



Empowering Pakistan's Civil Society to Counter Global Violent Extremism

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For the 11th annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum, we returned once again to the city of Doha. The Forum, co-convened annually by the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World and the State of Qatar, is the premier international gathering of leaders in government, civil society, academia, business, religion, and the media to discuss the most pressing issues facing the United States and global Muslim communities.

Each year, the Forum features a variety of platforms for thoughtful discussion and constructive engagement, including televised plenary sessions with prominent international figures addressing broad issues of global importance; sessions focused on a particular theme led by experts and policymakers; and working and action groups that bring together practitioners to develop initiatives and policy recommendations. The 2014 Forum continued its strong record of success.

Over three days together, we launched an initiative to return Mali's cultural heritage to Timbuktu after the city was taken over by jihadists. We also deliberated on expanding the capacity of Pakistan's civil society to counter violent extremism, discussed the application of Islamic values to achieve reconciliation in post-conflict Muslim societies, and examined the challenges faced by Muslim communities in Europe and North America to develop a contextualized understanding of their religion. These deliberations were captured in papers to be shared with policymakers and the broader public. (For detailed proceedings of the Forum, including photographs, video coverage, and transcripts, please visit our website at <http://www.brookings.edu/about/projects/islamic-world>.)

The opinions reflected in the papers and any recommendations contained therein are solely the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the participants of the working groups or the Brookings Institution. Select working group papers will be available on our website.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the State of Qatar for its partnership and vision in convening the Forum with us. In particular, we are grateful to His Highness the Emir for his leadership and generosity in enabling us to come together for these three days of candid discussion. We would also like to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Khalid bin Mohammad Al Attiyah, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support. We would especially like to recognize H.E. Rashid Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, the Minister's Assistant for Services and Follow-up, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jasim Al Thani, the Minister's Assistant for International Cooperation Affairs, Ambassador Abdulla Fakhroo, the Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences' Executive Director, Dr. Osman Majeed, and the Permanent Committee's entire staff for their support.

Sincerely,



Dr. William F. McCants
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Abstract

Empowering Pakistan's Civil Society to Counter Violent Extremism

Conveners:

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Pakistan is one of the most strategically important countries for the United States and the Muslim world. Since 9/11, the United States has focused on securing a more stable and democratic Pakistan that is capable of countering violent extremism (CVE); however, despite investing over \$30 billion, Pakistan remains a base for numerous U.S.-designated terrorist groups. In lieu of a robust government-led strategy, Pakistan's civil society has had to take the lead in CVE. Although civil society organizations (CSOs) have developed innovative peacebuilding initiatives at the grassroots level to counter violent extremism, they must overcome numerous obstacles in creating a nationwide movement. With this challenge in mind, how can the United States and the international community adopt a more systematic approach to strengthen Pakistan's civil society? This Working Group will address this question by assessing the capacity of existing CVE programs in Pakistan, determining good practices in engaging local actors, and identifying regional challenges to implementing programs. This Working Group will also consider how lessons learned in Pakistan can be applied in other countries that are at risk of violent extremism. Finally, the Working Group will develop recommendations for national and provincial strategies to empower civil society as a bulwark against extremism.

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Introduction to the Issue

Pakistan is among the most strategically important countries for the United States because of its nuclear capabilities, geographic location, and its position as a frontline state in the battle against global extremism. Since 9/11, the United States has invested more than \$30 billion in civilian and military assistance to Pakistan.¹ However, Pakistan still remains a base for numerous U.S.-designated terrorist groups, and the threat of violent extremism has continued to increase over the last decade.

Radical ideologies continue to gain traction in Pakistan, and the risk to civilians, government institutions, and aid organizations is growing in spite of the Pakistani military's counter-extremism and deradicalization programs. According to intelligence reports, between 2001 and March 2013, 49,000 Pakistanis died at the hands of the Taliban and other militant groups.² The situation has particularly deteriorated within the past four years, with an increase in ethnic and sectarian violence³ and

numerous attacks on major cultural and religious sites resulting in the deaths of scores of civilians.⁴

The government of Pakistan (GoP) is unable to effectively counter violent extremism (CVE) because of its competing national security priorities and economic and energy crises. As a result, Pakistan's civil society has had to take a lead in peacebuilding and CVE initiatives.⁵ While many civil society CVE programs are effective at the grassroots level, civil society organizations (CSOs) must overcome numerous challenges to become more sustainable and replicable. The United States and the international community must adopt a more systematic and integrated regional approach to empowering Pakistan's civil society to specifically address these issues.

It is more urgent than ever to support Pakistan's civil society in its peacebuilding efforts as the United States reduces its presence in Afghanistan. Since

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1. Susan Epstein and K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan: Foreign Assistance," Congressional Research Services, July 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41856.pdf>.
 2. Mudassar Raja, "Pakistani Victims: War on Terror Toll Put at 49,000," *The Express Tribune*, March 27, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/527016/pakistani-victims-war-on-terror-toll-put-at-49000/>.
 3. "Sectarian Violence in Pakistan," South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm>.
 4. "Attacks on Sufi Shrines in Pakistan," CIRCLe, <http://www.sust.terrorismwatch.com.pk/Attacks%20on%20Shrines%20In%20Pakistan.html>.
 5. Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq, and Waleed Ziad, "Pakistan's Civil Society: Alternative Channels to Countering Violent Extremism," WORDE Report, October 2012, <http://www.worde.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/WORDE-Report-Pakistan-Civil-Society-Alternative-Channels-to-CVE.pdf>.

2001, the United States has made considerable progress in establishing relationships with Pakistan's civil society to implement programs that specifically address drivers of violent extremism. This paper aims to equip policymakers with the tools to expand such efforts and develop a sophisticated strategy for the distribution, allocation, and implementation of assistance to Pakistan to reduce the threat of international terrorism. This CVE strategy can also serve as a model for stabilizing other at-risk Muslim majority countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Egypt.

First, this paper will explore Pakistan's civil society-led CVE programs and assess U.S. government efforts to support these initiatives since 2001. The report will then consider challenges to civil society-focused CVE work in Pakistan, including institutional obstacles and capacity limitations. Recommendations are addressed primarily toward U.S. policymakers and CVE program implementation agencies, as well as their partners in the diaspora community and in Pakistan.⁶

Defining 'CVE'

CVE is a broad-ranging term that describes initiatives to reduce the spread of violent extremist ideologies espoused by al-Qa'ida and similar terrorist networks.⁷ The Obama Administration used the phrase in 2011 with the release of its policy paper, "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States" and the subsequent release of its Strategic Implementation Plan. Senior policymakers from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Justice (DOJ) and the State Department acknowledge that protecting our nation from foreign and domestic violent ex-

tremism is a top national security priority. Accordingly, significant resources and political capital have been dedicated to advancing the CVE agenda.

The phenomenon of extremism in Pakistan is highly complex and multi-layered. While this report primarily addresses Taliban and al-Qa'ida related violent extremism, radicalization may result from a multitude of 'push' and 'pull' factors such as poverty, ethnic or sectarian discord, political grievances, and extremist ideologies.⁸

6. Given political sensitivities, many interviews with U.S. government officials were conducted not for attribution.

7. For the purposes of this paper, violent extremism will be defined as those activities and beliefs which are used to advocate, engage in, prepare, or otherwise support ideologically-motivated violence to further socio-economic and political objectives.

8. Push factors are social conditions that influence an individual toward violent extremism. These are often factors that cause individuals to reject or disassociate from mainstream beliefs and behaviors. Pull factors are those that make violent extremist ideas and groups appealing, and are often unique to each individual.

Processes of Radicalization in Pakistan

Radicalization and recruitment into extremist groups stems from a multitude of factors. For the purposes of this paper, factors that influence the processes of radicalization include deviant ideologies, political grievances, psychological disorders, sociological motivators, and economic factors. Characteristics of radicalization in Pakistan may vary regionally, particularly between urban and rural areas. In addition, many factors can be overlapping.

