</sup> This review assessed that *Prevent-2011* sought to recast the

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<sup>259</sup> BBC News, “Reality Check”; Ratcliffe, “Teachers.”

<sup>260</sup> BBC, “Reality Check”; Ratcliffe, “Teachers.”

<sup>261</sup> Ratcliffe, “Teachers”; Gardner, “Prevent Strategy”; Lorenzo Vidino, “Foreign Fighters: An Overview of Responses in Eleven Countries” (report, Center for Security Studies, 2014).

<sup>262</sup> Nicole Magney, “CONTEST, Prevent, and the Lessons of UK Counterterrorism Policy,” *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, August 10, 2016, <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2016/05/16/contest-prevent-and-the-lessons-of-uk-counterterrorism-policy/>.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.; Robert Lambert, *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), chapter 16.

United Kingdom's efforts to counter extremism through a whole-of-community, collaborative approach, while contradictorily refusing to partner with Salafists or conservative Islamists who may well be instrumental in reducing the threat, and who are perhaps most at risk of radicalization.<sup>265</sup> This marginalization understandably increases debate and exaggerates continuing community criticism; a policy that stigmatizes and discriminates against British Muslims is a divisive one that negatively impacts all Britons.<sup>266</sup> In an example of a domestic policy spilling into international affairs, critics have blamed *Prevent* for feeding the extremist narrative that a country espousing democratic values discriminates against Muslims.<sup>267</sup>

These claims are intensified by information about the referrals made under *Prevent's* Channel program. Because they are legally mandated to participate in the Channel program by the Counter-Terrorism and Security of 2015, hospitals, schools, and universities—typically considered bastions of confidentiality and free speech—are now required to notify local authorities if they encounter an individual who they believe is at risk for radicalization. This requirement generated 3,955 referrals in 2015, representing a significant increase from pre-legislation referrals rates of 1,681 in 2014.<sup>268</sup> The drastic increase in referrals was met with great concern when the National Police Chief Council released additional Channel statistics indicating that 415 children aged 10 or under and 1,424 minors between the ages of 11 through 15 had been referred.<sup>269</sup> These groups accounted for 46 percent of the total number of referrals in 2015, and the Muslim community has expressed concern that the authorities who referred children did so out of fear for their own safety, rather than because the children were exhibiting behaviors expressive of radicalization.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Magney, "CONTEST."

<sup>266</sup> Townsend, "Theresa May"; Magney, "CONTEST"; "Prevent Criticism 'Stems from Ignorance,'" BBC News, August 7, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-40845911>.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Josh Halliday, "Almost 4,000 People Were Referred to UK Deradicalisation Scheme Last Year," *Guardian*, March 20, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/20/almost-4000-people-were-referred-to-uk-deradicalisation-scheme-channel-last-year>.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ratcliffe, "Teachers."

## F. METRICS

It is difficult to measure efficiency or to fully account for successes in preventive programs such as *Prevent*.<sup>271</sup> “Success” for such programs is typically measured by the absence of an event, but it is not enough to argue that a CVE strategy is effective simply because an attack does not occur.<sup>272</sup> The number of dependent variables and possible cascading effects of one act makes the threat landscape far too complex for a single, broad counterfactual statement to determine effectiveness. In an era of publicly desired transparency, governments must justify expenditures; the United Kingdom and the United States share this difficulty in measuring success of their respective CVE programs.

Government policymakers and academics alike find it challenging to create measures for these preventative programs. Often, “the problem of defining success becomes even more acute when the focus is placed on the prevention of violent conflict ... it is notoriously difficult to prove the counterfactual of successfully preventing an event.”<sup>273</sup> Thus, when the United Kingdom previously attempted to evaluate the success of *Prevent* by measuring “changing attitudes as much as behaviors, attitudes which are complex to measure and assess,” the policymakers relied on measuring program *outputs* instead of *outcomes*.<sup>274</sup> A review of *Prevent*’s performance measures in 2010 found that, despite intermittent levels of evaluation, a national-level evaluation of *Prevent*’s projects and outcomes did not exist overall.<sup>275</sup> Data collection issues, a lack of metrics to account for baseline risk, and unclear performance measures plagued an evaluation of *Prevent*’s

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<sup>271</sup> Gardner, “Prevent Strategy”; BBC News, “Reality Check”; Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

<sup>272</sup> Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

<sup>273</sup> Evan Hoffman, “Methods for Evaluating Conflict Prevention” (report, Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation, 2014), 4, <http://www.ciian.org/PDF%20Docs/Methods%20for%20Evaluating%20Conflict%20Prevention.pdf>.

<sup>274</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 36.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

success.<sup>276</sup> In response to these failures, Her Majesty’s Government called for a redoubling of efforts, indicating that it is “critical” to measure outcomes and impacts.<sup>277</sup>

Under the CONTEST strategy, the United Kingdom’s impressive police and intelligence apparatus has produced a number of arrests and successful prosecutions for offenses related to terrorism. However, researchers find it difficult to validate the goals and objectives of the new preventative programs under *Prevent* with quantitative analysis.<sup>278</sup> Like the American CVE strategy, the relative newness of prevention strategies like *Prevent* only allows for a short-term evaluation of a long-term prevention effort.<sup>279</sup> Just as the United States has been criticized for using outputs—such as the total number of programs initiated or the number of people trained—as a metric of success (criticized in the 2017 GOA report discussed in Chapter III), the United Kingdom has fallen prey to incorporating some, the United Kingdom has fallen prey to these same false process metrics.<sup>280</sup> The limited number of declassified government statistics provided by the National Police Chief Council under the Freedom of Information Act only indicate the number of referrals, and do not provide information on measurable outcomes—such as whether or not a risk remains to the community or if a particular treatment was successful. Information about this type of outcome is needed to measure program efficacy, especially considering CONTEST’s primary goal: to reduce risk.

## **G. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Despite differences between governmental structures and an underlying legal system, the United Kingdom is the most relevant example of a Western democracy that has established the American CVE ideal: implementation of a holistic approach to countering violent extremism.<sup>281</sup> Continuing a history of combating terrorism and violent

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<sup>276</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 36.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 37–40.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>279</sup> Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

<sup>280</sup> GAO, *Countering Violent Extremism*; HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, 62.

