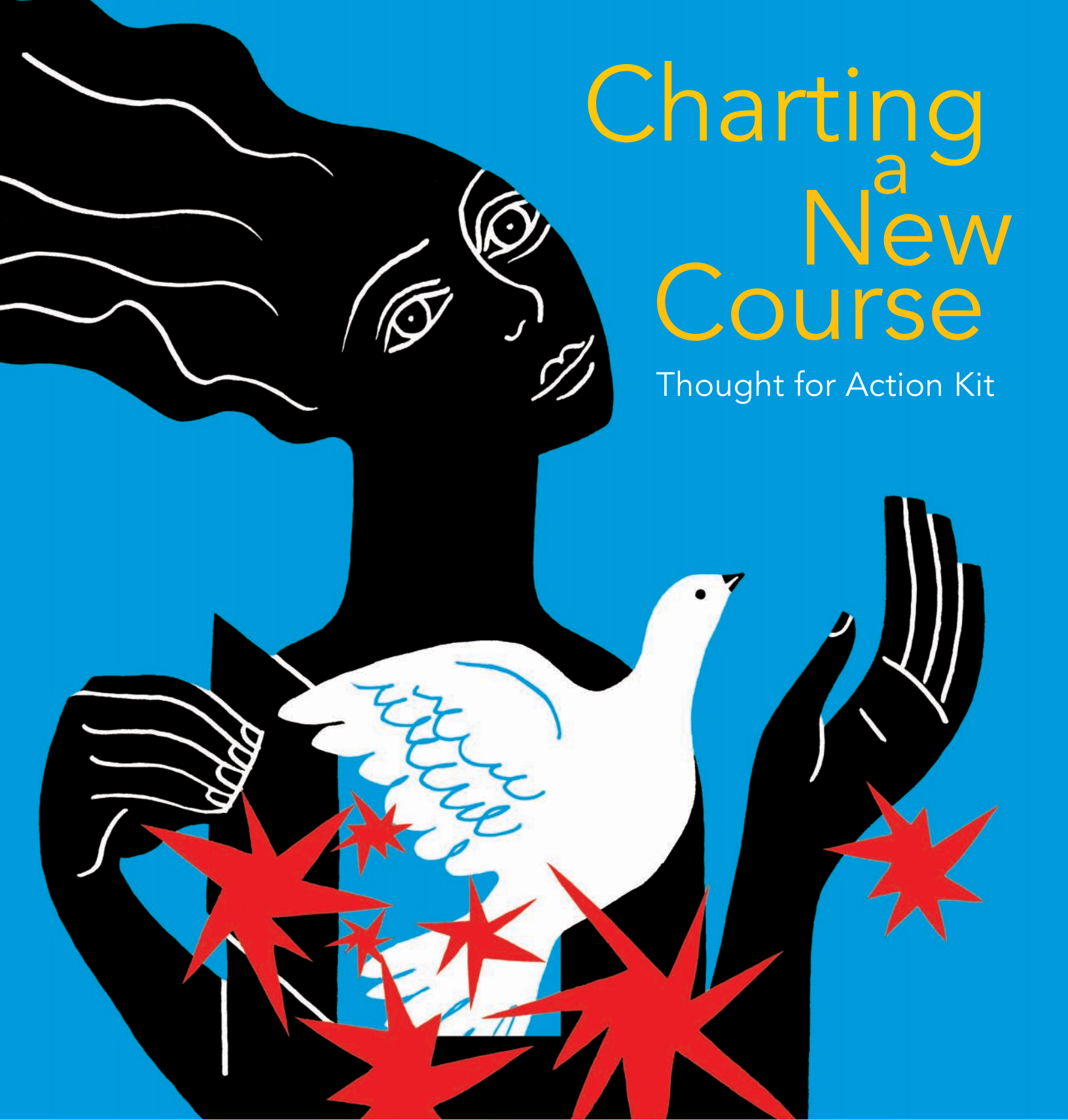


Charting a New Course

Thought for Action Kit



WOMEN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM



**UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE**

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Charting a New Course

WOMEN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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2	Acknowledgments
3	Introduction
7	Why Gender Matters
9	Women on the Front Lines <i>by Alistair Millar</i>
11	<i>Exercise: Act Like a Woman/ Act Like a Man</i>
12	Blindspots <i>by Jayne Huckerby</i>
13	<i>Exercise: Spheres of Influence</i>
15	Women and the Dynamics of Extremist Violence
17	Listen to the Women Activists <i>by Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini</i>
19	<i>Exercise: Gendered Motivations</i>
20	When Women are the Problem <i>by Mia Bloom</i>
21	<i>Exercise: Multiple Interpretations: Who is Right?</i>
22	Motivations of Female Fighters <i>by Nimmi Gowrinathan</i>
25	Engaging Communities in Preventing Violent Extremism
27	Building Resilience to Violent Extremism <i>by Georgia Holmer</i>
29	<i>Exercise: Allies and Challengers</i>
30	Charting New Ways with New Partners <i>by Edit Schlaffer</i>
31	<i>Resource: Active Listening Techniques</i>
32	Everyday Technologies Can Help Counter Violence and Build Peace <i>by Nancy Payne</i>
33	<i>Resource: Enabling Technologies for Preventing Violent Extremism</i>
34	Increasing Understanding through Words <i>by Alison Milofsky</i>
35	<i>Resource: Debate versus Dialogue</i>
36	Acronyms
36	Resources

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The creation of the thought for action kit, “Charting a New Course: Women Preventing Violent Extremism,” has been a team effort. The kit will eventually include a video component with interviews featuring women practitioners on preventing violent extremism. The U.S. Institute of Peace has lead the pilot project “Women Preventing Extremist Violence” in Nigeria and Kenya. Our civil society partner, Women Without Borders, has been the lead on the “Sisters Against Violence Extremism” project in India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many women leaders who participated in the projects and who face on a daily basis the ravages of violent extremism. Their courage and generosity has been an inspiration for us all.

I would also like to recognize Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, Edit Schlaffer, Georgia Holmer, and Linda Bishai for being key contributors to conceptualizing and delivering specific programs in-country. Thank you also to the other experts that contributed essays to this thought for action kit: Mia Bloom, Nimmi Gowrinathan, Jayne Huckerby, Alistair Millar, Alison Milofsky, Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, and Nancy Payne.

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The overall projects were made possible through support from the U.S. Department of State. Speaking for the team, a special note of thanks is due to Oliver Wilcox, Christina Nemr, and Amanda Fazzone, for their help, inputs and encouragement throughout the projects.

Here is to charting new paths toward preventing violent extremism!

Dr. Kathleen Kuehnast

Director, Center for Gender and Peacebuilding

Governance, Law and Society

U.S. Institute of Peace

I N T R O D U C T I O N

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) was groundbreaking in that it provided strong support for greater attention to the role of women in international peace and security. It acknowledged the inordinate impact of violent conflict on women and recognized that women's empowerment and gender equality are critical to international peace and security. The UN Security Council explicitly recognized the link between the Women, Peace and Security agenda as laid out in UNSCR 1325 and the role women could and should play in preventing violent extremism.

The increased political attention to the role of women in countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism is encouraging. Nevertheless, a coherent international framework is still needed. Indeed, women are not one cohesive group, and as men, they play multiple roles in societies. They can be victims, enablers, and actors for positive change—each requires a different response and approach. Moreover, there is little research and data with respect to these various roles that women occupy.

continued



“The problems we face today are too big and too complex to be solved without the full participation of women.”

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Former U.S. Secretary of State

Our efforts here are intended to engage a discussion on key issues related to the role of women and preventing violent extremism (PVE). This document is not for an academic audience. Nor is it a tool kit. We think of it as a thought kit—a collection of experts’ essays and exercises, designed to help guide activists and practitioners to engage in reflection and dialogue on violent extremism. In addition, we hope to bring greater awareness to the particular roles of women and women’s organizations in dealing with violent extremist ideologies.