Extremist groups within Pakistan rely on numerous methods to expand their influence in society, including but not limited to:

- **Violence and intimidation to silence ideological and political opposition:** Since 2001, hundreds of mosques and shrines have been attacked, and traditional religious and political leaders who have actively spoken out against the Taliban have been targeted.
- **Indoctrination with radical religious ideologies:** Extremist groups have funded and supported the development of *madrasas* (religious schools), supplying them with curricula and textbooks espousing extremist ideologies (e.g., religious intolerance, *takfirism*,⁹ and the centrality of militant jihad to Islamic practices).
- **Economic incentives and social welfare assistance:** Similar to tactics employed by Hezbollah, organizations like Jama'at ud-Da'wa (the charitable front for the terrorist organization Lashkar-e Tayyaba) gain popular support among low-income families by providing medical facilities, cash hands outs, clothing, and food.
- **Socio-political grievances:** Extremist groups have capitalized on grievances (e.g., drone strikes, inefficient judicial systems, income inequalities, perceived government corruption, and frustration with U.S. foreign policy) to win support.

An Overview of Civil Society in Pakistan

Pakistan has one of the most robust civil societies in the developing world, with over 100,000 CSOs operating across the country.¹⁰ USAID's 2011 CSO Sustainability Index report for Pakistan scored it among the highest of African and Asian countries.¹¹

The CSO sector encompasses a diverse and broad range of non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, coalitions, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, labor unions, citizen's groups, and voluntary orga-

nizations. The precise number of CSOs in Pakistan is unknown because nearly half are unregistered and official registration records are not routinely updated. Estimates from 2001 indicate that 46 percent of CSOs are involved in education, 17 percent focus on civil rights and advocacy, and the remainder is engaged in social services, health, culture, or recreation."¹²

As noted above, civil society in Pakistan includes both non-faith-based and faith-based organizations. The majority of organizations are non faith-based, and include development organizations, media networks, and organizations specifically dedicated to

9. *Takfir* refers to declaring a Muslim to be a *kafir*, or unbeliever, on the basis of doctrinal differences.

10. Khawar Ghumman, "Over 100,000 NGOs Operate in Pakistan: Minister," *Dawn.com*, June 29, 2009.

11. The Index analyzes and assigns scores to seven interrelated dimensions of CSO sustainability, including Legal Environment, Organizational Capacity, Financial Viability, Advocacy, Service Provision, Infrastructure, and Public Image, and averages them to produce an overall score. "2011 CSO Sustainability Index for Pakistan," United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2011, <http://www.usaid.gov/pakistan/civil-society-sustainability>.

12. Nadia Naviwala, "Harnessing Local Capacity: U.S. Assistance and NGOs in Pakistan," *Harvard Kennedy School Policy Analysis Exercise*, Spring 2010.

conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Faith-based CSO networks, which remain relatively understudied and underutilized by the international community, are well institutionalized. Their mosques and *madrasas* coordinate resources and projects among their affiliated soup kitchens, social welfare organizations, political parties, and publishing houses. Faith-based networks include groups with extremist and pro-Taliban orientations, as well as those who condemn terrorism while promoting peace and social cohesion. Faith-based networks (hereafter referred to as traditional Muslim networks) include both Sunni and Shi'a groups and form a bulwark against the spread of violent extremism. They play a significant role in countering al-Qa'ida and Taliban-related ideologies.

An Overview of CVE Initiatives

Government of Pakistan CVE Initiatives

The GoP has implemented a number of policies and reforms in the education, media, economic development, and security sectors to address the threat of extremism. Nonetheless, the GoP's record on countering extremism has been mixed due to weak governance capacity, civilian-military divides, domestic political constraints, conflicting strategic objectives, and economic obstacles.

As early as August 2001, President Musharraf had announced a nationwide strategy to eradicate sectarian and other militant outfits.¹³ Since then, the GoP has pursued several initiatives. For example, in late 2013, Pakistan passed two significant pieces of legislation: the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinances and the Pakistan Protection Ordinance, empowering law enforcement officials and amending the legal framework governing terrorism.¹⁴ In February 2014, the government issued its first integrated National Internal Security Policy, which acknowledges the CVE role of the civilian government, the military, civil society stakeholders (including religious leaders, educational institutions, and the media), Pakistanis living overseas, and the international community.¹⁵ Although

this policy represents a positive step, implementing the strategy will require consistent political will and substantial resources.

To address instability in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the epicenter of the regional Taliban insurgency, the GoP has extended the Political Parties Act to the region,¹⁶ and taken steps toward amending the draconian Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR).¹⁷ Additional expected reforms in FATA could integrate this historically isolated region into the mainstream socio-political spheres of Pakistan. Pakistani policymakers believe that extending greater political rights to the people in FATA will reduce both political grievances and the local population's support of alternative forms of governance proposed by the Taliban.

The Pakistani military has also led counterinsurgency operations across Pakistan, particularly in Swat in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and in the seven agencies in FATA. Following operations in Swat, the military established deradicalization centers to rehabilitate Taliban recruits. The military has several other CVE initiatives, including a radio station, FM 96, to counter terrorist propaganda in the Swat valley.

13. The Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, issued on August 15, 2001, banned terrorist organizations including Lashkar-e Jhangvi.

14. "Anti-Terrorism Ordinance Presented in NA," *Dawn.com*, November 7, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1054749/anti-terror-ordinances-presented-in-na>.

15. *National Internal Security Policy of Pakistan* (2014-18), Government of Pakistan, Ministry of the Interior, February 25, 2014.

16. Prior to the extension of the Political Parties Act, Members of the National Assembly had to contest elections as independent candidates. The act now enables political parties to field candidates for the National Assembly from FATA. "Political Parties Order 2002 as Amended in 2011," FRC FATA Reforms, <http://www.fatareforms.org/political-parties-order-2002/>.

17. The FCR, implemented in 1901, has been widely criticized for allowing collective punishment and for denying the people of FATA the right to appeal detention, the right to legal representation, and the right to present reasoned evidence. "Summary of 2011 Amendments to the Frontier Crimes Regulation," FRC FATA Reforms, <http://www.fatareforms.org/summary-of-2011-amendments-to-the-frontier-crimes-regulation/>.

Notwithstanding these efforts, Pakistani and international analysts contend that the GoP has pursued a largely ad hoc and reactive approach that lacks long-term vision. In addition, the GoP has been largely unsuccessful in mobilizing public support for its CVE campaigns. The international community has also criticized the military for supporting militant groups to advance its regional political objectives in Afghanistan and India.

Civil Society-Led CVE Initiatives

In the absence of a sustained government-led CVE strategy, Pakistan's civil society has played a major role in implementing peacebuilding and CVE-related programming through several key channels relying on indigenous tools, networks, and resources.¹⁸

First, CSOs are organizing anti-terror campaigns, public rallies, demonstrations, and conferences to mobilize various segments of the population against the Taliban. For example, at the height of the Taliban insurgency in Swat in 2009, traditional Muslim networks from across Pakistan came together in Lahore to organize the Istehkam-e Pakistan (Strengthening Pakistan) Conference. The participants unanimously condemned the atrocities committed by the Swat Taliban, and approached the Pakistani government to take military action against the insurgents. A number of subsequent conferences and rallies such as the anti-Taliban Save Pakistan conventions, attracting thousands, have galvanized the population and forged unity against extremism. Without generating this public support, many Pakistani activists believe it would have been difficult for the military to take the appropriate decisive action against the Taliban.