<sup>281</sup> Craig Stewart, “Counter Violent Extremism Policy in the United States” (thesis proposal, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, 2017), 7.

extremism domestically, the United Kingdom developed CONTEST as a national counterterrorism strategy in 2003, and the strategy was published in 2006. Of CONTEST's four policy legs, the *Prevent* strategy addresses CVE efforts. Unlike American CVE policy, *Prevent* has evolved through several publicly debated revisions into an all-inclusive philosophy that incorporates soft-power resources from the whole of government to augment hard-power practices of counterterrorism.

The *Prevent* strategy, most recently updated in 2011, has three central aims: responding to the ideologies and casual variables that drive terrorism, violent extremism, and non-violent extremism; preventing individuals from radicalizing; and fostering stakeholder partnerships to identify risks.<sup>282</sup> After 2011, British intelligence services began evaluating the threat of radicalization within local jurisdictions and prioritized the types of funding and programs available to these areas.<sup>283</sup> Many believe that *Prevent* seeks whole-community collaboration to prevent radicalization. The 2011 *Prevent* policies may seem dated when compared to the United States' revised 2016 strategy; however, the United Kingdom reviews its counterterrorism strategy on a regular basis and has made several significant refinements. Notably, in 2015, the British government enacted the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, which placed *Prevent* on "statutory footing" and promoted program evaluation.<sup>284</sup> The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act legally mandated public stakeholders such as childcare facilities, schools, healthcare providers, and corrections institutions to refer individuals they believe to be in danger of radicalization to authorities, who then investigate and determine appropriate action.<sup>285</sup> This greatly expanded the scope and authority of *Prevent*.

The United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy is a nationally directed, locally driven approach to countering violent extremism. The Home Office's Office of Security and Counterterrorism sponsors a catalog of "*Prevent* projects," which allow local

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<sup>282</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> House of Lords, House of Commons, Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Counter Extremism*, Second Report of Session 2016–17 (HL Paper 39, HC 105, July 22, 2016), 11, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201617/jtselect/jtrights/105/105.pdf>; Mastroe, "Evaluating CVE."

<sup>285</sup> Mastroe, "Evaluating CVE."

communities to select programs that best match their needs. These standardized programs “vary from supporting community based projects to the Channel program; the multiagency intervention program that offers potential at-risk individuals a tailored support system with in the pre-criminal space.”<sup>286</sup> These efforts bring a degree of standardization, flexibility, and subsequently measurability to *Prevent*.<sup>287</sup>

While CONTEST and *Prevent* were drafted and enacted years before they were made public, any discussion of the scientific research considered or used in support of these policies has yet to be disclosed. Like CVE programming in the United States, as outlined in Chapter III, evidence of policymakers’ ability to establish strategy directly from scientific support of the *Prevent* strategy is largely absent. The pervasive criticism about American CVE efforts—that they lack a scientific basis—is equally applicable to UK CVE strategies. However, after reviewing the evolution of the *Prevent* strategy, it is clear that the UK strategy has incorporated many variables from scientific models and terror research, as outlined in the next chapter.

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<sup>286</sup> Mastroe, “Evaluating CVE.”

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

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## V. AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TOWARD TERROR STUDIES

In 2015, the National Institute for Justice assembled CVE researchers, practitioners, and government officials from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada to discuss lessons learned and to identify research gaps in the fields of radicalization and violent extremism. In addition to paralleling the critique of American CVE outlined in Chapters II and III, this international collaborative found the need for continued research to discern the common causal variables such as narratives, the role of group dynamics, and grievances for future CVE policy considerations.<sup>288</sup> According to these experts, such research “may also provide further avenues for designing successful interventions that prevent and counter radicalization to violent extremism.”<sup>289</sup>

This chapter discusses the commonalities between four existing criminological and terrorism research models. Separately, these models have helped researchers understand the underlying causes of crime and terror. Here it is argued that theories from these fields should be considered together in order to fill the knowledge gaps identified by the world’s CVE experts and used to refine the American CVE strategy. This thesis posits that if policymakers accept that criminological and sociological theory have afforded researchers insight into the causality of crime and that the phenomenon of terrorism is a crime (as defined in the United States), then scientifically supported modeling from social science may also yield insight for future evidence-based CVE policy.

### A. GENERAL STRAIN THEORY

General strain theory is uniquely applicable to CVE research because its creator has purposefully recalibrated the original criminological theory for the express purpose of studying terrorism. The findings from this theoretical revision afford policymakers and

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<sup>288</sup> National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned from Canada, the U.K., and the U.S.*, NCJ 249947 (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 2015), iv–12.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

researchers the opportunity to consider both the underlying causes and effects of “strain” (or grievances) that influence individuals to radicalize or engage in criminal acts of terrorism in the United States.

General strain theory (also referred to as *anomie*) is a criminological framework that seeks to account for imbalances in a group as members attempt to integrate themselves into mainstream society. General strain theory states that acceptance, cohesion, and integration within the norms established by society translate into order and harmony, while varying degrees of disruption may cause social strife, crime, or an overall breakdown in social control.<sup>290</sup> Historically, general strain theory has been adapted to “provide an explanation of the concentration of crime ... in American society” and its theoretical concepts are well understood in research communities.<sup>291</sup>

Robert Agnew originally conceptualized general strain theory by investigating the (dis-)connections between individuals and micro-level societal demands, and determining which non-economic variables may be criminogenic. Individuals see these strains as “unjust,” and “high in magnitude,” and emanating “from situations in which social control is undermined”; the strains may lead to criminal activity, especially if the individual encounters some pressure or incentive to engage in criminal activity as a coping mechanism.<sup>292</sup>

Agnew’s 2001 study illustrated multiple causes of strain that may also pertain to terror studies:

1. Anger from willful unjust treatment may cause emotions conducive to crime because the emotion stifles coping mechanisms.
2. Perception of unjust treatment that violates an established social norm or law.
3. Belief that felt strain is not in furtherance of higher cause such as God, country, or gang, and is therefore more personally directed.

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<sup>290</sup> Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, 159.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>292</sup> Agnew, “Building on General Strain Theory”; Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, 180; Craig Stewart, “Review of General Strain Theory for Future Research” (Unpublished, 2006).