This document has three sections. Each section opens with a brief introductory background, followed by short essays by some of the leading experts in this field. Each section also includes exercises that may prove useful for further dialogue.

The first section examines the question of gender and why it is important to consider both men and women when addressing violent extremism. The second section deals specifically with women and the dynamics of extremist violence. It invites thinking about women as actors in preventative efforts as well as perpetrators of terrorist acts. Finally, the third section raises issues related to the various ways in which to engage communities, including members of the security sector.

Within this thought for action kit, we have used terrorism and violent extremism interchangeably. Internationally speaking, there are no agreed upon definitions of terrorism or violent extremism. What most definitions have in common is that terrorist and violent extremist acts are criminal acts and involve the unlawful use of violence against civilians with the intent of causing death or serious bodily injury. It is also agreed that violent extremism is not linked to any single ideology, religion or country.

The underlying assumption of this thought kit is that greater understanding of the processes of radicalization (that is, the process by which an individual becomes involved in violence that is rooted in or associated with extremists beliefs) will require greater understanding of the gender dynamics at play within such processes, as well as better understanding of gender dynamics within institutions and society as a whole.

A gender-aware countering violent extremism program recognizes the differential impacts of violent extremist messaging for women and men. It also seeks to analyze how traditional stereotypes, attitudes and behaviors affect women and men and how they may inadvertently encourage violent extremism.

In sum, a gendered perspective in countering violent extremism examines these issues from the point of view of both women and men, and will seek to identify differences in their needs and priorities, and in their abilities or potential to promote non-violence and peacebuilding. It will seek guidance from the tenants of UNSCR 1325 and the principle of gender equality. The latter is a critical element in the empowerment of women and the strengthening of international peace and security.

“Women are essential contributors to the transition from the cult of war to the culture of peace.”

*Amb. Anwarul Chowdhury,
Undersecretary
General and High
Representative of
the United Nations*



Why Gender Matters

Preventing and countering violent extremism is a topic high on the policy agenda of many governments around the world. However, understanding the gendered dimensions of violent extremism, especially in the policies concerned with preventing and countering violent extremism has fallen short.

To address radicalization and de-radicalization processes—and hence to make our policy responses more effective—we need to pay greater attention to the impact of gender on identities, roles and relationships between men and women in society. A discussion about gender has also proven to be a critical entry point for engaging communities in dealing with and preventing violent extremism.

In this thought kit, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expectations and attributes that a society considers appropriate for women and men, girls and boys. It is critical that we do not consider gender as another word for “women,” or the biological and physiological characteristics of males and females.

Gender dynamics and socio-cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity differ widely. However, suffice it to say that in all societies, gender is a key defining element of identity on par with class, race, age, or ethnicity.

Gender is a complex dynamic that is negotiated through both informal and formal social processes, and integrated into institutional educational, economic, and political processes. Similarly, analysis of gender helps the identification of gender hierarchies—

CONTENTS

Essay I:	Women on the Front Lines
Exercise I:	Act Like a Woman/ Act Like a Man
Essay II:	Blindspots
Exercise II:	Spheres of Influence

that is, the political and economic power dynamics between men and women within such societies. In sum, gender as a category of analysis is highly relevant to understanding processes of change, especially the ways in which gender roles are essentialized and instrumentalized.

The gendered roles of men and women in any given society are not static and change over time. Globalization, violent conflict and periods of transition often alter prescribed gender roles. During political transition, the roles for women are often a site of contention. In the case of extremist groups, gender ideals for women limit their human rights, mobility and empowerment. For example, many of the extremist groups that call themselves “Islamists” call for a return to traditional values and clearly sex-separated roles, whereby men occupy and dominate the public space and women inhabit the domestic and private space while being subservient to men.

Gender is a critical entry point for engaging communities in dealing with and preventing violent extremism.



The two authors in this section illustrate how the lack of a focus on gender leads to ineffective policy responses. **Alistair Millar** examines the overall question of why gender matters in addressing violent extremism. By only conceptualizing the extremist with a male face, and focusing on young men, we miss half of the population, and women’s critical role in preventing and supporting violent extremism. **Jayne Huckerby**, while underscoring the need to focus on women, cautions that many of our policies that do focus on the role of women in countering violent extremism often inadvertently instrumentalize and reinforce traditional roles for women. She highlights the policy blind spots that see men and women in binary and non-connected roles, and instead advocates for a deeper analysis of how gender roles are interactive, reactive and responsive. This section, “Why Gender Matters”, begins to map out the complexity of these approaches and cautions against oversimplifying men’s and women’s roles in the context of violent extremism.

The Center for Gender and Peacebuilding of the United States Institute of Peace has found that discussing gender identity issues and gender related behaviors are good entry-points for addressing problems related to violent extremism. An analysis of gender relations allows us to be context specific and to uncover grievances, feelings of alienation, frustrated expectations, perceptions of discrimination, and the lack of adequate economic opportunities. The latter are good indicators of the underlying causes and proximate triggers of violent extremism.

The exercise, “*Act Like a Woman/Act Like a Man*”, enables participants to examine gender norms and behavior in the socio-cultural spheres that each participant lives and works in. The “*Spheres of Influence*” exercise allows the participants to reflect on how these gender norms translate into the public spheres.

Women on the FRONT LINES

BY ALISTAIR MILLAR

In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the common profile of the 21st century terrorist was that of a male in his mid-twenties who trained in camps far away from his family. Over the last decade, the number of women involved as perpetrators of terrorist attacks, or providing active support or encouragement for violent extremists in their own families and communities, has increased dramatically. At the same time, there is now more focus on how women are critical to countering the spread of violent extremism by drawing on the influence they have on their husbands, their children, and their communities. This increased focus is often turned on the ways in which women can strengthen collective resilience against violent extremism.

Counterterrorism experts and officials (the majority of whom are male) have mostly been oblivious to the gender-specific dimensions of violent extremism.

Much more nuanced and contextualized research is needed in order to develop policy responses that are tailored to women.

The number of women providing active support or encouragement for violent extremists in their own families and communities has increased substantially in recent years. Young women are using social media to express their support for the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Researchers both inside and outside the intelligence community, have found instant messages between women in the United Kingdom and the United States that gave explicit instructions on how women can evade Turkish customs agents in order to travel into ISIL controlled territory. On Facebook, numerous posts reveal that ISIL is providing a monthly allowance “not only to the husband and wife (wives) but also for each child.” According to Mia Bloom, an expert at the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, “ISIL is recruiting these women in order to be baby factories...to populate the state.”

Women are also joining the fight on the battlefield, taking up arms and becoming actively involved as perpetrators of terrorist attacks. It is now estimated that 300 women from the United States and Europe have traveled to the battlefields of Syria, Iraq, and Libya.

While more women are part of the threat, there is also a growing call at the United Nations, in many capitals around the world, and from civil society that women should be at the center of efforts to fund a sustainable strategic effort to counter the violent extremist threat.



Women have an essential role to play in preventing others—both men and women—from joining the ranks of violent extremists. In much the same way that ISIL is encouraging women to use social media to attract “sisters” to support the cause, violence prevention strategies can leverage the same power. Women are well placed to develop credible counter narratives that debunk the twisted recruitment messages of false hope and hate used by violent extremists causes to justify violence and draw in more women.

This effort cannot be limited to cyberspace. By working with family members, and through their roles as educators and leaders within their communities, women play critical roles in challenging extremism on the ground. Extremist groups that are actively enflaming sectarian conflicts in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia are often the first to assault women’s rights. As human rights defenders in the face of extremist groups, younger women are bravely promoting and actively engaging in discourses around their rights and how those rights are affected by cultural and religious practices that do harm to women.