Second, some public intellectuals and community leaders are promoting peace and social cohesion in ways that appeal to the local population. Youth activist Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi, for example, has developed a campaign to counter radical narratives by painting messages promoting peace on rickshaws—a medium popularly used by militant recruiters.¹⁹ Similarly, radio stations have been established to counter radical rhetoric across the country. Most community-based stations established by traditional Muslim networks were short-lived because they lacked resources and could not garner financial support from the government. However, radio programs such as *The Dawn and The Voice of Peace* have been able to thrive with the support of the international community.²⁰

Third, advocacy groups such as the Jinnah Institute conduct research and public awareness campaigns including peace rallies that are instrumental in reducing public support of extremist organizations. Efforts such as the peace CSO CIRCLE's 25,000-man National Flag Day March bring together cross-sections of civil society to demonstrate public support of counter insurgency operations.

Fourth, cultural associations and faith-based organizations denounce attacks on innocent civilians and the destruction of Pakistan's cultural heritage. For example, in 2013 when militants targeted a church in Peshawar, communities organized several sit-ins across Pakistan to protect Muslim and non-Muslim places of worship.²¹

Fifth, there are several efforts to promote tolerance and diversity from the grassroots level to institutions of higher learning. Bushra Hyder, the Direc-

18. In 2011–2012, WORDE conducted a study of these efforts across 35 cities, towns, and villages and published a report and a supplementary directory of approximately 100 organizations engaged in CVE. For more information about the civil society-led CVE initiatives highlighted in this section, see Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq, and Waleed Ziad, "Pakistan's Civil Society: Alternative Channels to Countering Violent Extremism," WORDE Report, October 2012, <http://www.worde.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/WORDE-Report-Pakistan-Civil-Society-Alternative-Channels-to-CVE.pdf>

19. Sebastian Abbot, "Pakistan Peace Rickshaws: Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi, Youth Leader, Spreads Anti-Violence Message," *Associated Press*, February 8, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/08/syed-ali-abbas-zaidi_n_2646510.html

20. "Pakistani Radio Show Uses Mothers and Mullahs to Undercut the Taliban," *Reuters*, September 24, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/441617/pakistani-radio-show-uses-mothers-and-mullahs-to-undercut-taliban/>

21. Aroosa Shaikat, "Human Chain Formed to Protect Christians During Lahore Mass," *The Nation*, October 6, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/614333/muslims-form-human-chain-to-protect-christians-during-lahore-mass/>

tor of the Qadims Lumier School and College in Peshawar introduces youth to cultural and religious diversity through a peace education curriculum. In rural Sindh, the CSO Baanhn Beli (“A Friend Forever”) works to build inter-faith relations by engaging both Muslim and Hindu communities in grassroots development work.

Finally, faith-based organizations erode the credibility of militant groups by challenging their narratives within a culturally appropriate framework. In Okara, the hometown of several of the 2008 Mumbai attackers, the Dar ul-Uloom Ashraf al-Madaris Okara organizes seminars on Qur’anic principles of peace and conflict resolution.²² In addition, scholars have issued dozens of anti-terror fatwas in Urdu and local languages. Dr. Tahir ul-Qadri’s 600-page fatwa against terrorism and suicide bombing, for example, has become a powerful tool for Pakistani religious scholars to streamline anti-terror talking points.

It is important to also highlight peacebuilding efforts led by women among these diverse programs. In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the women’s organization PAIMAN teaches mediation and conflict transformation skills to women and youth through the “Let’s Live in Peace Project”. Over the past twenty years, the organization has impacted over 35,000 youth and 2,000 women²³ through their centers for conflict prevention and peace building. PAIMAN founder Mossarat Qadeem is also a leader of the Aman o-Nisa, a women’s coalition of civil society activists against extremism. The coalition includes activists such as Huma Chughtai, who teaches diverse segments of the population about conflict resolution, and Sameena Imtiaz, Executive Director of Peace Education and Development (PEAD) Foundation, which provides training for youth groups, teachers, religious leaders, and community leaders on promoting tolerance and nonviolence.²⁴

22. Sebastian Abbot, “AP Exclusive: U.S. Ups Extremism Fight in Pakistan,” *Associated Press*, December 31, 2011.

23. “Women Save Pakistan: Empowering Women to Sensitize and Mobilize Against Extremism – Mossarat Qadeem,” Women Without Borders, 5 Nov, 2010, <http://www.women-without-borders.org/news/uptodate/223/>.

24. “Against All Odds in Pakistan: Women Combatting Radicalization,” Meridian International, <http://www.meridian.org/meridian/news/item/696-against-all-odds-in-pakistan-women-combatting-radicalization>

Challenges Faced by CSOs in CVE

Pakistan's civil society faces numerous challenges and limitations.

Institutional Capacity: Pakistani CSOs often lack the leadership and good governance skills required to become effective at the national or international level. Audits cite financial mismanagement, corruption, and inadequate reporting mechanisms as obstacles to effective programming among larger CSOs who have received international support.²⁵ In addition, most grassroots institutions lack long-term strategic vision and operate on a project-to-project basis.

Security: Insecurity continues to impede project implementation and has made it increasingly difficult to organize public awareness campaigns in at-risk areas. As a result, activists often have to assume indirect approaches in which they embed anti-extremism talking points within broader discussions of social issues.

Radicalization of the Middle: Over the past thirty years, radical rhetoric propagated by extremist groups has contributed to the spread of intolerant beliefs, narratives, and pejorative terms such as *kafir* (non-believer) and *wajib al-qatl* (worthy of being killed) in Pakistani society. This has constricted the public space for moderate civil society activists to publicly champion positive values.

Finances: One of the main concerns for Pakistani CSOs is financial viability. Most community-based

groups do not receive support from international organizations, and rely on limited community donations. The lack of manpower further constrains efforts. Volunteers carry out most civil society campaigns, and organizers find it difficult to maintain volunteer commitment in the medium and long-term. Unlike peace activists, extremist groups tend to be well funded. According to a 2010 cable leaked by Wikileaks, \$100 million dollars is funneled from Arabian Gulf states annually to support radical *madrasas* in southern Punjab.²⁶

Lack of Coordination, Communication, and Networks across Sectors: It is difficult to mobilize the diverse groups that constitute the moderate majority due to poor collaboration between faith-based organizations and their like-minded secular counterparts, as well as the competitive environment for financial resources. Further, there is limited communication between Islamabad-based English-speaking CSOs with access to international funding and grassroots and traditional Muslim networks which often have far greater reach in at-risk areas.

Socio-Political Climate: Finally, CSOs find it difficult to engage in CVE activities as the socio-political climate in Pakistan becomes increasingly defined by anti-Americanism. There is a perception among many Pakistanis that CVE programs are conducted only at the behest of the United States as part of a broader western agenda to interfere in Pakistan's affairs.

25. The allegation of corruption against Pakistan's Children's Television Project is one of several high profile cases of CSO mismanagement of USAID funding. See "Pakistan's 'Sesame Street' Hits Dead End Amidst Fraud Charges," *The Express Tribune*, June 6, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/389577/pakistans-sesame-street-hits-dead-end-amid-fraud-charges/>

26. Declan Walsh, "Wikileaks cables portrays Saudi Arabia as a cash machine for terrorists," *The Guardian*, December 5, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/05/wikileaks-cables-saudi-terrorist-funding>

U.S. Government Foreign Assistance in Pakistan Toward CVE

U.S. assistance to Pakistan rose exponentially in the years following September 11, 2001²⁷ from \$36.76 million in 2000 to \$2 billion by 2002. In 2010, aid appropriations and military reimbursements collectively amounted over \$4.5 billion.²⁸ Because the aid is premised on Pakistan's role as a reliable partner in counter-terrorism efforts, there is an implicit assumption that it should ultimately contribute to regional security and the elimination of extremism and terrorist networks.