4. Individuals perceive a greater harm than society acknowledges.
5. Individuals perceive some form of procedural injustice or unfairness in how the source of the strain was assigned to them (e.g., they may feel uprightly singled out or targeted).
6. Individuals believe the source of the strain is either aggressive or disrespectful to them (degree of strain).
7. The idea that the negative treatment or strain is a continuation of previously felt strain, such as long term or increasingly painful discrimination or continued disrespect (duration/frequency/recency).
8. Individuals are encouraged to perceive an act as an injustice by a trusted or respected associate.
9. Strain is perceived to encourage criminality as a coping mechanism.
10. Unpopularity/exclusion/ostracization from mainstream societal group.
11. Criminal victimization of the individual.
12. Discrimination and prejudice against race/ethnicity.<sup>293</sup>

In 2010, Agnew suggested applying general strain theory to the study of sub-state terrorism. In “A General Strain Theory of Terrorism,” Agnew modifies general strain theory to argue that “terrorism is more likely when people experience ‘collective strains’ that are:

1. High in Magnitude with civilians affected;
2. Unjust;
3. Inflicted by significantly more powerful others, including ‘complicit’ civilians, with whom members of the strained collectivity have weak ties.”<sup>294</sup>

Agnew argues that these variables may make terrorism likely because they both lessen the individual’s ability to cope through legal means and they increase the individual’s

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<sup>293</sup> Agnew, “Building on General Strain Theory,” 319–361

<sup>294</sup> Robert Agnew, “A General Strain Theory of Terrorism,” *Theoretical Criminology* 14, no. 2 (2010): 131–153, doi:10.1177/1362480609350163.

potential to support radicalization or terrorism. These indicators have led researchers to explore other strains that lead to terrorism.<sup>295</sup>

Strains—labeled as “grievances” in other works—are both rational and relevant to terrorism research today.<sup>296</sup> Agnew outlines twelve separate strains that cover problems “encountered by certain immigrant groups, including unemployment, discrimination, the clash between western and Islamic values,” the “denial of ‘basic human rights,’ including political rights, personal security rights, the right to the satisfaction of basic human needs,” “military occupation of certain types,” and “resentment over the cultural, economic, military domination of the West, particularly the United States.”<sup>297</sup> The independent variables, when an individual experiences many of them, perceives them to be unjust, or has them inflicted by a dominant group or individual, are sources of strain positively associated with radicalization.

There is certainly anecdotal evidence for groups responding to strain with terror. For instance, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the Tamil Tigers, Hezbollah, Hamas, and al Qaeda all claim to *perceive* [emphasis added as a group’s perception may become their subjective reality even if an objective review proves otherwise] at least one cause of prolonged, high-magnitude strain (or “grievance”) that has driven the organization to respond with terrorism.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Agnew, “A General Strain Theory of Terrorism,” 132. See also Randy Blazak, “White Boys to Terrorist Men,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 6 (2001): 982–1000; Jeff Goodwin, “A Theory of Categorical Terrorism,” *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (2006): 2027–2046; and Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>296</sup> Agnew, “A General Strain Theory of Terrorism,” 132

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>298</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*; Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Tembo, *US–UK Counter-terrorism*. An individual’s perception of reality can *become* his reality, regardless if what is perceived is objectively correct. It is possible that an individual’s perceived reality is adopted by a group if the individual has influence and authority among group members.

## B. SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

As “terrorism is a form of social interaction,” understanding how groups and group members interact with one another is important to terror studies.<sup>299</sup> Social identity theory adds value and context to CVE policy discussions, and it can help policymakers identify the unique causal variables underlying an individual’s desire to maintain his or her social, religious, and cultural groups. Understanding these social needs, the motivations behind them, and the potential for violence when group members feel their identity is threatened are critical factors to consider in CVE policy.<sup>300</sup>

Social identity theory seeks to understand an individual’s membership within specific groups and how the individual’s resulting attitudes can affect his or her actions toward other groups outside of their own sphere of personal involvement. To understand the complexity of terrorism, “we have to understand terrorists as individuals and terrorist groups as groups of individuals that are driven—at the most basic level—by the same mechanisms, wants, and needs as non-terrorists.”<sup>301</sup> Stets and Burke explain that social identity theory focuses on the “causes and consequences of identifying with [and as] a social group or category.”<sup>302</sup>

According to social identity theory, an individual’s feelings of self-esteem and prestige are a potential motivator for outcomes within the group.<sup>303</sup> The importance of an individual’s level of esteem from his or her in-group cannot be overstated.<sup>304</sup> As an individual maintains an active involvement in the group, the theory posits that he or she then begins to self-identify as a member of the group, adopting and sharing the group’s

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<sup>299</sup> Brannan et al., *A Practitioner’s Way Forward*, 45.

<sup>300</sup> National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism*, 4.

<sup>301</sup> David W. Brannan, Philip F. Esler, and N. T. Anders Strindberg, “Talking to Terrorists: Towards an Independent Analytical Framework for the Study of Violent Substate Activism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24, no. 1 (2001): 56.

<sup>302</sup> Jan Stets and Peter Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2000): 224–237.

<sup>303</sup> Brannan et al., “Talking to Terrorists”; Stets and Burke, “Identity Theory.”

<sup>304</sup> Brannan et al., “Talking to Terrorists.”

ideals, which subsequently reaffirms the same views and perceptions and encourages the continued reaffirming behaviors.