Nearly two decades ago in a speech to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Hillary Clinton said that “[w]e also must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected.” This message resonates ever more so today. Supporting women so that they can safely challenge extremists and help other women fight for justice and dignity should be given far more emphasis as part of a comprehensive strategy to counter violent extremism and promote values that protect the fundamental rights of all people.

Alistair Millar is the founder and executive director of the Global Center on Cooperative Security and president of the Fourth Freedom Forum. He is also a nonresident senior fellow at the George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute.

Act Like a WOMAN or MAN*

I. Ask participants to brainstorm and write down what it means to “Act like a Woman” or to “Act Like a Man”

II. In mixed groups: Ask women to “Act like a Man” and men to “Act like a Woman”
or
Ask groups to *first* “Act like a Woman” and *then* “Act like a Man”

The following areas may be considered:

- physical appearance/posture
- clothing
- education
- work
- professions
- dating/relationships/marriage
- communication/feelings
- toys
- free time/hobbies
- colors

III. Ask Participants to write down what happens when someone does not conform to those specific norms and expectations of behavior (sanctions, name-calling).

Discussion Questions

1. Where did you learn these gender norms?
2. Have you, or someone you know, ever stepped out of these norms? Why?
What were the consequences? How did it make you feel?
3. Have you seen some of these norms change? Which ones? And how did they change?
4. What are the norms you would like to see reinforced and what are the norms you would like to see changed? Why? How would you go about it?

BLINDSPOTS

BY JAYNE HUCKERBY

Consideration of gender has been largely absent in strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism (CVE). Men and boys are assumed to be the key targets of CVE efforts. The roles of women and girls in violent extremism are generally dismissed as anomalous or marginal.

From the security sector to community elders and religious leaders, CVE efforts often privilege men. The role of women has been considered important only in that they may be the victims or mothers of violent extremists. This primary focus on men and boys has ignored the broader role of masculinities and femininities in violent extremism.

The recent shift in focus from “hard” and punitive to “soft” and preventive approaches to violent extremism continues to ignore the complex gender dimensions of violent extremism. Basing preventive approaches on a binary understanding of women—either as female victims or as perpetrators of extremist violence misses the interconnectedness of both men and women in violent extremism. It perpetuates the notion that gender is synonymous with women only, and reduces a gender lens to a limited focus on how best to pay more attention to women and girls as victims, perpetrators, and preventers of violent extremism.

That said, a focus on women is important and long overdue. From kidnappings of schoolgirls to attacks on women politicians to restrictions on female dress, violent extremists often target women and girls. In addition, female violent extremism is a pressing issue, and the power of women to prevent and counter violent extremism remains largely untapped and under-supported. However, by approaching gender in this limited way, national and international actors miss some key elements that fuel violent extremism, and thus they miss opportunities for more human rights-compliant and effective CVE efforts. Best practices recognize that the causes of violent extremism are highly localized, context-specific, and tied to socialization processes—and that the

responses will need to also be multidimensional.

A true gender lens will allow us to perceive how the social experience of gender differs across specific contexts and influences the push and pull factors of violent extremism. **A genuine gender perspective will highlight specific policy blind spots—that is, oversimplifying women’s roles as only victims, perpetrators, and/or preventers.** It enables a deeper understanding of how these roles interact with each other, as well as with other gender realities in a community.

Addressing the complexities of gender helps us understand how terrorist violence may encourage women and girls to participate in CVE, but also how gender discriminatory government policies, such as a lack of education, can impede their participation in CVE efforts. Similarly, the effects of gender discriminatory CVE and counterterrorism measures, such as anti-terrorism financing rules that cut off funds to small organizations or laws that criminalize women’s rights defenders, can actually inadvertently undermine counterterror efforts by such organizations. These complexities invite caution with regard to those approaches that seek to subsume the promotion of gender equality, and all women, peace, and security issues, into the CVE agenda.

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Jayne Huckerby is an associate clinical professor of law and the inaugural director of the Duke International Human Rights Clinic. She has also served as a human rights adviser to UN Women.

Spheres of Influence*

I. Ask participants to indicate *where women have influence* in their societies.

II. Ask participants to indicate *where men have influence* in their societies.

Spheres of influence can be:

- our children
- our spouses/partner
- the family
- the marketplace
- local government
- national government
- the school
- my workplace
- police
- community group
- international actors
- international organizations.

Have participants initially come up with their own spheres.

*The smallest circle is the place where one has the **most** influence—outer circles indicate the places where one has **least** influence.*



Discussion Questions

1. Why do men and women have different spheres of influence?
2. What gender norms reinforce these spheres of influence?
3. How does such gender influence manifest itself?
4. Is there a difference between how men and women have influence in their respective spheres?
5. Are there other factors that make men or women have influence in a particular sphere? Age, class, ethnicity ...?
6. Where would you like to have influence and why?
How would you go about getting influence in that sphere?

* This exercise is adapted from the "Spheres of Influence" exercise by Georgia Holmer.



Women and the Dynamics of Violent Extremism

It is generally recognized that women are disproportionately affected by acts of extremism and terrorist violence. Many observers also believe that women have strong motivations for preventing such acts. At the same time, we have witnessed an increasing number of women supporting and joining violent extremist groups.

When considering the role of women and the dynamics of violent extremism, two critical questions must be addressed. The first question is whether women have a comparative advantage when it comes to preventative efforts. The second question is why women join violent extremist groups and whether their motivations are different from those of men.

With respect to the first question, it is frequently pointed out that women in one of their central roles as mothers—are key players in the household and have significant influence in the social hierarchies of families and communities. As such, they often have a deep awareness of activities within their communities. That said, in many societies women inhabit the private rather than the public sphere of influence, and are not encouraged to challenge norms or social practices. In addition, preliminary research illustrates that mothers are often among the last to recognize that their children are on a path of radicalization. USIP’s project on the role of women in preventing violent extremism has been designed to provide women with the necessary skills to recognize early signs of radicalization, build supportive communities, and subsequently, to engage in effective and contextually appropriate actions to prevent radicalization from taking place.

CONTENTS

Essay I:	Listen to the Women Activists
Essay II:	When Women are the Problem
Exercise I:	Gendered Motivations
Essay III:	Motivations of Female Fighters
Exercise II:	Multiple Interpretations: Who is right?

Women are disproportionately affected by acts of extremism and terrorist violence...

With regard to the second question about why women join violent extremist groups, women's engagement is often considered an aberration. Nevertheless, women have consistently been part of violent extremist and terrorist groups. Female suicide bombers became prominent actors in the mid-1980s and their numbers have gradually increased. Research on the reasons for women joining violent extremist groups is inconclusive. Do women join out of their own free will and view their joining as a political act and measure of their emancipation? Or are women coerced into joining, and hence membership becomes a measure of oppression and exploitation? The case of young women freely joining the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIL) illustrates that in many cases both social dynamics may be at work.

...at the same time, an increasing number of women are joining or supporting violent extremist groups.



In the case of the three essays in this section, **Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini** addresses the dynamics of gender in her "Listen to the Women Activists" essay. She sorts through male motivations for joining extremist movements and their ideological views on women's rights. **Mia Bloom** hones in on the motivations for women joining violent extremist groups as well as how such groups view the role of women in their propaganda. **Nimmi Gowrinathan** examines the level of complexity in the motivations of many female fighters in the case of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). She argues that on the one hand, they are the victims of renegade gender norms, yet on the other hand they also showcase a certain amount of individual empowerment in joining the fight against governmental forces. She underscores how women in violent extremist groups are contradictory in their agency.

Discussions about motivations are often highly subjective and require a deeper discussion about gender, social norms and incentives. The exercise, "*Who is Right?*" helps to demonstrate how reality is perceived by different groups and individuals. It will also serve to introduce a facilitated group exercise and discussion, "*Gendered Motivations*," which tries to illustrate gender-related and gender-specific reasons for joining an extremist group.