The U.S. Congress has tried to strike a balance between civilian and military assistance to Pakistan. In 2007, Congress passed a \$750 million five-year aid package for development assistance in FATA as part of a strategy to increase civilian assistance to bolster soft power approaches to reducing extremism in Pakistan. Two years later, Congress passed the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act (EPPA), also known as the 'Kerry-Lugar-Berman' bill, which allocated \$1.5 billion per year for five years.²⁹

The percentage of aid that directly relates to CVE is difficult to determine given that military and civilian aid to Pakistan is not specifically designated for CVE purposes.³⁰ Implementing agencies such as the State Department, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United States Institute of Peace (USIP), or the Department of Defense (DOD) characterize CVE efforts in a variety of ways, partly

because the U.S. government as a whole does not apply a consistent definition of CVE. As a result, it can be difficult to differentiate *CVE-specific programs* from *CVE-related programs* that indirectly prevent violent extremism through poverty alleviation, governance and democratization, or education. Moreover, some have argued that all civilian and military aid to Pakistan builds resilience to extremism and could therefore be categorized as CVE programing. Furthermore, many older programs have been retroactively categorized as CVE programs as this agenda gains traction. In short, as Steven Heydemann, the vice president of Applied Research on Conflict at USIP argues, "the lack of a clear definition for CVE not only leads to conflicting and counterproductive programs but also makes it hard to evaluate the CVE agenda as a whole."³¹

Despite the ambiguities surrounding the term, a number of U.S. government programs in Pakistan can be broadly seen as furthering CVE and counter-terrorism objectives. Such programs include efforts to provide development assistance in at-risk areas, engender positive values, enhance security in border areas, counter narcotics, and countering terrorist financing. Several of these U.S. government programs are implemented in partnership with civil society, as detailed below.

USAID

USAID's development efforts in Pakistan that relate to CVE or promoting democratic values include programs implemented by the Office of Tran-

27. Steven Radelet, "Bush and Foreign Aid," *Foreign Affairs*, (2003) Volume 82, Number 5; Carol Lancaster and Ann Van Dusen, "Organizing U.S. Foreign Aid: Confronting the Challenges of the 21st Century," *Global Economy and Development: Monograph Series on Globalization*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2005), 3.

28. In 2013, foreign assistance had decreased to \$1.5 billion. As the U.S. prepares to withdraw its armed forces from the region, foreign assistance to Pakistan is expected to further decrease. Epstein and Kronstadt, 10; Congressional Research Service, "Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2015," March 26, 2014, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/pakaid.pdf>.

29. "Statement by the Press Secretary on the Signing of Kerry-Lugar-Berman," *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, October 15, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-press-secretary-signing-kerry-lugar-berman>.

30. It is noteworthy that a Department of State Assistance Strategy Report which followed the EPPA referenced helping "the Pakistani government address basic needs and provide improved economic opportunities in areas most vulnerable to extremism" among its three key objectives. However, the strategy did not directly reference CVE, peace-building, or related programs under the EPPA. Pakistan Assistance Strategy Report, Sec. 301(a) of the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, December 14, 2009.

31. Steven Heydemann, "Countering Violent Extremism as a Field of Practice," *United States Institute of Peace Insights*, Issue 1, Spring 2014.

sitions Initiatives (OTI) and USAID's Democracy and Governance (D&G) programs.

OTI works with local partners to advance peace and democracy, with flagship programs in Karachi and southern Punjab.³² Providing recreational opportunities and vocational training are some examples of OTI's efforts to promote counter-narratives and mitigate the social and political factors that facilitate recruitment of youth into violent extremist groups. Similar to the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad's CVE office (see below), OTI programs pursue a trial-based approach addressing various theories of change and drivers of radicalization, with a preference for small-scale projects. Lessons learned are disseminated within USAID and other U.S. government agencies.³³ According to OTI staff, their success rests on streamlined funding mechanisms that allow OTI to provide fast, flexible assistance that can adapt to changing political dynamics. OTI contracts with U.S.-based and international organizations that support local partners to carry out activities. However, local Pakistani civil society activists have noted that this has decreased the transparency of USAID's programming processes.

USAID's D&G programs focus on democratization, good governance/anti-corruption, and civic engagement. International organizations such as the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) are principal partners in some of these endeavors. D&G programs also include small-grants initiatives that regularly engage local CSOs.³⁴

USAID also conducts programs in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. OTI programs aim to build trust between the government of Pakistan

and communities through the development and construction of community-identified projects. Examples in FATA include vocational training, institutional capacity building, rehabilitation of schools, community-based development projects, and infrastructure development. More recently, USAID has focused programming to support political reforms, political party development, and democratization. NDI has also been working with local civil society activists to recommend further political reforms.

USIP

USIP supports a range of projects with Pakistan's civil society related to peacebuilding, mitigating conflict, and countering extremist narratives. USIP also continues to lead and fund research projects on issues ranging from the roots of extremism and militancy to mapping youth trends. Recently, in partnership with the organization Al-Noor, USIP published peace education textbooks. In addition, USIP organizes several workshops, including Peacebuilding Across Borders (a program that fosters Track II relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan), and the Education and Training Center (a program to train civil society leaders in conflict resolution). Other areas of focus include training Pakistani parliamentarians and female civil society leaders, and fostering Track II diplomacy between India and Pakistan.

For over six years, USIP has directly engaged with Pakistani religious leaders toward promoting Sunni-Shi'a dialogue, developing a peace curriculum for *madrasas*, and strengthening mediation and conflict resolution skills. With guidance from USIP, religious leaders have also initiated education and cultural preservation programs.

32. OTI's FATA and southern Punjab program are managed from the USAID Mission in Islamabad, whereas their Karachi program is managed from the Consulate in Karachi.

33. Good practices are not systematically communicated with the NCTC, which is tasked with sharing good practices relating to CVE on an inter-agency level.

34. These include the Small Grants Program for local CSOs, the U.S. Ambassador's Fund, the Gender Equity program, and the Citizens' Voice Project. *Quarterly Progress and Oversight Report on the Civilian Assistance Program in Pakistan as of March 31, 2013*, Offices of Inspector General of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, and State, and the Government Accountability Office, 44.

USIP's Priority Grant Competition funds research and programming related to peacebuilding in countries at risk of violent extremism such as Pakistan. In addition, USIP recently started offering micro-grants as part of its Peace Innovations Fund for Pakistan. The fund provides small grants ranging from \$1,600–\$30,000, which are better suited for local CSOs conducting peacebuilding programs. The 60 Second Film Festival is an original project supported by the Fund, which promotes activism and awareness of pressing social issues, particularly among Pakistan's youth.³⁵ Furthermore, USIP offers larger grants ranging from \$50,000–\$150,000, for organizations engaged in countering sectarianism, intolerance, and violent separatist movements.

CVE Initiatives Supported by the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad (Department of State)

The State Department serves as the focal point for U.S. government funded CVE programming efforts worldwide. In 2011, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad's Public Affairs section developed a new office to support peacebuilding and CVE initiatives.³⁶ The office administers a grants program, intended for civil society actors to "expand media engagement, strengthen people-to-people ties, and increase community engagement."³⁷ The office's approach has been described as a hands-on, trial-based, grassroots approach in which innovative proposals are sought from civil society activists. Embassy supported programs include vocational training for at-risk youth, religious leader dialogue series and documentaries about victims of violence.³⁸ For example, to counter sectarian and communal violence, the Embassy

helped organize a women's interfaith dialogue series in Rawalpindi that included teachers, civil society activists, and over 40 female religious leaders from various faiths.³⁹ The Embassy also supports programs to counter extremist narratives—from public service announcements, to radio programs, college lecture series, theatre performances, as well as comics and animated television series for youth. Some credit the Embassy's broad civil society outreach to the involvement of local hires that carry out or assist in much of the office's community engagement.

The Embassy's CVE related programming objectives are guided by the Pakistan Expanded Regional Stabilization Initiative (PERSI), a working group to coordinate Embassy and consular staff in their CVE programming. In PERSI meetings, participants provide updates on their efforts and explore areas of potential inter-agency synergy.