The group then begins to take on a singular voice and act with a singular vision, which not only reinforces these unified ideas, but also intensifies the differences between the “in-group” that the individual belongs to and other “out-groups.” The established social identity theory framework contends that individuals simultaneously identify with concentric groups and that these identities are placed into floating (and perhaps competing) hierarchies, such as “American,” “Catholic,” and “father,” that an individual may prioritize as he or she deems appropriate in any given situation.<sup>305</sup>

As it relates to terror studies, social identity theory can help researchers examine and account for the interplay between individual and group variables, and can help make sense of these sociological contexts to explain “why” some individuals may radicalize and turn to terrorism. Advocates of the theory contend that it offers researchers insight into why groups may create and perpetuate the “us versus them” mentality.<sup>306</sup> Practitioners hold that when an individual feels his or her in-group is threatened by another (dominant) “out-group,” it may create an impetus for the individual to act against threat variables with violence or terroristic threats. These threats, real or perceived, may emanate from feelings of being dehumanized, being offensively labeled, perceptions of being judged to be inferior, or having one’s culture or moral code threatened.<sup>307</sup>

Social identity theory supports the concept that when an individual’s in-group is challenged, that person may begin to rationalize violence or engage in a directed attack in response. A group subjected to such a threat may be more likely to rationalize violence if the group collectively feels it is excluded from a legal or legitimate means of redress. Additionally, if group members feel they have been subjected to discrimination by out-groups, they may develop feelings of anger and moral superiority toward that group;

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<sup>305</sup> Brannan et al., “Talking to Terrorists.”

<sup>306</sup> Seth Schwartz, Curtis S. Dunkel, and Alan S. Waterman, “Terrorism: An Identity Theory Perspective,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32, no. 6 (2009): 537–559, doi:10.1080/10576100902888453.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

these feelings and perceptions, and therefore the group members' *reality*, may require retaliation. An out-group may label that retaliation as "terrorism," the affected individual sees it as the only legitimate and rational recourse.<sup>308</sup>

### C. STAIRCASE MODEL OF TERRORISM

Georgetown University Professor Fathali Moghaddam's staircase model of terrorism depicts an individual's transition to terrorism as a series of incremental steps taken in response to a number of perceived social injustices or individual deprivations. While framing the phenomenon of terrorism as stairclimbing can help researchers conceptualize terrorism as a process, the distinct variables identified in this model are particularly important to future CVE programming. For American CVE policymakers, understanding the sources of these deprivations, the resultant behaviors—such as unabated anger, and resentment—and the subsequent justification of terrorism are especially significant. The staircase model is important to CVE as it concisely illustrates the goals of the intervention strategies used to discourage an individual who is transitioning from radicalization toward a plan to committing violence; the same intervention strategies can be found in the UK's Channel program and the now-closed FBI's SRC program. Accounting for these dynamics is especially important when countering violent extremism in the United States, where society is built upon premises of freedom, inclusion, and equality, but where terrorist counter-narratives continue to challenge the application of these principles to all of society.

The staircase model places the behaviors associated with radicalization and terrorism into a contextual framework: an individual begins by standing at the bottom of a six-step staircase, viewing the narrowing steps as they lead upward.<sup>309</sup> As an individual climbs the staircase, it continually narrows toward the top step: terrorism. At each step upward, the individual is confronted with fewer and fewer choices until he or she reaches the top, where the only option is to engage in terrorism. This is not to say that a person is

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<sup>308</sup> Schwartz, Dunkel, and Waterman, "Terrorism."

<sup>309</sup> Fathali Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration," *The American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (2005): 161–69, doi:10.1037/0003-066X.60.2.161.

unable to descend the staircase through deradicalization, intervention efforts, or positive influences that deter radical ideology, or through rational deliberations; however, the higher a person climbs up the staircase, deradicalization becomes increasingly less likely.

The staircase's ground floor is where the majority of people, and their community members reside; it comprises perceptions of "fairness and feelings of relative deprivation."<sup>310</sup> Professor Maghaddam suggests that very few people feel the need to move to the next step; those who do move to the next step are attempting to satiate their need for justice over "perceived deprivation" as it relates to their position within a group, or to their in-group's standing in relation to other, similar groups.<sup>311</sup> These deprivations may, Moghaddam notes, either be egotistical (individually based perceptions) or fraternal (group-based perceptions), and that they may be "influenced by deep prejudices."<sup>312</sup> Should they fail to acquire the justice they seek, they may move to the first floor. Frustrated with their perceived station within the ground-floor community, individuals step to the first floor to effect change through legitimate means, such as social or political engagement. Should these efforts prove futile, the individual may climb the staircase.

At this second floor, the individual still perceives what Moghaddam describes as, "grave injustices," and experiences sustained anger and frustration. Others may influence the individual to direct these feelings outwardly toward those who are causing the injustices, or those who represent them. Though fewer individuals advance to the third floor, those who do begin a "gradual engagement with the morality of terrorist organizations" and start to rationalize terroristic acts as necessary to restore the "ideal" society.<sup>313</sup> At the fourth and fifth floors, the individual is recruited into a terrorist organization where his or her worldviews are refocused through "an in-group-out-group" lens; terrorism is firmly legitimized and the individual is emboldened or directed to operationalize an attack against an out-group.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Moghaddam, "Staircase to Terrorism," 163.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.



There are numerous variables underlying an individual's journey on the pathway to radicalization and terror. The model includes a number of specific variables that may precipitate radicalization. For example, an individual living in a country that adopts Western economic policies but whose life does not subsequently improve may experience frustration; that same person may be equally frustrated if the changes do not afford him greater civil liberties or freedoms. Another individual in this same country may resent that his country's existing culture has been usurped by new Western customs, languages, and societal nuances.

The staircase model is offered here because understanding the variables associated with radicalization and terrorism, and considering those causal relationships, are important in building CVE policy. While controversial viewpoints that much of society may deem "radical" are constitutionally protected in the United States, responsible CVE policy needs to consider the possible sources of anger and resentment that may trigger a violent response before future CVE programming can lessen the threat of terrorism.

#### **D. RADICALIZATION PUZZLE MODEL**

The final scientific model contributing to the intersection of variables is the radicalization puzzle model proposed by Dr. Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins. In their research, Hafez and Mullins examined behaviors of Islamic extremists and sought to isolate the independent variables that influenced them to radicalize. While the U.S. and UK CVE policies discussed in Chapters III and IV address all forms of extremism, both nations remain heavily invested in combating the radicalization and terrorism emanating from Islamic extremism inspired by al Qaeda and the Islamic State. As such, the radicalization puzzle affords terror researchers and CVE policymakers the unique opportunity to consider causality from this specific type of extremism and apply it to future policy deliberations and training modules.