LISTEN to the Women Activists

BY SANAM NARAGHI-ANDERLINI

Gender matters in addressing violent extremism because the actors, ideology, and actions are deeply gendered, as are the forces that challenge them. If policy makers do not consider the gendered dimensions of violent extremism, their strategies to curtail the phenomenon will not only fail, but backfire.

The actors: Predominantly young men attracted to extremist movements have often experienced decades of state corruption and repression, ineffective development policies, and foreign military intervention. Many have been displaced by war and have no access to schools. They may join violent extremist groups to provide income for their families. They may have suffered from social exclusion and have deep grievances, and/or they may have aspirations to contribute to a cause or seek justice.

The ideology: Regardless of the region, one of the core ideological messages of such movements is the promotion of patriarchy and the subservience of women. They create legal and physical boundaries between men and women and promulgate rigid understandings of religious texts that define what it means to be a good wife, daughter, or woman.¹ Similarly, men's rights and responsibilities are clearly articulated, and in many instances imply that women are under men's protection (and by extension, ownership). Extremists will often frame women's rights as "Western" or colonialist and immoral, while using religion to justify control and violations against women.²

The actions: In the *public sphere* (via the pulpit as well as traditional and social media), attacks on women are condoned, encouraged, or considered as inevitable because of women's own behavior. In the *political sphere*, women are accused of indecency, threatened, or used as political pawns. In Algeria, political quotas

for women were introduced as calculated "window dressing" to gain favor with the middle class and the West. In the *legal sphere*, the suspension of equal rights legislation and the introduction of discriminatory laws are both a means to control women as well as an end goal. Extremists also exploit *education* gaps. Religious education in Yemen, Egypt and elsewhere – much of it Saudi-funded – emphasizes rituals instead of religious values, and promote one-sided religious teachings.³ All-female Pakistani madrassas are rising in numbers where girls learn to be ideal mothers and transmit conservative beliefs to their offspring, which is interpreted as commitment to religion.⁴ In non-Arab contexts the Wahabbi/Salafis are spreading their teachings by claiming theirs is the 'authentic' version of religion.

The challengers: Given deliberate and systematic targeting, it is not surprising that women represent the most consistent voices against extremism. For over a decade, transnational networks such as Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) have warned against rising extremism. Globally, women have developed tactics to counter extremism, draw attention to root causes, and provide alternatives. **Despite death threats, they continue their work:**

- **De-radicalizing youth and providing livelihood alternatives:** In Pakistan, the PAIMAN Alumni Trust engages directly with Talib youth and their mothers, addresses psychosocial and economic needs, and conveys moderate interpretations of Islam.
- **Challenging extremist understanding of Islamic text:** Focusing on prevention through education, activists disentangle religion from culturally specific practices that condone violence or the subservience of women. The Malaysian NGO Musawah uses religious texts and women's experiences to deconstruct the idea of male authority.⁵
- **Infusing rights-based approaches to religious discourse and texts:** Initiatives engage religious scholars to discuss commonalities between Islamic values and universal human rights frameworks, sharing the roots of Islamic pluralism and democracy.⁶

- **Protecting gender equality under the law:**
Women’s organizations advocate for laws based on gender equality principles and lead efforts to prevent regressive legislation, particularly in transitioning countries.

Women activists do not have the resources, structures, or outreach of extremists. They are hindered by the need to respond to immediate crises, lack of international recognition, and a perennial struggle against ignorance, racism, and sexism. Yet, as the only socially rooted, transnational groups offering comprehensive alternative solutions, these movements are critical

That extremists threaten and kill women activists is indicative of the influence women already have.

Turning this tide requires us to:

- Listen to and take guidance from women activists at the front lines of the battle against extremism;
- Move beyond a military-focused CVE approach to incorporate development initiatives;
- End support for countries that enable and support extremist ideologies;
- Reform development practices to provide adequate social services, especially education, health, and economic opportunities, particularly in vulnerable communities and for young men and women;
- Work with media to promote the overwhelmingly moderate and tolerant interpretations of religion as well as greater understanding of universal human rights norms and culturally specific historic or folkloric traditions in which rights and human dignity are rooted;
- Integrate peace education, human rights, and democratic laws into curricula;
- With leadership from women, develop rights-based counternarratives, raise awareness of religious interpretations, and expand public debate.

As women activists from 13 countries in the Middle East and Asia stated at the 2014 ICAN Forum on Women’s Rights, Peace, and Security, “Today we stand at a crossroads. The international community can continue its failed policies and strategies that foment more violent extremism and radicalization. Or they can follow our lead. One thing is guaranteed: our version of the region, our vision for the future, is about peace, freedom, dignity, rights, pluralism, and prosperity for all. Listen to us. Join us.”

¹ American national security expert, September 2013.
² Yemeni scholar and journalist, September 2013.
³ Yemeni scholar and journalist, September 2013. See also Haytham Mouzahem, “Sunni-Shi’a strife inspires Houthi-Salafist conflict in Yemen,” *The Atlantic Post*, (December 20, 2013).
⁴ “Religious Schools in Yemen,” by a Yemeni woman scholar and journalist, September 27, 2013.
⁵ More information about Musawah can be found at www.musawah.org.
⁶ Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

.....
Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini is a co-founder of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and a senior fellow at the MIT Center for International Studies. In 2011, she was the first senior expert on Gender and Inclusion on the UN’s Mediation Standby Team.

Gendered Motivations

I. Ask participants to list their personal experience why they believe men join violent extremist groups.

II. Ask participants to list their personal experience why they believe women join violent extremist groups.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the similarities and the differences between men and women to join violent extremist groups? Why these differences?
2. How does the situation within a country affect the attractiveness of violent extremist groups? To what extent does a country's conflict history affect these motivations?
3. Have recruitment dynamics changed over time? Why?

When Women Are the PROBLEM

BY MIA BLOOM

Much of the discussion about women and countering violent extremism has focused on their roles as mothers. Mothers are thought to be either the source of radicalization or entry points for de-radicalization and prevention efforts.

For example, one notable jihadi and leader of Al Qaeda, Sanafi al-Nasr, eulogized his mother on social media saying, “She never asked for my return, rather she prepared and urged me to Jihad.” In several cases, from Maryam Farhat to Zubeidat Tsarnaeva, mothers are the source of radical views and perpetuate the notion that the task of women in the jihad is to raise their sons to carry on their father’s tradition.

On the opposite side of the spectrum women—that is, mothers—are seen as critical agents in prevention efforts. A leading Salafi police officer from the UK, confided in me that in crisis situations, the police try to get the perpetrator’s mother on the phone especially in hostage situations, “because only the mother has an effect.” According to this school of thought mothers can have a profound influence on their children, provided they are given the confidence and skills to ask the right questions and be able to recognize the changes in their children’s behavior and demeanor during the process of radicalization.

While both views of the impact of mothers on violent extremism and on countering violent extremism have credence, we have yet to fully understand how extremist groups see the role of women, including mothers.

The terrorist organization known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has very retrograde views with regard to gender roles. Unlike its Al Qaeda predecessor, ISIL does not encourage women to be

on the front lines and engage in suicide bombings. In its recruitment narratives, it uses the idea of protecting women as a basic motivation for men’s involvement. At the same time it depicts women as commodities and encourages the idea that men are manly only if they have many wives and many children, and can boast a blonde convert. It promises foreign male fighters rewards in the form of brides and female converts. The current caliph, Al Baghdadi, also encourages the systematic degradation, abuse, and rape of women, particularly non-Muslim Yazidi women, and maintains brothels for their fighters. In sum, ISIL encourages young men to conflate manliness with violent extremism and abuse of women, and champions ideas of hyper-masculinity.

Despite these renegade views of women, hundreds of young women from Europe, North America and Scandinavia have flocked to Raqqa’s marriage bureau in Syria in order to become Jihadi wives and bear Jihadi children. Like the men, young women are seduced by notions of hyper-femininity.