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) (Department of State)

DRL supports several endeavors to counter extremist narratives that focus on intolerance, particularly toward ethnic and religious minorities. The office has supported initiatives including the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy's (ICRD) Ethnic and Religious Minorities initiative for the development of *madrasa* curriculums, the Promoting Peaceful Coexistence program with the Church World Service, and the Protecting Human Rights While Countering Terrorism program enhancing the legal profession and justice sector in promoting human rights and rule of law in national security.⁴⁰

35. Viola Gienger, "Pakistan 60 Second Film Festival Goes International," *USIP*, January 7, 2014, <http://www.usip.org/olivebranch/pakistan-60-second-film-festival-goes-international>.

36. Staff positions for this office have been formalized in the Foreign Service schedule. According to a senior policymaker, having a permanent office within the Embassy dedicated exclusively to community outreach and CVE set a precedent for U.S. officials to firewall portions of public diplomacy funds specifically for CVE.

37. "Grants Opportunities," Embassy of the United States, Islamabad, Pakistan, http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/pr_122712.grant.html.

38. Abbot, "U.S. Ups Extremist Fight In Pakistan."

39. Tara Sonenshine, "The Role of Public Diplomacy in Countering Violent Extremism," U.S. Department of State, *Diplomacy in Action*, March 27, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/remarks/2013/206708.htm>.

40. *Quarterly Progress and Oversight Report*, 39–40.

Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT Bureau) (Department of State)

The CT Bureau has focused on making CVE a priority issue for the State Department. Within Pakistan, the CT Bureau has conducted CVE programming in universities and in prisons. In addition, the Bureau provides assistance to the U.S. Embassy's CVE office relating to issues of policy, information sharing, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

Strategic Communications on Counterterrorism (CSCC) (Department of State)

The CSCC has played a role in countering radical ideologies online through its Digital Outreach Team. Established in 2010 as an interagency initiative, the CSCC is based in the State Department and works closely with U.S. embassies.⁴¹ The CSCC collaborates with other U.S. government departments in developing effective counter-messaging, with a focus on al-Qa'ida related narratives.

U.S. Pakistan's Women's Council (USPWC) (Department of State)

The USPWC functions as a public-private partnership between the State Department and American University. USPWC is a coalition of high-impact women engaged in women's entrepreneurship, education, and employment. USPWC works with several diaspora organizations and activists such as CARE, The Citizens Foundation (TCF), and Developments in Literacy (DIL), as well as the Organization for Pakistani Entrepreneurs of North America (OPEN), the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent, North America (APPNA), and the U.S.-Pakistan Foundation. The council is involved in several

programs including a multi-generational leadership center, mentor-to-work programs, and educational exchanges. While the work of the Council does not directly relate to CVE, it seeks to challenge extremist narratives broadly through the empowerment of women and civil society in Pakistan.

Future Resources for CVE

With the gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and the larger budgetary constraints facing the U.S. government, it is likely that American aid to Pakistan will not continue at the same levels as before. The reduced budget may affect individual CVE programs. However, it is important to note that a significant portion of the funds appropriated under Kerry-Lugar-Berman remain unspent, and USAID and specifically OTI will likely have considerable resources in the medium-term through which to continue CVE-related programs.

The establishment of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) in 2011 also opens significant opportunities as a global coordinating venue for CVE cooperation.⁴² In September 2013, the GCTF launched the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), a public-private global fund to support local CVE efforts, particularly at the grassroots level. The fund is expected to raise more than \$200 million dollars.⁴³

41. The CSCC also offers Resilient Communities Grants "to amplify the voices of survivors and victims of terrorism." "The State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications: Mission, Operations, and Impact," Hearing before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives 112th Congress, Second Session, Aug 2, 2012.

42. Eric Rosand, "New Global Fund Supports Local Efforts To Counter Violent Extremism," *DipNote*, September 27, 2013, <http://blogs.state.gov/stories/2013/09/27/new-global-fund-supports-local-efforts-counter-violent-extremism>

43. "Final Steering Group Meeting for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund," *Media Note, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of the Spokesperson Washington, D.C.*, February 21, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/02/221905.htm>

Challenges to Civil Society Engagement for Peacebuilding and CVE

U.S. government officials, Pakistani CSOs, and the policy community cite a number of key interrelated challenges to effective civil society engagement in Pakistan.

Lack of a Comprehensive U.S. Government CVE Strategy for Pakistan

The U.S. government lacks a coherent CVE strategy that is coordinated across the various stakeholders and agencies involved in strategic planning and implementation of CVE programs in Pakistan.⁴⁴ In the absence of a systematic approach, the U.S. has pursued CVE programs in an ad hoc manner, depending on the approach of individual policymakers or officials. This has made it difficult for implementing agencies to plan long-term programs, and has eroded the credibility of U.S. government agencies as partners among Pakistani CSOs engaging in peacebuilding work.

There are several key reasons for this. First, the field of CVE is relatively new, and extremism is a constantly evolving phenomenon. As a result, there is a lack of academic literature on the nature of extremism and the drivers of radicalization in Pakistan. Furthermore, the relative efficacy of security-driven counter-terrorism approaches, as compared to ‘soft-power’ approaches that seek to build community resilience to violent extremism, remains understudied.

Second, the issue of CVE remains a sensitive one, both for the government and the people of Paki-

stan. In Pakistan, activities that are overtly branded as part of a CVE agenda often arouse suspicion.

Third, the U.S. government’s regional ‘Af-Pak’ approach has hindered the development of a Pakistan-specific strategy. The linking of Pakistan to Afghanistan rests on the assumption that both countries are interconnected with regards to violent extremism. While there are merits to this approach given the transnational structure of extremist groups, it makes it difficult for the administration to view Pakistan’s problem of extremism on its own terms and to develop Pakistan-focused solutions.

Fourth, there are a number of competing concerns driving U.S. foreign policy. The continued crisis in Syria and Iraq and the aftershocks of the Arab Spring are likely to draw policymakers’ attention away from Pakistan in the coming months. As a result, CVE in Pakistan is not always at the forefront of policymakers’ agendas. Several senior policymakers have acknowledged that pressure is required from President Obama and Secretary Kerry to make CVE in Pakistan a priority in U.S. foreign policy.

Fifth, there is little coordination on developing and implementing CVE approaches between agencies, within agencies, and even between Washington and the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad. To address this, in 2013 the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan’s (SRAP) office formed an interagency Af-Pak CVE working group to share resources and exper-

44. The NSC Global Engagement Directorate, for example, develops comprehensive policies that leverage resources for national security objectives, including CVE. Within the State Department, the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan coordinates U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

tise, both internally and externally, with non-governmental organizations. The working group's meetings have been temporarily deferred as the participants are currently refining a global definition of CVE. The State Department is also developing a toolkit to illustrate the drivers of radicalization, provide examples of CVE programs, and identify available resources in the U.S. government to address violent extremism. The resource will also include points of contact within the U.S. government to help improve coordination.

Sixth, strong leadership and commitment to the CVE agenda from the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan is required in order to carry out a coordinated and streamlined approach in the Embassy. Several policymakers have noted that Ambassador Cameron Munter set a positive precedent that allowed for the development of CVE programming and coordinating mechanisms such as PERSI.

Finally, securing long-term funding required for CVE initiatives remains a challenge. Congress may hesitate to appropriate funding for programs that do not bear measurable results within a budget cycle. Developing metrics to assess CVE programs has consistently proven difficult, and moreover, initiatives that aim to influence the beliefs and practices of at-risk individuals may take several years to produce an impact.

Impact of U.S.-Pakistan Cooperation and the Regional Political Climate

U.S.-Pakistan cooperation for CVE has faced critical setbacks, given a number of successive diplo-

matic crises and disputes arising from U.S. foreign policy including the use of drone strikes.⁴⁵ The strained climate has also contributed to heightened anti-Americanism throughout the country and has created disincentives for local activists to partner with the United States. Furthermore, U.S. supported peacebuilding programs are often perceived as a form of interference in Pakistan's internal affairs.⁴⁶ For example, Malala Yusufzai, a young female activist for women's education, was initially hailed as a hero in Pakistan after she was targeted by the Taliban. However, after allegations that she had received U.S. support, significant public opinion turned against her and similar activists.