The radicalization puzzle model accounts for the variables commonly associated with the study of radical Islamic extremism. Arguing that linearly structured radicalization models have yet to successfully explain the radicalization process on sub-

state terrorism, Hafez and Mullins' model seeks to conceptualize radicalization in terms of the connections made between previously independent pieces from four distinct categories that, once assembled, go on to create a complete picture of cognitive and the behavioral processes. The model does not discredit the individual variables from previous theoretical works, but instead restructures them into a holistic overview. The four categories (or "pieces") for consideration include: grievances, networks, ideologies, and enabling structures. Grievances include the "economic marginalization and cultural alienation, a deeply held sense of victimization, or strong disagreements regarding the foreign policies of states."<sup>315</sup> Here, significant personal crises experienced by fellow Muslims from being looked upon as the security and immigration scourge of Europe are also accounted for. The model accounts for a deep sense of humiliation and victimization Muslims feel from Western policies such as the invasion of Iraq, continued support of Israel, and support of Middle-East policy that constrains Pakistan; these grievances have all been cited as reasons that individuals adopt extremist views.

Data analyzed by Victoroff et al. indicate that "younger age and perceived discrimination toward Muslims living in the West are significantly associated with the attitude that suicide bombing is justified."<sup>316</sup> While these grievances are important to understand, it is suggested that perhaps what most offends Muslims is what they view as an attack on their identity and faith by Western society—especially Western society's embrace of free speech, which precipitates what Muslims perceive as blasphemous statements about Islam. When coupled with other pieces from the puzzle model, grievances from a number of variables are identified as powerful motivators toward radicalism.

Multiple extremist ideologies have successfully used networks as a source of recruitment and as a controlling mechanism. When networks are composed of familial relationships and trusted and pre-existing friendships, new members are more likely to adopt the group's extremist ideals.<sup>317</sup> To radicalize and recruit others, these groups rely

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<sup>315</sup> Hafez and Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle," 962.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

on intimate and historical knowledge that can often be found only within a community of family or friends. In order to facilitate strong bonds and trust within these groups and to foster a sense of collective identity, the group must maintain these ties. “Spirals of encapsulation” occur as the group encourages a new member to break off associations from the life that existed before he or she was affiliated with the group.<sup>318</sup> This increases the group’s control over the individual and enables the group to maintain the flow of messaging and influence, until the costs associated with leaving the group (which has now become the member’s sole social network) are socially disastrous, or even fatal.

As Hafez and Mullins note, criminal gangs, religious groups, right-wing extremist groups, and Islamic extremists have all taken advantage of this type of networking.<sup>319</sup> While the network usually requires strong bonds between the recruiter and the recruited for trust to exist, it is possible for an individual to be exposed to extremism or recruitment efforts through other means. As discussed previously in Chapters III and IV, violent extremists continue to demonstrate their ability to recruit and radicalize individuals to commit acts of terrorism through social media accounts and end-to-end encryption, and through a wealth of online propaganda readily available on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. This direct and indirect exposure dramatically extends the extremist’s network and compounds the threat of terrorism.

The final piece of the radicalization puzzle model is ideology. Within the model, it is argued that ideology functions as a master framework through which the world is viewed, and through which an individual can “question the precepts of the prevailing order.”<sup>320</sup> While the extremist’s worldview frequently contrasts—or directly opposes—reality, the individual turns to the group to make sense of his or her own ordering of world affairs, and to seek stasis, through whatever means necessary, in a world that does not match his or her views. This is not to say that a difference of opinion, ideology, or even religiosity always leads to radicalism.<sup>321</sup> However, when an ideology is built upon

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<sup>318</sup> Hafez and Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle,” 965.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 967

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 966.

the belief that Muslims worldwide are suffering at the hands of Western powers, that the respective governments of largely Muslim countries are closely aligned with Western powers, and that radicalization offers an opportunity for a “heroic redemption” for Muslims everywhere, radicalization may increase.<sup>322</sup>

#### **E. THE INTERSECTION OF APPLICABLE SCIENTIFIC THEORY**

The social sciences are replete with theories, often with decades of empirical support, that attempt to account for the varying causes of criminality. A survey of the social sciences’ considerable efforts highlights the value in many divergent theories of crime’s causation. Even as researchers work within their respective fields of study to promote various models to account for the phenomenon of terrorism and radicalization, some experts have concluded that adherence to a single explanation is insufficient.<sup>323</sup> Terror researcher Randy Borum suggests that researchers and practitioners studying the processes by which an individual adopts extremist ideas and then justifies and advocates violence should adopt a multidisciplinary approach in order to fully understand terrorism. Intensifying these concerns is the fact that, until recently, few empirical examinations of terrorism have been available to fulfill this research opportunity.<sup>324</sup>

As the social sciences create new ways to study terrorism, researchers have started to expand the base of scientific research. As an example, researchers Freilich and LaFree emphasize the need to continue to apply existing criminological and sociological theoretical models such as general strain theory and social identity theory to the study of terrorism.<sup>325</sup> Hafez and Mullins purport that “reality is far too complex for a single, parsimonious explanation ... [to] yield predictive power to help identify budding radicals

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<sup>322</sup> Hafez and Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle,” 966.

<sup>323</sup> Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism,” 9; Hafez and Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle,” 959.

<sup>324</sup> Freilich and LaFree, “Criminology Theory and Terrorism.”

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.; Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan, “How Does Studying Terrorism Compare to Studying Crime,” *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism* 5 (April 2004): 53–74, doi:10.1108/S1521-6136(2004)0000050006; Sharla Rauch and Gary LaFree, “The Growing Importance of Criminology in the Study of Terrorism,” *The Criminologist* 32, no. 6 (2007): 1–5.

on the path to violent extremism.”<sup>326</sup> Continued assertions such as these demand an interdisciplinary review of terror and radicalization to discover the common variables found in existing applicable theories.

While a *singular* theory may not provide agreed-upon insight into the terror phenomenon, identifying and studying the intersection of where several competing theories converge can begin filling in the gaps in understanding for practitioners and government authorities moving toward an evidence-based CVE policy. Isolating a common set of independent variables associated with terrorism and radicalization from a *set* of supported theories provides researchers and policymakers a promising set of variables from which to build an impactful CVE policy—one that is defensible and scientifically substantiated. This chapter compared several established models from the social sciences and terrorism research and identified a set of intersecting variables for future CVE policy considerations.