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Mia Bloom is a professor of Security Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. She has also held senior positions at the Pennsylvania State University and the University’s International Center for the Study of Terrorism.

Multiple Interpretations: Who is Right?*

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- I.
 - Provide each participant with one sheet of paper.
 - Ask participants to stand somewhere in the room and to close their eyes during the exercise.
 - Tell participants to follow the instructions the way that they understand them.

 - II. **Instruct participants to do the following:**
 - Fold the paper in half.
 - Fold the paper in half again.
 - Tear off the bottom right corner.
 - Turn the paper upside down.
 - Tear off the other bottom right corner.

 - III. **Ask participants to open their eyes and hold the paper over their head so everyone can see it.**

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice?
2. How did you feel when you saw what your paper looked like in comparison to everyone else's papers?
3. Did anyone think they had done the exercise incorrectly, especially when they saw the results of others?
4. How could there be so many interpretations when everyone received the same instructions?
Was there one right way to do this exercise?

* This exercise is adapted from the Paper Folding exercise included in M. Silberman, *Active Training: A Handbook of Techniques, Designs, Case Examples and Tips* (3rd ed.), (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2006).

Motivations of FEMALE FIGHTERS

BY NIMMI GOWRINATHAN

The Sri Lankan civil war ended in 2009 when the Sinhalese-dominated government militarily defeated the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from the minority Tamil community. Early in the movement the recruitment of women in the LTTE was primarily voluntary. In later stages a large portion of new recruits were coercively recruited eventually comprising roughly one-third of active combatants.⁷

Why did these women, despite being coercively recruited, become highly committed insurgents, and what can this tell us about the conditions for radicalization? In-depth interviews with women in the LTTE reveal that the factors prominent in the life histories of potential recruits *prior* to the moment of recruitment may play a significant role in shaping the political identities of Tamil women and determining levels of commitment to the movement.

Lived experiences with militarization shaped daily life for most Tamil women. Militarization here is understood as a gendered, calculated, institutionalized practice with the ability to deepen the impact of repressive policies. Prema, a female fighter, commented, *“Even though I hadn’t wanted to join, the only solution with so many guns around us was to learn to use one.”* Some described the military takeover of school latrines, leaving girls to wander in meadows, while others re-routed their daily walks to avoid the “body massage” of a checkpoint.⁸

Most women describe a “fear psychosis” in a context in which civil society had been absorbed into a militarized space, and offered no outlet for women’s grievances. One civil society activist notes, *“In the process of looking for the LTTE, the army isolates*

*young people. In a militarized society, young women are further isolated and placed at risk”.*⁹ Faced with perpetual insecurity and invasive surveillance, women expressed a sense of helplessness and frustration with their lives. Facing a government unafraid to deploy violence in pursuit of its political agenda, several women found that they could push past the paralysis of fear by joining the LTTE.

In addition to general militarization, individual experiences with gender-based violence and prolonged displacement further shaped the contours of their political beings, well before the moment of recruitment. Thava, a female fighter, comments, *“Our family never had enough to eat in the refugee camps.”* Lavanya felt depressed about her possibilities for the future. *“We would sit for hours in the hot sun, waiting for food, not knowing what we should do,”* she says.¹⁰ Deprivation and despondency contributed to an understanding of, and anger at, the injustice and inequality of their position.



Throughout the conflict, Tamil women faced widespread gender-based violence in the form of rape, sexual harassment, sexual torture, and prostitution. The perpetrators were largely government soldiers. These were political acts, which had a political impact. Women reported existing in a state of extreme marginalization (ostracized from their families, villages, communities, and the state), with civil society and international interventions offering only “livelihood support” in the form of livestock, sewing machines, or small businesses to draw them back into the mainstream of social life. One woman who had survived being raped testified, “I started to think about how unfair things were for Tamils, and also that I had to suffer as a woman.” Gender-based violence made an indelible mark on these women’s political identities. Central to these identities were the two aspects of themselves that determined their vulnerability to violence.

As women who fight with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Peshmerga come in front of the media glare, the battle between feminism and nationalism also emerges. Some women in the LTTE were attracted to the promise of “liberation” the movement offered from conservative gender roles, but they were not fighting for women’s rights.¹¹ On the leadership side, most armed groups, including the LTTE, draw on feminist-inspired liberation rhetoric to draw women, though few commit to gender equity in their political project. Even as they operate within patriarchal structures, women do have political agency, and moments of liberation. Most understood their vulnerability as women, yet pinned their hopes for survival as Tamils to the nationalist struggle. As Lavanya said, “In the movement I felt I belonged to something, and was doing something important.”¹²

Even among women who were abducted or coercively recruited into the LTTE, experiences at the collective level with entrenched militarization and individual experiences with displacement and rape shaped their political identities well before the moment of recruitment—creating highly committed female insurgents.

⁷ Miranda Alison, “Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” *Civil Wars*, 6 (Winter 2003): 37-54.

⁸ “Civilians & Former Fighters, Personal Interviews, 2008-2011, Batticaloa and Vavuniya, Sri Lanka.” Used in Nimmi Gowrinathan, *Militarizing Her: Context and Cause for Tamil Women in Sri Lanka*, unpublished manuscript (2014).

⁹ Personal interview, *Civil Society* 11 (June 2011).

¹⁰ Nimmi Gowrinathan, “Inside Camps, Outside Battlefields: Security and Survival for Tamil Women,” *St. Antony’s International Review: The Gendered Refugee Experience*, 9 (2013): 11-32.

¹¹ For more on the debate on this, please see Miranda Alison, “Women as Agents of Political Violence,” *Security Dialogue* 35 (December 2004): 447-463; Anuradha M. Chenoy, *Militarism and Women in South Asia* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2002); Neloufer De Mel, *Women and the Nation’s Narrative: Gender and Nationalism in Twentieth Century Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2001); Rajini Thiranagama, “No More Tears Sister,” *The Broken Palmyra* (Claremont, CA: Sri Lanka Studies Institute, 1990): 305-330; Peter Schalk, “Women Fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamililam: The Martial Feminism of Atel Palcinkam,” *South Asia Research*, 14 (Autumn 1994): 163-83.

¹² Personal interview, Sri Lanka, 2011, used in Nimmi Gowrinathan, *Militarizing Her: Context and Cause for Tamil Women in Sri Lanka*, unpublished manuscript (2014).

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Dr. Nimmi Gowrinathan is a visiting research professor at the Colin Powell Center for Global and Civic Leadership at City College New York where she directs the Politics of Sexual Violence Initiative. She is the executive producer of the Vice News Women in/at War Series, www.deviarchy.com



Engaging Communities

In Preventing Violent Extremism

It takes a village to effectively counter and prevent violent extremist ideologies from taking hold. In many international policy circles, the ability of communities to deal with adversity is also referred to as resilience.

Community structures and institutions, including gender norms, determine who has access to the economic, social, and political resources to anticipate risks, limit impacts and organize preventative actions and programs. Security and law enforcement forces are in the forefront of countering violent extremism. That said, because of their local roots and diverse portfolios, preventative efforts by women and women’s organizations are

Women’s organizations are believed to have special advantages when building resilience at the community level.

believed to have special advantages when building resilience at the community level.

be mediators within their communities. In many instances, women’s organizations are found to be non-polarizing, and hence efficient conduits for expressing and addressing grievances that may arise within communities. In order for them to do so, it is important to build up skills and capacity.