There have been positive developments in U.S.-Pakistan relations in recent months, including the resumption of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue. The Dialogue is noteworthy as it addresses several pressing issues, including mutually determined measures to counter extremism and terrorism. The bilateral Law Enforcement and Counter-Terrorism Working Group also resumed discussions in 2014 to address issues such as counter-terrorism, terrorist financing, and border control.⁴⁷

U.S.-Pakistan tensions have also impacted American public opinion and prompted calls in Congress to decrease or halt U.S. foreign assistance. For example, following the Osama bin Laden raid, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher introduced the "Defund the United States Assistance to Pakistan Act of 2011" and in July of that year, President Obama suspended and cancelled millions of dollars of aid to the Pakistani military. Despite the recent upturn

45. Most notably, U.S.-Pakistan relations took a sharp downturn in 2011 following the Raymond Davis incident in which CIA operative Davis shot and killed two Pakistanis. In May 2011, the Osama bin Laden raid further deteriorated the bilateral relationship, with the Government of Pakistan accusing the United States of violating its sovereignty, and U.S. policymakers criticizing Pakistan for its lack of commitment to eradicating terrorism. When U.S.-led NATO forces launched a cross-border attack, known as the "Salala incident," in November 2011 which killed 24 Pakistani soldiers, Pakistan responded by closing off NATO supply routes to Afghanistan, bringing relations to an all-time low.

46. It should be noted that several grassroots Pakistani CSOs interviewed by WORDE noted that while they would be hesitant to accept funding directly from the U.S. government, receiving assistance from U.S.-based organizations would not be problematic.

47. The Defense Consultative Group (DCG), the key bilateral forum for discussing the U.S.-Pakistan security relationship and defense cooperation, also recently met in November 2013, and both sides renewed their commitment to pursuing a forward-looking, transparent, and politically sustainable defense relationship in areas of mutual interest. "Joint Statement from U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue," *U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman*, 27 January 2014, IIP Digital, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/01/20140127291706.html?CP.rss=true#axzz2wxElBe6B>

in U.S.-Pakistan relations, however, another aid package along the magnitude of the EPPA is unlikely. Moreover, the urgency of providing aid to Pakistan will likely decrease as U.S. security forces draw down from Afghanistan.

Congressional Appropriations and Oversight

Several congressional appropriations processes must occur before aid reaches the ground. This makes timely assistance difficult and can hinder the possibility for U.S. government agencies to leverage soft power readily in a crisis. Aid appropriations to Pakistan have undergone lengthy scrutiny since 2001, reflecting concerns of Pakistan's nuclear program, the GoP's accountability and transparency regarding aid spending, and the alleged support of extremist groups by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Moreover, aid conditionality has had a negative effect. The EPPA for example, provided aid on the condition that Pakistan would maintain democratic institutions, safeguard human rights and cease to support extremism. The Pakistani public regarded these conditions as an infringement of Pakistan's sovereignty,⁴⁸ and many in Pakistan doubt Washington's sincerity when the transfer of funds is delayed.⁴⁹ Many civil society actors argued that Pakistani civilian aid should not have been linked to the actions of Pakistan's security establishment, over which they exert little control.

In addition, congressional oversight has reduced the programmatic flexibility of implementing agencies. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), USAID and their implementing

partners have "limited input into program designs and strategies, and their work is constrained by an abundance of rules, regulations, and reporting requirements" on the part of Congress.⁵⁰ Reporting requirements have discouraged many grassroots and local organizations from applying for funding from the United States.

Grant Processes and Reporting Requirements

U.S. and Pakistan-based CSOs claim that the process of applying for grants from the U.S. government is cumbersome and lacks transparency. Many perceive that the pool of aid recipients is restricted to the Islamabad-based English speaking elite or to large international development organizations. While such organizations are adept at writing grants, they often lack the expertise required to work in critical regions of Pakistan, or to engage key local stakeholders such as religious or tribal leaders. Grant recipients noted that reporting mechanisms for U.S. grants can be prohibitively complex, and that metrics for evaluating their peacebuilding programs are difficult to acquire. Finally, U.S. grants are often designed to support large-scale projects, rather than smaller, region-specific grassroots programs that are often required in the field of CVE.

Human Resources and Expertise

Human resources issues impact effective CVE strategy development and program implementation. Given security concerns, USAID and the State Department assign most American personnel to Pakistan for only one-year renewable terms. This has resulted in inconsistent CVE approaches due to the loss of institutional memory within U.S. agencies

48. Mahrukh Khan, "Ten Years of U.S. Aid to Pakistan and the Post-OBL Scenario," *Institute of Strategic Studies Pakistan*, August 31, 2013, no. 4 & 1, http://www.issi.org.pk/publication-files/1379480372_41320758.pdf

49. Prior to 2008, U.S. foreign assistance was administered either through the GoP's line ministries, or to NGOs (through a Request for Proposal process) who would then partner with Pakistani organizations to carry out programs. However, as part of the U.S. government's efforts to build up the GoP's capacity, aid was thereafter directed through the Pakistan Government Ministry of Economic Affairs for distribution. Fearing increased corruption, officials in Washington had to develop new transfer mechanisms which significantly delayed the disbursement of funds. See Sadika Hameed, "The Future of Cooperation Between the United States and Pakistan," *CSIS*, October 2013.

50. "Aid and Conflict in Pakistan," International Crisis Group, Asia Report Number 227, June 27, 2012.

operating in-country. Despite the frequent turnover of Embassy staff in Islamabad, a systematic CVE training program for Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) does not exist.⁵¹

Similarly, there is a dearth of Pakistan-specific expertise in government and policy circles in Washington. The majority of experts tend to consider Pakistan from the vantage point of Afghanistan, and few are intimately familiar with Pakistan's unique socio-political climate.⁵² This problem would persist even in the event of a re-classification of SRAP in which Pakistan would be primarily addressed as part of the South Asia bureau within the State Department. In this case, experts would be likely to approach Pakistan from an India-centric perspective.

Perceived Constitutional Restrictions on Religious Leader Engagement

Religious leader engagement in Pakistan has been a subject of continued debate. There is a perception that it is unconstitutional for the U.S. government to engage directly with religious discourses. This hesitation has hampered the government's ability to provide consistent support to religious actors who are ideologically opposed to the Taliban and other extremist groups. This obstacle has been successfully overcome in Bangladesh and more recently in Afghanistan, where the U.S. government has implemented a range of religious leader engagement and imam training programs.

Challenges and Limitations in Diaspora Engagement

Engaging the Pakistani-American diaspora community is a valuable component of U.S. government efforts in Pakistan.⁵³ Previous engagements

with the diaspora have focused on strengthening U.S. public diplomacy initiatives, cultivating subject matter expertise for development programs, expanding entrepreneurial development, and women's empowerment. To date however, the diaspora remains underutilized in the field of peacebuilding and CVE.

There are several challenges and limitations to effective diaspora engagement in these areas. To begin, the Pakistani diaspora has a greater interest in philanthropy work (e.g., supporting schools and hospitals) than peacebuilding programs. This is partly due to a limited awareness of the problem of extremism in Pakistan and its potential impact on the diaspora community. In addition, many members of the Pakistani diaspora are uncomfortable engaging in such issues given sensitivities after 9/11 and mistrust of U.S. law enforcement agencies. Pakistani-American community leaders also cite that their engagements with the U.S. government are not routinized. Diaspora leaders claim that they are only engaged when there is a crisis, and that there is little follow-up for establishing lasting partnerships.