After examining variables from general strain theory, social identity theory, the stairway to terrorism, and the radicalization puzzle model, it is clear that there are important intersections where formal models share common variables. The intersection is important because it highlights the essential, shared causal variables that social scientists and terror researchers find significant for the future of CVE policy.<sup>327</sup>

## **F. COMMONALITIES FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

The quest to isolate and identify common variables across several scientific theories offers an alternative starting point from which homeland security professionals and academic researchers can begin developing policy initiatives to “systematically identify key intervention strategies that can help to prevent or counter radicalization in the United States.”<sup>328</sup> This is not to argue that theory development and continuing research that seeks to isolate common variables should cease; instead, this thesis argues

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<sup>326</sup> Hafez and Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle,” 959.

<sup>327</sup> National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism*.

<sup>328</sup> Aziz Huq, “Modeling Terrorist Radicalization” (working paper, University of Chicago, 2010), 50, [http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/public\\_law\\_and\\_legal\\_theory/193/.50](http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/public_law_and_legal_theory/193/.50).

that policy development could be furthered and adapted while research continues in tandem. Continuing research does not negate the potential for policy development just as future policy initiatives would not threaten continuing terrorism research.

While the theoretical models may use varying language to describe baseline radicalization and terroristic precursors, careful consideration affords researchers the opportunity to review the theoretical variables and place them into generalized categories. Table 1 presents these categories (left column) from the respective theoretical models (top row). The interdisciplinary analysis show that variables related to intense anger, feelings of prejudice, cultural isolation, and circumstances that foster a resentment of Western culture and policy are positively correlated with radicalization. As the discussion in Chapters II and III indicates, the findings from this comparative study are currently underrepresented in U.S. CVE policy, and are therefore important to consider in future of American CVE policy research.

Table 1. Common Variables from an Interdisciplinary Approach to Radicalization and Terrorism

|  | <b>General Strain Theory</b> | <b>Social Identity Theory</b>                               | <b>Radicalization Puzzle</b>   | <b>Stairway to Terrorism</b>                                      |
|--|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Variables related to <b>ANGER:</b>                 | Anger from unjust treatment  | Subjected to dehumanizing behaviors causing sustained anger | Sustained anger from perceived humiliation or victimization                                  | Perception of grave injustice. Anger directed toward causal agent |
| Variables related to <b>PREJUDICE</b>              | Subjected to racism          | Subjected to racism   | Subjected to anti-Muslim behaviors (unemployment, housing, “uncivilized” label)              | Perceptions of fraternal deprivation(s) influenced by prejudices  |
| Variables related to <b>CULTURAL ISOLATION</b>     | Ostracism from society       | Sense of moral code threatened                              | Xenophobia fuels discriminatory and hostile environment for those embracing Islamic identity | Belief that culture is minimized                                  |
| Variables related to <b>RESENTMENT of the WEST</b> | Resentment of the West       | Cultural alienation   | Perceptions of Muslims suffering at hands of Western power                                   | Resentment of West  |

## G. CHAPTER SUMMARY

“Social science has much to say that should inform strategies for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency”; an “aggressively interdisciplinary approach” can afford policymakers with analysis that is both authoritative and scientifically sound.<sup>329</sup> Instead of viewing these theories through alternative disciplinary lenses and then juxtaposing the results, this chapter and interdisciplinary review attempts to consider them *in totum* by not only drawing from “traditional social-science disciplines and their subfields, but also on such cross-cutting fields as terrorism studies, criminology, organization theory, and policy analysis.”<sup>330</sup>

The social sciences use empirical and theory-driven approaches, though both rely on similar reasoning, models, and analysis.<sup>331</sup> “Much of the quantitative counterterrorism social-science literature is of the data-driven variety” with practitioners specializing in and focusing on statistically modeling a small set of individual variables instead of the systemic and causal modeling approach favored by many theory-driven researchers.<sup>332</sup> These approaches complement each other and contribute to a holistic scientific understanding, as demonstrated here.<sup>333</sup>

According to the UK Home Office, “Social and behavioural science includes many separate disciplines including sociology, psychology ... economics, and communication studies.”<sup>334</sup> While the list is not exhaustive, sub-fields such as terrorism studies, criminology, and policy analysis should pull findings from these areas and incorporate cross-disciplinary reviews into their scholarship.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Davis et al., *Social Science for Counterterrorism*, 19.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 458.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>334</sup> HM Government, *Countering the Terrorist Threat*.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 61–64.

Social science may help researchers understand why people radicalize or commit terrorist acts, and therefore where policy may be improved in order to intervene in the radicalization process.<sup>336</sup> As disrupting the radicalization process is a central tenet of CVE policies in the United States and the United Kingdom, policymakers in each country should make a concerted effort to incorporate research data from the breadth of social science. Social science considers the context of how terrorist groups form, sustain motivation, develop the capacity to commit attacks, and weaponize religiosity.<sup>337</sup> They “can model extremist and socially marginalized group and organizational behaviors” that show how these groups start and change over time.<sup>338</sup>

These findings can help capture “best practices from around the world, notably in communities and non-government organisations,” thereby increasing the knowledge base of the academic community and CVE practitioners and policy planners.<sup>339</sup> As described in the beginning of this chapter, collaboratives of CVE experts are now beginning to identify best practices and additional areas for research and to share the information with military strategists, experts in diplomacy, non-profit organizations, and think tanks that influence CVE policy creation and decision making with an unfiltered and often apolitical approach.<sup>340</sup>

The National Science and Technology Council believes that the social, behavioral, and economic (SBE) sciences have theoretical and analytical tools that are “immediately applicable to the construction of [CVE] strategies that can enhance the Nation’s capacity to predict, prevent, prepare for and recover from a terrorist attack.”<sup>341</sup> Some of these contributions to CVE policy lie within the sciences’ ability to assist law

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<sup>336</sup> HM Government, *Countering the Terrorist Threat.*, 5.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), “Combating Terrorism: Research Priorities in the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/ostp/NSTC%20Reports/CombatingTerrorism2005.pdf> (accessed October 08, 2016).