In this regard, much attention has focused on the importance of women and women’s organizations engaging with the security and law enforcement forces through community policing efforts. The success

Indeed, these organizations often have deep and meaningful relationships with their communities and a track record of addressing community needs. This gives them legitimacy to call community forums and

CONTENTS

Essay I:	Building Resilience to Violent Extremism
Exercise I:	Allies and Challengers
Essay II:	Charting New Ways with New Partners
Resource I:	Active Listening Techniques
Essay III:	Everyday Technologies Can Help Counter Violence and Build Peace
Resource II:	Enabling Technologies for Preventing Violent Extremism
Essay IV:	Increasing Understanding through Words
Resource III:	Debate versus Dialogue

of community/policing programs in helping to prevent violent extremism lies in the development of a common understanding of what constitutes violent extremism and what is an effective and appropriate response. Unfortunately, such common understandings are often lacking.¹⁶

Women's empowerment and active participation are cornerstones to building communities resilient to violent extremism.

Promoting the role of women in countering violent extremism is part of a larger conversation on women, peace and security as embodied in the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which emphasizes women's engagement in peacebuilding and security efforts as critical to creating a foundation for sustainable peace. Women's empowerment and active participation in public life are cornerstones to building communities resilient to violent extremism.



This section addresses the importance of community engagement, and begins with the essay by **Georgia Holmer** examines the personal push and pull factors that may lead young individuals to join violent extremist groups. She also emphasizes the critical role women and women's organizations can play in preventing violent extremism. **Edit Schlaffer** focuses on the role of mothers. As the founder of Women without Borders/SAVE, she is known for her pioneering work with groups of mothers in helping them to recognize signs of radicalization and providing them with skills in how to deal with young people who feel marginalized and are in search of identity. She has found that building confidence among mothers coping with issues of radicalization of their children has provided those same mothers with the determination to address issues not just in the private sphere, but also to engage with community structures in the public sphere. In addition, it has provided them with courage to engage with the

media and new technologies. **Nancy Payne** looks at the role of media programming and its influence on attitudes, behaviors and norms of both men and women. She believes that new technology can help counter violence and can be used as early warning mechanisms. Ultimately, as **Alison Milofsky** noted, true community engagement must come through listening to one another and through the assistance of formal and informal dialogues.

For women's organizations to be effective relays of preventative efforts, they need to first identify "**Allies and Challengers.**" Being aware of potential allies, those who challenge you, and those who remain silent need to be identified, mapped and then eventually a part of a larger engagement process. Once engagement begins dialogue rather than debate, and active listening offers the key to open up barriers long limited by fear, anxiety and distrust.

¹⁶ For more on CVE see Georgia Holmer with Fulco van Deventer, "Inclusive Approaches to Community Policing and CVE," USIP Special Report, September 2014.

BUILDING RESILIENCE to Violent Extremism

BY GEORGIA HOLMER

What makes a young man or woman vulnerable to joining a violent extremist group? In the same way that a malnourished, exhausted, neglected, or traumatized body is more susceptible to disease or infection, a person who lacks resources, opportunity, and support is more vulnerable to engaging in violent extremism.

Community engagement in countering violent extremism (CVE) can be understood as an effort by civil society to inoculate youth from violent extremism, by building their resilience and strengthening their ability to reject or resist the influence and recruitment efforts of terrorist groups.

Radicalization, or the process by which an individual becomes involved in violent extremism, is often best explained through an exploration of the unique set of push and pull factors that influence trajectories to terrorist violence. Pull factors include the messages, relationships, and recruitment campaigns that lure individuals into participation in extremist activities. Push factors are what make an individual vulnerable or open to the “pull,” and might include the absence of a support network of friends and family, or a lack of resources or opportunities to thrive, work, and have a family. Push factors can also include a shortage of self-confidence to face adversity or limited knowledge, skills, and practice in making good judgments. Other factors include unhealed trauma and exposure to cycles or generations of violence. Another key vulnerability is the absence of a perceived connection or belonging to a group – a sense of identity that embeds an individual within a community.

A focus on the push factors

With this push-pull framework in mind, a natural division of practice emerges in CVE strategy.



Community or civil society responses, more logically and organically, address the push factors. State and security actors are better positioned, and are trained and equipped to manage the risks associated with, directly challenging, pursuing and apprehending violent extremists and counter their recruitment efforts. Community engagement efforts have the most impact when focused on prevention: equipping those who are vulnerable to recruitment with the skills and knowledge and opportunities needed to be resilient. A community-led CVE program might, for example, work to create a stronger sense of social cohesion and identity, help resolve community-level disagreement and grievances, or promote a deeper understanding and awareness of the dynamics of radicalization.

The creation of non-securitized spaces

Violent extremists justify and enable violence and brutality, and are, by definition, completely intolerant of other ideologies and ways of being. They are also extreme in their unwillingness to compromise. Working to contradict and counter these actors is extremely dangerous. For such efforts to succeed, community-level efforts should be allowed a safe and neutral space in which to help prevent violent extremism apart from the work of security services and protected from direct confrontation and engagement with violent actors. In places with unreformed security services, it may be dangerous or counterproductive to collaborate with police in identifying groups of individuals who are at risk of radicalization or pose a security threat. CVE programs that focus on building capacity of civil society actors can only be truly effective if undertaken in a way that ensures the safety and non-instrumentalization of these individuals.

The importance of women

A community that promotes tolerance and inclusivity, and reflects norms of gender equality, is stronger and less vulnerable to violent extremism. Not only do women's participation in a community – formally or informally – strengthen its fabric, women themselves are among the most powerful voices of prevention in their homes, schools, and communities. Women – as mothers, caretakers, partners, teachers, and faith leaders – can, uniquely, help build the social cohesion, sense of belonging, and self-esteem that youth might need to resist the appeal of a violent group. Community engagement in CVE requires the participation of women to be successful.

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Georgia Holmer is the deputy director of the US Institute of Peace's Rule of Law Center. Previously, she led the Women Preventing Extremist Violence project in Nigeria for the USIP's Center for Gender and Peacebuilding.

Charting NEW WAYS with New Partners

BY EDIT SCHLAFFER

The recent terror attacks are directed towards the building blocks of civil society: schools, media, and government buildings. These spaces represent the shared values of humankind: freedom of movement, political representation, free speech and education.

It is often said that peace starts at home, unfortunately, trouble starts at home, too. Indeed, the majority of those who were radicalized were living at home at the time when they were recruited into Islamic militia and terrorist networks. While we generally focus on the public spaces where this recruitment takes place from local communities to cyberspace, we have neglected to think about how family life may impact the behavior of our youth.

In the course of trying to understand the process of radicalization, I met with mothers of perpetrators or “aspiring jihadis” from Indonesia to Tajikistan, from Pakistan to Palestine, and from England to Northern Ireland. Many of the mothers were in denial, and were defensive. But after interacting with them for some time, a group of mothers emerged who were ready to speak out so that others could learn from their experiences and avoid the traps that they had not. They shared their painful feelings of failure as they put together the pieces of their child’s downward spiral into radicalization. Their messages resonate in particular with families struggling to protect their children and keep them safe in similarly critical situations.

Women, particularly mothers, are strategically located at the heart of the family. They are often the first to recognize fear, resignation, frustration, and

anger in their adolescent children. When women are informed and empowered, equipped with the right attitudes, self-confidence, and skills, they can meet global challenges at the local level. A mother who is able to read early warning signs of radicalization can counter recruitment efforts and hence becomes a major asset in advancing prevention efforts.

Recent experiences, including campaigns by IS, have shown the importance of emotions in the radicalization process. Many who have joined extremist groups have spoken of their deep desire to be somebody and belong somewhere. Hypermasculinity is an attraction behind violent extremism and not only for the male foot soldiers but, increasingly, for young women who are caught in fantasies of romantic engagement and even direct participation.

To counter these appeals, we need dialogue and engagement from the kitchen table upward. Mothers can reach the young, before they become entangled in such highly emotional appeals of ideas and ideologies and lose their grip on reality.

The idea of developing the incredible potential of mothers as allies in the home and the community is an entirely new angle in counter-radicalization efforts. Women have proven that they can lead. Therefore actively including and training women as serious players in the security arena is the next step. The strategy forward: to empower a generation of confident and competent women who can open dialogue and challenge extremist ideas and ideologies in their families and communities.