The Role of the Government of Pakistan

The GoP poses several challenges to U.S. government agencies and implementing partners engaged in CVE such as delays in issuing visas for project personnel and in approving memorandums of understanding for CVE programs. In addition, GoP-imposed travel restrictions prevent program implementation in high-risk regions. For example, CSOs must apply for No Objection Certificates before executing programs in regions such as FATA. Regulations that may place more restrictions on foreign-funded programs are currently under review by the Pakistani government.⁵⁴

51. NCTC has coordinated a similar training program for FSOs in Europe, at the Foreign Service Institute. To date, there are no plans to extend this training program for FSOs engaged in South Asia.

52. Shuja Nawaz, "Exeunt Pakistan Experts Pursued by Bear," *Foreign Policy*, June 14, 2011, http://southasia.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/14/exeunt_pakistan_experts_pursued_by_bear; Michael Kugleman, "Where Have Washington's Pakistan Experts Gone?" *Dawn.com*, April 26, 2012, <http://www.dawn.com/news/713622/where-have-washingtons-pakistan-experts-gone>

53. "U.S.-EU Expert CVE Meeting on Pakistan and Pakistani Diaspora Communities," Brussels, January 24-25, 2012.

54. Mubarak Zeb Khan, "Plan to Regulate Funds for NGOs," *Dawn*, August 7, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1034606/plan-to-regulate-funds-for-ngos>

In addition, U.S. policymakers often complain the GoP has not shown a consistent commitment to CVE. The failure to fully acknowledge extremism as a domestic problem at the governmental level has resulted in sporadic cooperation in counterterrorism or CVE.

Regional Challenges and Security

Security remains one of the largest concerns for local and international organizations operating in Pakistan. Since 2001, there have been hundreds of targeted killings of anti-Taliban activists as well as journalists. Security has also precluded the U.S. government from publically disclosing its funding and support of certain peacebuilding projects, particularly in at-risk regions. Publically branding projects may jeopardize the security of local implementing partners in the current political climate.

Security concerns also prohibit U.S. government outreach with local partners and hinder effective monitoring and evaluation in at-risk areas. USAID and U.S. Embassy personnel in particular are restricted by their Regional Security Officers to conduct limited site visits across the country. With fewer personnel able to travel, the U.S. government has been working through more local partners to carry out projects. In addition, FSOs are relying on locally-hired Pakistani staff to maintain relationships with civil society.

There are additional challenges to implementing CVE programs in places where the writ of state is limited. This problem is particularly acute in FATA where the legal and judicial structures are radically different from the rest of Pakistan. Such regions provide peace activists limited opportunities to mobilize resources for programs due to limited physical and communications infrastructure.

Reflections of the Working Group

The following recommendations are intended for the U.S. government and other relevant stakeholders, including the policymaking community and the Pakistani-American diaspora.

Develop an Inter-Agency CVE Strategy for Pakistan

The foremost requirement for Pakistan is a comprehensive inter-agency CVE strategy that integrates civil society as a key component. Such a strategy should be developed by pooling expertise from across the U.S. government in conjunction with Pakistani-American community leaders and analysts within the think tank and academic communities.

An inter-agency strategy should ideally:

- Determine a comprehensive and focused inter-agency definition of CVE specifically for Pakistan, which takes into account how CVE is related to, or distinct from, traditional counterterrorism, development and public diplomacy.
- Develop an action plan that clearly identifies lead U.S. government agencies, their responsibilities, target demographics and regions, and metrics for evaluation.
- Account for a five-year time horizon, with contingency plans in the event of political crises.
- Consider Pakistan and its problem of extremism on its own terms, delinking Pakistan from the ‘Af-Pak’ framework.
- Define and address the multiple dimensions of extremism in Pakistan, from recruitment processes to foreign financing of terrorist groups.

- Forge long-term relationships with non-governmental actors including media, CSOs, and religious networks operating at the grassroots level.
- Concentrate resources from multiple agencies to implement a series of projects in targeted localities that address multiple drivers of violent extremism and have measurable results in creating community resilience.
- Foster local buy-in for the CVE agenda. This may require rebranding CVE in less controversial terms, such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution, or stabilization. Improved transparency can help Pakistani policymakers, CSOs, and the general public to recognize that the U.S. government is working toward shared objectives.

Invest Political Capital in the CVE Agenda

Sustained support of the CVE agenda from the White House is required to ensure that the U.S. government invests the appropriate resources to overcome the aforementioned challenges. President Obama and Secretary Kerry should designate CVE—particularly in high-risk regions such as Pakistan—as a priority issue for national security, and refer to the issue in key speeches and public statements.

Increase Civilian Assistance and Funding for CVE Initiatives in Pakistan

Congress should sustain high levels of non-security related assistance to Pakistan. Allocations should be made specifically for civil society engagement, development in areas at risk of violent extremism, as well as high-visibility branded

aid, which can engender trust with the Pakistani people. Furthermore, civilian aid should be de-linked from the actions of Pakistan's security establishment, as CSOs—the prime targets of this aid—have little influence on the actions of the Pakistan military and government.

Re-evaluate the Public Diplomacy and CVE Nexus

The U.S. government should make a distinction between its public diplomacy goals and its national security interests in eliminating terrorism. These two objectives may not necessarily be achieved simultaneously in the current political climate. It is important to recognize that effective Pakistan-based CSOs may further U.S. strategic interests while also being critical of American foreign policy. The United States should therefore weigh the costs and benefits of partnering with such organizations, independent of public diplomacy objectives.

Improve Outreach for CVE-related Programming

U.S. Embassy and USAID staff are often unable to conduct outreach with civil society actors outside of major cities, particularly those operating in rural and tribal areas. Short of revising the Embassy's security restrictions, implementing agencies could partner with USIP, which faces fewer travel restrictions. In addition, the U.S. Embassy and USAID could hire additional local staff with CVE expertise, and seek guidance in identifying and vetting partners from a range of stakeholders (including CSOs, members of the National Assembly, local police, and alumni of U.S. Government funded programs and exchanges). They can also link up with well-established Pakistani development organizations, like Sustainable Participatory Organization and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, that collaborate with international organizations

and have developed extensive networks of partnerships with grassroots organizations.

Furthermore, a centralized database should be developed of Pakistani activists and CSOs engaged in peacebuilding, which includes details regarding CVE projects and good practices. Such a database should be updated in real-time and synchronized between the U.S. Embassy, consulates, and the State Department in Washington, D.C. to ensure continuity even after staff transition to other postings.

Make Grants Accessible

The process of applying for grants, particularly those relating to CVE and peacebuilding, should be simplified and made more transparent and readily accessible to Pakistani CSOs. Furthermore, Requests for Proposals (RFPs) should be developed with input from local stakeholders to better reflect the ground realities and needs of communities.

The U.S. government should reduce complex reporting requirements, extend grant durations beyond one to two years, and expedite grant allocations to encourage a broader pool of applicants. In addition, micro grant programs, such as those implemented by USIP, should be expanded and replicated to encourage smaller organizations with grassroots reach to apply.

Finally, U.S. government agencies should disseminate information on CVE-related grant opportunities and requirements through multiple channels across the country (e.g., regional roundtables or grant-writing workshops, local newspapers, college bulletins, radio stations, etc.).

Link to Alternative Sources of Support

The U.S. government should encourage increased public-private partnerships to diversify funding

sources for Pakistani CSOs. The GCERF could serve as an ideal platform to mobilize the requisite resources. In addition, the U.S.-Pakistan Business Council, or the Asia Department at the United States Chamber of Commerce, could mobilize American businesses in Pakistan to support local peace activists. The State Department could also host regular philanthropy round tables to network Pakistani civil society with U.S. and international private foundations that are able to provide grants with less stringent reporting and programming requirements than U.S. government agencies.