<sup>339</sup> UK Home Office, “Countering the Terrorist Threat,” 9; National Institute of Justice, *Radicalization and Violent Extremism.*

<sup>340</sup> National Science and Technology Council, *Combating Terrorism.*

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



enforcement and intelligence agencies to “adapt to new roles [and to] ensure [they] protect individuals and communities that are vulnerable to isolation and stigmatization.”<sup>342</sup> The sciences also supply CVE policymakers with the tools to build optimal solutions into short-term and long-term strategies to combat radicalization and terrorism based on lessons learned from previous instances of attacks and disasters, both in and outside of the United States.<sup>343</sup>

While such research has been available for consideration, there is no guarantee that policymakers have reviewed and incorporated it into previous CVE policy deliberations. As discussed in Chapters II, III, and IV, there remains a distinct lack of discussion or information about the scientific basis used to create CVE policy in the United Kingdom and United States. There is, however, promise of closing the fissure between academic research and policy implementation. In advancing an interdisciplinary approach, this thesis demonstrates that using such a methodology to identify common variables can reduce the threats associated with terrorism and radicalization and help to further CVE policy efforts in the United States.

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<sup>342</sup> National Science and Technology Council, *Combating Terrorism*, 5.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

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## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research question for this thesis asked whether CVE programs in America are effectively mitigating the threat of homegrown violent extremism. This thesis makes the case that they are not. The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the broad policy changes that followed forever altered the paradigm of how government preserves the security of the homeland and how we can prevent attacks in a terror landscape that continues to evolve. Around the world, America's foreign policy decisions and military actions in the Middle East continue to be used as justification to attack the United States in radical counter-narratives, and this greatly impacts extremist recruitment efforts.

As the tactics of foreign-based violent extremist groups such as al Qaeda and the Islamic State have expanded and as directed and inspired attacks have increased, the United States has responded by developing a national strategy to counter the continuing and evolving threat of violent extremism. Ten years after 9/11, the White House released the nation's first CVE strategy document and a plan for its strategic implementation. As discussed in Chapter III, the American CVE strategy was revised in 2016 to account for the transformative threats of homegrown radicalization of American citizens to attack the United States. Despite efforts to refine CVE strategy and the notable successes in disrupting terrorist plots, there is little public evidence to support the idea that American CVE policies are effectively reducing the threat of violent extremism.

### A. RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides recommendations to improve countering violent extremism policy in the United States. The preceding chapters demonstrate American CVE can be improved by adopting features of the UK *Prevent* strategy, implementing metrics to evaluate CVE efforts, and by incorporating lessons learned from the social sciences.

- (1) Recommendation 1: A national U.S. CVE strategy similar to the United Kingdom's *Prevent* should be created.

The White House should collaborate with the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to revise, publish, and implement a new CVE strategy that is

nationally directed and locally administered, like the United Kingdom's *Prevent*. As discussed in Chapter III, since the publication of American CVE strategy in 2011, only three pilot programs have been initiated. Based on the GAO's evaluation of these pilot programs, it is recommended that the pilot programs should expand and continue, but based on the needs and priorities identified by the USAOs and DHS. Furthermore, it is recommended these organizations continue to administer the program.

- (2) Recommendation 2: The revised national CVE strategy should be federally directed by the CVE Task Force, under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security and the National Governors Association.

The current CVE Task Force comprises leadership from DHS and the FBI. As discussed in Chapter III, the direct involvement of a primary law enforcement agency such as the FBI has drawn considerable criticism from the public and advocacy groups. As the FBI is the primary enforcement agency to investigate terrorism-related cases, the Bureau's involvement with the creation and direction of CVE policy may present a conflict of interest. It is recommended the FBI maintain its unquestioned expertise in its counterterrorism role within the national security context and assume an advisory role in support of the Task Force. DHS and the National Governors Association should direct the national CVE efforts to serve localized programming needs.

- (3) Recommendation 3: The Department of Homeland Security and the United States Attorney's Offices should support CVE efforts and training modules for federal employees and state and local law enforcement officers.

According to self-reporting by the USAOs described in Chapter IV, many of the USAOs that are required to engage in CVE programming have not received any official CVE training to support their added duties. Additionally, the attorneys reported a need for CVE training materials to educate state and local law enforcement officers, but they neither have the materials nor the needed staffing to do so. It is recommended that the DHS Office for Community Partnerships and the USAOs develop suitable CVE education for law enforcement officers to standardize training and messaging within stigmatized communities.

- (4) Recommendation 4: The United States should establish an office responsible for mitigating extremist narratives like the RICU under the United Kingdom’s Prevent strategy.

It is recommended that the DHS establish an office directed by the CVE Task Force that is dedicated to countering extremist narratives and reducing the spread, influence, and availability of extremist messaging like the UK’s Research, Information, and Communications Unit (RICU) discussed in Chapter IV. Extremists exploit established support structures on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, membership-based sites such as Stormfront, online magazines such as *Inspire* and *Dabiq*, and messaging applications such as “CryptoPhone,” “FireChat,” and “Telegram” to advance their messages and tactics and expand their recruitment efforts to a global audience.<sup>344</sup> The use of these technologies has accelerated the spread of extremism. It is recommended that the CVE Task Force partner with social media companies to develop community-based approaches and capabilities to redirect users away from extremist propaganda and to create an effective counter-narrative strategy online.

- (5) Recommendation 5: The United States needs to affirm its commitment to continuing the DHS CVE Grant Program and to expanding its opportunities.

As discussed in Chapters III and IV, a national CVE strategy empowers local communities to implement tailored programming to meet their respective needs. While the DHS CVE Grant Program offers a competitive application process for local initiatives to counter all types of extremism, the program is vastly underfunded when considering the need for CVE programming in the United States. Considering the absence of nationally directed CVE programs across the country, the Grant Program may be the only federal opportunity for a community to counter extremist narratives in its jurisdiction. As such, it is recommended that the White House direct efforts to incrementally expand outreach and grant funding through the DHS Grant Program to continue localized CVE

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<sup>344</sup> Robert Graham, “How Terrorists Use Encryption,” *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 6 (2016): 20–25. See also “ISIS Uses These Apps to Communicate,” *Business Insider*, accessed August 28, 2016, [www.businessinsider.com/isis-communicate-apps-2015-11/#government-officials-have-increasingly-come-out-against-the-use-of-encryption-in-consumer-technology-products-with-some-even-asking-for-backdoors-1](http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-communicate-apps-2015-11/#government-officials-have-increasingly-come-out-against-the-use-of-encryption-in-consumer-technology-products-with-some-even-asking-for-backdoors-1).

programming until programs like those found in the three pilot cities are available nationwide.