Edit Schlaffer is the founder of Women without Borders, an international research-based NGO, encouraging women to take the lead in their personal and public lives. In 2008, she launched Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), the world’s first female counter-terrorism platform.

Active Listening Techniques

TECHNIQUE	PURPOSE	METHOD	EXAMPLES
ENCOURAGING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To convey interest - To keep the Person talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't agree to disagree • Use noncommittal words with a positive tone of voice 	<p>"I see..."</p> <p>"That's interesting."</p> <p>"Uh-huh"</p> <p>"Mmm"</p>
ELICITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To gather relevant information - To encourage others to reveal their needs and concerns - To establish a climate of open communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open-ended, not leading, questions • Don't agree or disagree • Use noncommittal words with positive tone of voice • Use encouraging body language, such as nodding 	<p>"What concerns does that situation cause for you?"</p> <p>"Why is that important to you?"</p> <p>"How would that affect your interests?"</p>
RESTATING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To let others know that you are listening carefully, and that you are trying to understand - To verify your comprehension of what they've said 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraphrase the other's points • Avoid value judgments or inserting your own opinions • Ask for confirmation 	<p>"In other words, you've concluded that..."</p> <p>"So the way you see it is..."</p> <p>"Would it be correct to say..."</p>
CLARIFYING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To uncover underlying or unstated concerns - To understand ambiguous or unclear statements - To test interpretations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid frequent interruptions • Ask focused but open ended questions • Probe for fuller explanations 	<p>"I'm not sure what you mean by..."</p> <p>"Could you please explain more about the significance of...?"</p> <p>"What leads you to believe that...?"</p>
EMPATHIZING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand events from others' perspectives - To show that you respect their point of view and comprehend their feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize others' experiences as valid, without necessarily accepting their conclusions • Give acknowledgement rather than agreement 	<p>"I can see why you feel that..."</p> <p>"That must have been very disturbing for you..."</p> <p>"I can understand how you would see that as a threat..."</p>
SUMMARIZING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To pull important ideas and information together - To establish a basis for further discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review issues which have been raised • Highlight the most important matters • Set aside unimportant information 	<p>"These seem to be the key ideas you have expressed..."</p> <p>"So your view of this whole situation is...?"</p> <p>"I sense that the critical concerns you have are..."</p>
REFRAMING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To transition into problem-solving, refocusing discussion from past events to future goals 2. To encourage others to rethink positions and focus on interests 3. To redirect negative or adversarial statements into more productive channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on others' ideas in developing your proposals • Emphasize points of agreement and compatible and/or shared interests • Use neutral or positive rather than accusatory language • Explain how your proposals satisfy their interests 	<p>"That's an interesting thought. To carry it further, let me suggest that..."</p> <p>"Since we both value ---, would it make sense to...?"</p> <p>"I'm sorry you feel that way, but I'm glad you raised the issue. Let's see how we can work together to address your concern."</p>

Everyday TECHNOLOGIES Can Help Counter Violence and Build Peace

BY NANCY PAYNE

Have you ever wondered how using a cell phone could counter hateful words or actions? Consider the example of Sisi Ni Amani in Kenya, dedicated to both traditional and new ways of communicating about preventing violence in Kenya, and established by a forward-thinking woman who was trying to affect change through easily accessible technology.

In the 2013 presidential elections, Kenyans held their breath to see if forces would replicate the violence stemming from the 2007 election, which killed over 1,300 people and left 650,000 homeless. Participants in that violence acknowledged using text messaging to mobilize friends and groups to attack others. Sisi Ni Amani saw an opportunity to use SMS to promote peace. A partnership with telecom company Safaricom, which donated 50 million text messages, scaled the process to allow the local community to organize and use SMS alerts to proactively address individual incidents before they escalated. The 2013 elections proceeded relatively peacefully. The success of this should go in part to the vast network of Sisi Ni Amani's volunteers. Their work suggests that the same tools used to foment violence and hatred can also promote peace and dialogue.

Yet technology for tech's sake will not create the kind of widespread behavior change needed to prevent violence. **Change starts with clearly identifying a problem, and then applying the right solution. In today's interconnected world, those solutions can be technologies that we use every day. Applied the right way, these same utilities can scale up for much greater reach.**

Media can change attitudes about gender. Media programming in many forms - radio, television, phones, tablets, computers and community engagement activities such as street theater or listening groups - can provide viable outlets to educate large numbers of people, and begin to affect attitudes and behaviors in ways that counter violent extremism.

Peacebuilders use media channels in conflict situations to address critical issues – such as gender equality, personal responsibility, peaceful coexistence and others – that contribute to violent extremism. One example is Sawa Shabab, a dramatic radio series airing weekly in South Sudan based on an educational, peacebuilding curriculum designed and produced with local partners.

Sawa Shabab follows the daily lives of different young South Sudanese as they face unique challenges while learning how to become peacebuilders in their communities. The underlying curriculum includes a strong focus on countering stereotypes, respecting diversity and promoting gender equality. Each episode ends with a question for listeners to consider and respond to via phone and text. On average, 150 listeners respond from across South Sudan after each episode. Over 60% of listeners in a survey said the appeal of the program is its focus on peacebuilding, and 99% of current listeners surveyed said they are interested in hearing the next season of the show. Based on focus group discussions, gender equality outcomes continue to resonate. After listening to the show, young female participants indicated that “being educated” is an important quality for young women. And awareness among male participants about gender equality had notably increased.

Even in low-bandwidth, low-power environments, peacebuilders are harnessing every day technology platforms to address seemingly intractable problems.

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Nancy Payne is the deputy director of the PeaceTech Lab, which uses technology, media, and data to prevent or reduce violent conflicts. Previously, she help roles at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and Fleishman Hillard.

Enabling Technologies for Preventing Violent Extremism

Civil society actors are now seeing widespread availability of low cost, easy to implement technologies in a wide variety of areas. From leveraging social media capabilities for strategy, outreach and fundraising, to using innovative approaches in mapping, crowdsourcing and online communities, activists have used these technologies to find new ways to accomplish their missions.

Citizen Journalism: Journalism that is situated in community life as opposed to newspapers. Citizen journalists are part of the action as opposed to detached spectators. Often people use video and pictures to give voice to oppressed citizen groups, and post videos are cloud-based platforms like Ustream or Youtube for the rest of the world to see. This can also be used with blog-based approaches.

Crowdfunding: Software and applications that facilitate the organized solicitation of money or pledges, as for charitable organizations or political campaigns, via the internet.

Crowdsourcing: Crowdsourcing is a distributed problem-solving and production model that takes input from a larger group of people to make decisions or to complete tasks. Wikipedia is a crowdsourced encyclopedia, for instance. Other uses might include developing citizen generated data sets regarding environmental violations, or in creating and choosing the best logo for an outreach campaign.

Data/Event Mapping: Visualizing events or items on a map, which increases accessibility and comprehension of data. Often collaborative and open-source in nature, data/event mapping applications allow people to share timely updates by sending messages using mobile phones, email, or via a website. These messages are aggregated, indexed and visualized, usually for display on a website.

Digital Storytelling (Audio/Video, Podcasting): Use of video and audio for outreach, advocacy, communication, documentation, marketing or training.

Geospatial and Mapping: Can be used to put data visually on a map to generate new communication abilities. Can also be used for crowdsourced efforts for citizen generated data, collected either via mobile or the internet to gather information about a topic.

Online Learning Communities: Online communities of practitioners around the world who learn from one another, connect classrooms, connect students, and create a supportive learning environment.

Online Organizing/Mobilization: Collaborative approaches that use online communities as a key element in organizing local meetings, or in convening communities online. This includes internet-based applications that facilitate community-building, raising awareness, and organizing, via the internet.