Enhance Cultural Competency

USAID, the State Department, and other relevant agencies should prioritize hiring Pakistan experts for CVE program implementation. A high level of regional expertise, cultural competency, and language proficiency is particularly essential for effective engagement with religious actors and traditional community leaders. Relevant agencies should recruit local hires or advisors who have worked with Pakistani development organizations with a demonstrated track record in carrying out successful programs in rural and low income urban areas (e.g., the Rural Support Programs, the Orangi Pilot Project, or Sungi).

In addition, training in understanding radicalization in Pakistan should be provided to FSOs who usually learn about these dynamics from their experiences on the ground. Training should provide a baseline understanding of violent extremism and the various mechanisms of CVE to ensure the implementation of a streamlined CVE approach across the U.S. government. Training should ideally be provided to public affairs officers, political-economic affairs officers, USAID and OTI officials, as well as local hires, and should be delivered by experienced CVE experts and Pakistani development experts working in conflict areas or in peacebuilding.

Prioritize Funding for Training Programs to Build Institutional Capacity

In addition to investing in new CVE programs, U.S. government agencies should focus on supporting the existing work of CSOs that have proven effective in building peace and social cohesion.⁵⁵ USAID, in collaboration with other international aid organizations, should focus on providing training in non-profit management and capacity building, financial sustainability, civic education, emergency management and humanitarian relief distribution, coalition building, grant writing, communication and media, and social-media skills.

Harness the Potential of the Diaspora

With approximately half a million Pakistanis living in the United States, there is significant potential to mobilize Pakistani-American professionals. The diaspora can provide assistance in identifying potential local partners, overall guidance on program development and assessment, and the organization of workshops, training institutes, and exchange programs to develop the institutional capacity of Pakistan's civil society. Furthermore, Pakistani Americans should be recruited to fulfill community engagement positions within the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and its consulates.

All relevant U.S. government agencies should make a concerted effort to engage the diaspora in an institutionalized manner. Policymakers should gauge where the diaspora is best placed and most willing to assist. Ideally, agencies should establish a diaspora advisory board (comprised of established members of the community as well as young leaders) that would meet on a regular basis to discuss peacebuilding programming. Diaspora members noted that government officials of Pakistani heritage are particularly helpful in facilitating outreach, as they under-

55. For a broader discussion on best practices, see Hedieh Mirahmadi, Waleed Ziad and Mehreen Farooq, "Pakistan's Civil Society: Alternative Channels to Countering Violent Extremism," WORDE Report, October 2012.

stand the scope, capacity, and limitations of both the diaspora community and the relevant government agencies.

The U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council can provide an effective model for public-private partnerships in working with the diaspora to affect change in Pakistan. A similar council could be created specifically for peacebuilding.

Facilitate Coordination and Communication across CSOs

As mentioned above, CSOs engaged in peacebuilding and CVE in Pakistan often lack coordination. U.S. government agencies should identify existing CSO coalitions and help facilitate communication and cooperation, particularly among faith-based and non-faith-based organizations. CSO coalitions should then be encouraged to formulate their own definition of CVE in a framework that is palatable to Pakistanis, and to apply for CVE-related grants as a consortium.

Bridge the Gap between Expectations and Realities

Channels of communication should be increased so Pakistanis can better understand the constraints of the U.S. government, and to help the U.S. government better understand the ground realities and environmental limitations of Pakistani CSOs. This can be achieved through regular U.S. government engagements with partners and local experts, or through an advisory council of CSOs engaged in peacebuilding.

Continue to Support Alternative Narratives

Additional efforts are required to support programs that promote organic, locally designed alternative narratives. In particular, the U.S. government should support credible existing voices dedicated to peacebuilding to prevent the

marginalization of the moderate majority. These programs can range from the promotion of traditional Pakistani culture and poetry as a viable alternative to extremism, to rallies and poster campaigns condemning extremism and violence.

Engage and Empower Faith-based Networks

The U.S. government should seek to increase engagement with faith-based networks for CVE purposes. Given their grassroots capacity discussed above, religious leaders can not only provide counter-narratives to inoculate at-risk populations from extremist ideologies, but they can reinforce positive mainstream, democratic values.

Despite their proven track record of countering extremism, traditional Muslim networks require training in leadership, good governance, and communications to strengthen their capabilities. Although traditional Muslim leaders can speak at length on promoting social cohesion within a religious paradigm that is palatable to at-risk youth, they lack the skills to reach non-religious audiences or the media. Finally, their educational institutions need resources to provide students with critical thinking skills to challenge myopic violent extremist narratives. CVE funding and programing should be targeted to address these gaps.

Conclusion

Despite U.S. efforts to aid the government of Pakistan to counter terrorist recruitment, Pakistani and foreign terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State continue to recruit vulnerable Pakistanis. To date, the government-led approach has yielded limited results.

U.S. engagement of Pakistan's civil society is therefore critical for thwarting the recruitment efforts of terrorist organizations inside the country, especially as the United States lowers its military profile in the region. The United States should prioritize working with grassroots CSOs and religious and community leaders who can best mobilize local resources and cultivate support for CVE objectives. The United States should also convene CVE practitioners and experts, diaspora leaders, and academics to guide the development of the CVE agenda in Pakistan. Ultimately, the good practices gleaned from successful CVE efforts in Pakistan can serve as a blueprint for other regions facing similar challenges.

About the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World

The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World is a research initiative housed in the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The Project's mission is to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on the changing dynamics in Muslim-majority countries and to advance relations between Americans and Muslim societies around the world.

To fulfill this mission, the Project sponsors a range of activities, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and Muslim states and communities all over the world. The broader goals of the Project include:

- Exploring the multi-faceted nature of the United States' relationship with Muslim states and communities, including issues related to mutual misperceptions;
- Analyzing the social, economic, and political dynamics underway in Muslim states and communities;
- Identifying areas for shared endeavors between the United States and Muslim communities around the world on issues of common concern.

To achieve these goals, the Project has several interlocking components:

- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together leaders in politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from the United States and from Muslim societies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The Forum also serves as a focal point for the Project's ongoing research and initiatives, providing the foundation for a range of complementary activities designed to enhance dialogue and impact;
- An Analysis Paper Series that provides high-quality research and publications on key questions facing Muslim states and communities;
- Workshops, symposia, and public and private discussions with government officials and other key stakeholders focused on critical issues affecting the relationship;
- Special initiatives in targeted areas of demand. In the past these have included Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, and Religion and Diplomacy.

The Project's Steering Committee consists of Martin Indyk, Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies; Tamara Wittes, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Middle East Policy; William McCants, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Kenneth Pollack, Senior Fellow in the Center; Bruce Riedel, Senior Fellow in the Center; Shibley Telhami, Nonresident Senior Fellow of the Project and Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland; and Salman Shaikh, Fellow and Director of the Brookings Doha Center.

The Center for Middle East Policy

Charting the path to a Middle East at peace with itself and the world

Today's dramatic, dynamic and often violent Middle East presents unprecedented challenges for global security and United States foreign policy. Understanding and addressing these challenges is the work of the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings. Founded in 2002, the Center for Middle East Policy brings together the most experienced policy minds working on the region, and provides policymakers and the public with objective, in-depth and timely research and analysis. Our mission is to chart the path—political, economic and social—to a Middle East at peace with itself and the world.

Research now underway in the Center includes:

- Preserving the Prospects for Two States
- U.S. Strategy for a Changing Middle East
- Politics and Security in the Persian Gulf
- Iran's Five Alternative Futures
- The Future of Counterterrorism
- Energy Security and Conflict in the Middle East

The Center was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The Center is part of the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings and upholds the Brookings values of Quality, Independence, and Impact. The Center is also home to the *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, which convenes a major international conference and a range of activities each year to foster frank dialogue and build positive partnerships between the United States and Muslim communities around the world. The Center also houses the *Brookings Doha Center* in Doha, Qatar—home to three permanent scholars, visiting fellows, and a full range of policy-relevant conferences and meetings.