- (6) Recommendation 6: The CVE Task Force should work to include measurable outcomes and to monitor the progress and level of effectiveness in future CVE efforts.

Program efficacy is a key component in policy analysis. Chapters II and III discussed the need for evaluative program metrics for the American CVE strategy. It is difficult to prove preventative programming counterfactual; much of what CVE programming is designed to do is prevent extremism, and ultimately, attacks from occurring. While creating qualitative and quantitative metrics is a daunting task, the CVE Task Force and the presidential administration need to ensure metrics are in place to evaluate the long-term efficiency of outputs and outcomes of all future CVE efforts.

Despite the Task Force's original mandate to "assess and evaluate" CVE programs, an evaluation has yet to be produced. A 2017 GAO report outlined in Chapter III found that "the federal CVE effort lacks a cohesive strategy with measurable outcomes and a process for assessing progress."<sup>345</sup> It is understandably difficult to measure success for preventative programs such as *Prevent* and the strategy outlined in the American SIP.<sup>346</sup> However, assessments are still needed. This thesis recommends the CVE Task Force, the GAO, the Executive Office for the United States Attorneys, and representatives from the three pilot programs coordinate and administer a full review of programming results. It is recommended this review move beyond measuring *outputs* such as the number of programs initiated, and begin implementing measurement tools to determine *outcomes* such as threat reduction, level of recidivism/return to preventative programs, and the results of attitudinal surveys as appropriate metrics to evaluate CVE programming.

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<sup>345</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 21.

<sup>346</sup> Mastroe, "Evaluating CVE."

- (7) Recommendation 7: American CVE efforts should include an intervention strategy based in the lessons of scientific research and that parallels the United Kingdom’s Channel program.

One of the most significant contrasts between the American and UK CVE strategies is the U.S. strategy’s lack of an intervention component. As evidenced in Chapter V, social science and terror studies have provided several causal variables that lead individuals to violence. Using Moghaddam’s staircase to terrorism model as an example, if an individual’s behaviors can be identified as moving toward violence early, then non-coercive intervention strategies may be able to redirect that individual away from extremist activity through channels of behavioral health counseling or educational and employment resources.

As discussed in Chapter IV, the United Kingdom’s Channel program continues to afford individuals the opportunity to receive rehabilitative and therapeutic services to address the sources of grievance and social conflict, albeit with some degree of controversy after it was placed on statutory footing. The FBI’s SRC program was similarly met with opposition before the plan was scuttled, leaving the intervention efforts in the pilot cities as the only American programming of this type. As previously discussed in Recommendation 2, a continuing directive role for the FBI may relabel intervention strategies as a veiled securitization effort and thus erode their support. It is therefore recommended that the White House, DHS, and National Governors Association form an advisory board with CVE experts and researchers to establish a national intervention strategy, coordinated through the CVE Task Force and USAO and administered by each state’s homeland security department. It is recommended that future “off-ramp” programs be implemented, but not administered by law enforcement agencies.

- (8) Recommendation 8: American CVE policy needs to incorporate the lessons learned from social science and terrorism research.

Among the number of policy shortcomings discussed in this thesis, American CVE strategy fails to include lessons from the social sciences. The selection of scientific models in Chapter V shows the relationship between a number of causal factors and the individual feelings of anger, resentment, and cultural isolation as triggers for

radicalization to violence, yet American CVE policy does not account for this research. As outlined in Chapter IV, there is evidence that the UK CVE strategy effectively leverages the whole of government to address a number of these factors. Offered as an example, British community leaders consider the variance in cultural and societal needs for their at-risk populations when selecting localized CVE programming options under the national *Prevent* strategy. These options, in addition to the multi-agency resources for behavioral, educational, and employment counseling under *Channel*, account for and address the same causal triggers identified by social science as relating to radicalization.

It is recommended that the White House’s National Science and Technology Council consider a collaborative between CVE experts, DHS, and the National Governors Association to advance the sciences into an evidence-based national CVE strategy. This revised national strategy would then bring the lessons learned and best practices from researchers and practitioners into all national and localized CVE programming.

## **B. CONCLUSION**

It is not a novel idea to compare the U.S. and UK CVE strategies. Comparative analyses from CVE researchers and respected think tanks have sought to identify the best practices for American adoption from around the world. Even cited within this thesis, Naval Postgraduate School theses by Deardorff (2010), Davis (2014), and Bonanno (2017) all proposed that the United States adopt portions of the United Kingdom’s whole-of-government approach to countering violent extremism into a nationalized strategy, for example.<sup>347</sup> This thesis contributes to the ongoing CVE dialogue by reviewing the current CVE landscape, the most recent policy evaluations, and lessons from the social sciences to advance this growing area of research.

While the 2016 SIP remains the most recent American CVE strategy, it has been archived by the Trump administration and is no longer acknowledged as current on government platforms. This not only leaves the appearance of a policy void, but it may

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<sup>347</sup> Deardorff, “Countering Violent Extremism”; Davis, “Now Is the Time for CVE-2”; Bonanno, “Deterring Violent Extremism.”



also create a degree of public uncertainty for the future of the CVE Task Force and those CVE programs administered through the USAOs and DHS grants. This void represents an opportunity for the administration to secure an impactful and nationwide CVE policy to reduce the risks associated with violent extremism that incorporates the experiences and history of the United Kingdom's matured, national CVE strategy.

America requires a nationally administered, locally delivered CVE program in response to the continued radicalization of its own citizens and evolving tactics of terrorism. This CVE strategy needs to be as robust and comprehensive as the American counterterrorism efforts abroad. The American public should not accept avoidable casualties from terrorism due to its government's inability to address these issues. This thesis' recommendations illustrate how this effort should begin.

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