Social Media: Use of social media encompasses free services like Twitter, Linked In, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, along with approaches using social media for advocacy, marketing, project management, etc.

SMS/Text Messaging: Short Message Service (SMS) is the text communication service component of phone, web or mobile communication systems, using standardized communications protocols that allow the exchange of short text messages between fixed line or mobile phone devices.

Increasing Understanding through WORDS

BY ALISON MILOFSKY

Dialogue is a powerful instrument for creating understanding between groups who are in conflict with one another. Unlike debates or decision-making processes dialogues are open ended—their purpose is not to “win” or make decisions, but rather to allow people to deepen their understanding of a particular issue and to form relationships between people that may transform how they think about each other and how they can engage with people different from them.

Dialogue comes from the Greek *dialogos*. *Dia* translates to “through” and *logos* means “word” or “speech” (Online Etymology dictionary). Dialogue is a process of increasing understanding through words. In conflict situations, communication is often difficult. People tend to become entrenched in their positions, sticking firmly to what they believe and often trying to persuade others that they are correct.

The latter approach to communication leans toward debate rather than dialogue. When conversations move in this direction, the search for greater understanding is often lost. “Why seek new understanding when I know I am right?” one might argue.

Dialogue is an alternative way of communication. As a listener, I seek greater understanding in dialogue because I recognize that not all situations have one right answer. I open myself to other possibilities. I ask questions to gain a better understanding of what forms another person’s perspective rather than to dismantle their argument.

Dialogues also open up new ways of thinking about an issue. Dialogue invites people to think about and envision what they have not previously considered.

Women and women’s organizations active in trying to prevent violent extremism can use dialogue as a way to bring communities together and bridge differences. They can also use dialogue to encourage constructive listening and to speak with individuals or groups of people prone to radicalization.

A dialogic approach invites the listener to keep an open mind, to be mindful of their assumptions and cognizant when those assumptions are being challenged. It involves asking open-ended questions that are intended to deepen understanding rather than create defensiveness on the part of the speaker. It is an approach rooted in positive intent.

A dialogic approach to listening requires certain skills. It may necessitate unlearning some very basic practices that are firmly rooted in years of schooling around debating ideas, writing persuasive essays, and defending theses, all of which have their place in society.

If women and women’s organizations want to engage those sensitive to violent extremist messages or engage with agents of the security sector they must first learn how to listen without judgment, how to develop an awareness of assumptions of the “other,” and how to focus on experiences rather than ideas.

When engaged in dialogue, “Why do you think that?” becomes “What experiences have you had that might help me understand your perspective?” Such simple reframing of questions can be learned, but a willingness to engage from a place of good will must come from within.

Alison Milofsky is the director of Curriculum and Training Design in the US Institute of Peace’s Academy. Before joining the Institute, she was the associate director of the Anti-Defamation League’s Washington, DC regional office.

Debate versus Dialogue¹⁴

DEBATE

DIALOGUE

Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.

Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.

In debate, winning is the goal.

In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.

In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.

In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement.

Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.

Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.

Debate defends assumptions as truth.

Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.

Debate causes critique of the other position.

Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.

Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.

Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.

Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right.

Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude; an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.

In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.

In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.

Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.

Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.

In debate, one searches for glaring differences.

In dialogue, one searches for basic agreement.

In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other positions.

In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions.

Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings.

Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.

¹⁴ S. Berman, "A comparison of dialogue and debate," *In Facing the challenges of racism and race relations: Democratic dialogue and action for stronger communities* (3rd ed.), Pomfret, CT: Topsfield Foundation, 1993.

Acronyms

CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
GBV	Gender Based Violence
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (This group is also referred to as ISIS—Islamic State in Iraq and Syria—and IS—Islamic State).
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NAP	National Action Plan
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution* 1325 (2000) – Addresses the impact of war on women and the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace 1820 (2008) – Recognizes conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and connects sexual violence to women, peace, and security issues 1888 (2009) – Establishes the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and mandates that peacekeeping missions protect women and children from sexual violence during armed conflict 1889 (2009) – Calls for strengthening women’s participation in peace processes and for developing indicators to measure progress made on UNSCR 1325 1960 (2010) – Creates institutional tools to combat impunity and outlines specific steps needed for both the prevention and protection from sexual violence in conflict 2106 (2013) – Reiterates that more must be done by the Security Council, Member States, and other involved parties to implement previous resolutions on sexual violence in conflict and to combat impunity 2122 (2013) – Calls for increased attention to women, peace, and security issues and for inclusion of provisions to promote gender equality and female empowerment when mandates are established or renewed 2195 (2014) – Encourages members states to engage and empower civil society actors, including women, in countering violent extremism 2195 (2014) – Reaffirms the need to increase attention to women, peace and security issues, including in threats to international peace and security caused by terrorists act and notes the importance of incorporating the participation of women and youth in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism
USIP	U.S. Institute of Peace
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

* Descriptions and more information on these Women, Peace, and Security focused UN Security Council Resolutions can be found at: http://www.peacewomen.org/themes_theme.php?id=1.

Gender-Related Resources on Women Preventing Violent Extremism

Gender & Peacebuilding

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- Vess, J., G. Barker, S. Naraghi-Anderlini, & A. Hassink, A., (2013) The Other Side of Gender: Men as Critical Agents of Change. (Special Report No. 340). Washington, DC: USIP.

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- Bloom, M. 2011. *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (U.S. Edition). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
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- Chowdhury Fink, N. & R. Barkakat. (2013). Strengthening Community Resilience against Violence and Extremism: The Roles of Women in South Asia (Policy Brief). Goshen, IN: Global Center on Cooperative Security.
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- Gowrinathan, N. (2014) The Women of ISIS: Understanding and Combating Female Extremism. *Foreign Affairs*, August 21.
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- Huckerby, J. & Satterthwaite, M, (Eds.) (2013). *Gender, National Security, and Counter-Terrorism: Human Rights Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Preventing Violent Extremism

- Holmer, G. (2014) Creating Space for Effective CVE Approaches (PeaceBrief No. 178). Washington, DC: USIP.
- Holmer, G. (2013). Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective (Special Report No. 336) Washington, DC: USIP.
- Kuehnast, K. & J. Zenn (2014). Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan (Special Report No. 355). DC: USIP.
- Schlafler, E. (2014). Tackling Emotions to Tackle Terror—Innovative Counter Radicalization Strategies to Be Tested (Blog). *Huffington Post*, May 7.
- Schlafler, E. (2013). Terrorism... Again: Old Threats Alternative Solutions (Blog). *Huffington Post*, May 24.

* This is an abbreviated list of resources drawn from USIP and experts who have contributed to the kit.

About the United States Institute of Peace

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is an independent, nonpartisan institution established and funded by Congress. In its 30th year, its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote post-conflict peacebuilding, and increase conflict-management tools, capacity, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in conflict zones around the globe.

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Recognizing the importance and need for progress in women's contributions to peacebuilding, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) established the Center for Gender and Peacebuilding in 2009. The Center coordinates USIP's gender-related work. It aims to inform and expand critical understanding about the impact of gender; convene global experts on women, peace, and security as well as men, peace and security; contribute to policy development through both analytical and practitioner work on gender, conflict, and peacebuilding; and enhance the role of women in peacebuilding by educating and training both men and women. Over the past thirty years, USIP has engaged in or supported over 100 projects related to women, conflict, and peacebuilding. The establishment of the Center for Gender and Peacebuilding reflects the Institute's commitment to gender awareness in both its analytical and practitioner work on violent conflict and peacebuilding.

For further information about USIP's Center for Gender and Peacebuilding, please visit the Center's webpage at <http://www.usip.org/centers/gender-and-peacebuilding-center>.

To contact the Center for Gender and Peacebuilding, please email gender@usip.org.



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2301 Constitution Avenue, NW
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