



ASSESSMENT OF CVE STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION



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The War on Terror began shortly after the turn of the millennium with the infamous September 11th terrorist attacks. After New York City's Twin Towers crumbled down, the national fervor to counter terrorism rose up. Throughout the nearly two-decade long struggle since, policymakers have devised and tested various approaches to countering terrorism. Among the youngest of the strategies is the "countering violent extremism" (CVE) approach. CVE, aimed at countering terrorism on the community level, came into existence during the Obama Administration in the summer of 2011 when the president signed the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States. It defines CVE as using preexisting relationships between local law enforcement or government officials and the communities in which they serve to deter radicalization of individuals (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2011, 1).

Although the operationalized definition of radicalization can fluctuate, a basic definition of radicalization is "a movement in the direction of supporting or enacting radical behavior" (Kruglanski, Gelfand, Bélanger, Sheveland, Hetiarachchi, & Gunaratna, 2014: 70). Thus, preventing the initial radicalization of an individual addresses the issue of violent extremism at the root causes of the phenomenon. The goal in implementing a CVE program is to empower the members of the community from within, using community-level programs, to create resilient citizens. This is done at the local level through the use of programs that utilize the efforts of those with actual vested interest in the community and its well-being. Commonly referred to as stakeholders within the community, those individuals will have personal relationships with the members of the community and, by extension, a degree of trust. The motivating rationale for the success of community-led CVE programs is that creating resilience among community members

by empowering communities will yield individuals that who will not be swayed by radicalization mechanisms.

The imminent need for a proactive strategy, such as CVE, that targets the radicalization of terrorists at the roots coincided with the rise of the foreign terrorist fighters (FTF). An FTF is one who is radicalized in his or her home country and subsequently travels to the host nation of the group to train and fight with the terrorist group or by inconspicuously returning home after contact with a terrorist group abroad with the goal of radicalizing others (Kopitzke, 2017: 309, 311). Thus, the FTF phenomenon, which has increased in recent years, is equally as much of a domestic problem as it is global, even for nations like the United States (US) that are geographically separated from terrorist organizations.

Responding to the global threat of FTFs, the United Nations (UN) adopted Resolution 2178 (United Nations Security Council, 2014). This measure was significant because, as a resolution under Chapter VII, it is binding for Member States (Exec. Office of the Pres., 2011). Thus, countries are required to take a stance against the recruitment of FTFs; CVE is an essential method to do so and is explicitly mentioned in the resolution. As such, many Member States have attempted to implement such programs within their borders. Given the variability of possible CVE programs and the variability of existing national conditions, subsequent variance between the successes of the distinct programs is expected.

In this paper, I first review the existing literature on CVE. A portion of this literature reflects on why early attempts of CVE in pilot programs—particularly in the US—have often been met with public backlash. Considering this, I will move on to evaluate existing CVE strategies in the following sections of this paper following a brief discussion of the methodology. The evaluation of CVE will come in two main sections. First, I will look at the major categories of

CVE implementation, taking into account the suggestions that policymakers and scholars advise communities to follow when creating their CVE programs.

In the next section, I look at the ways in which CVE strategies have been carried out in various cities and countries. The goal of this assessment is to understand which strategies work best and under what conditions. All the states within this analysis are UN Member States, thus affected by Resolution 2178. First, the assessment will cover CVE within the US. There have been multiple pilot programs implemented in the US, but I examine CVE in Houston. This is a good proxy city to assess in order to examine CVE because it is one of the most diverse in the nation so results of analysis are more generalizable (City of Houston, Mayor's Office of Public Safety & Homeland Security, 2016: 2) Then, to get a different perspective on CVE conditions, I will assess CVE in Morocco, located in North Africa where US troops are present to assist in regional stability in the wake of terrorist group activity and related insurgencies. Finally, I will assess CVE implementation in Yemen. Yemen is currently engaged in civil war, so assessment of CVE here will give insight to whether government stability plays a factor in CVE success. As a reminder, CVE a community—not government—based approach. However, the national political climate may still play a significant factor in successful implementation.

Literature Review

In 2014, the United Nations (UN) passed Resolution 2178, making it the first Chapter VII resolution to mention the need for Member States to “focus on countering violent extremism (CVE)” (Kopitzke, 2017: 319). The passing of the resolution coincided with the rising trend of terrorist organizations, specifically the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), recruiting FTFs. In fact, the resolution was the outcome of the wave of FTFs from countries spanning the world and the barbaric tactics of ISIS (Kopitzke, 2017). Granted, the United States (US) had passed its own

CVE strategy, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, three years earlier in 2011 under the Obama Administration (Ambrozik, 2018). On the state level, CVE addresses a domestic security concern. Even FTFs that go abroad to fight with ISIS are likely to carry out attacks in their home countries upon returning (Kopitzke, 2017). This expectation—concern, rather—proved to be a legitimate threat; at the time of Kopitzke’s writing (2017), the FTF returning rate was 20-30%. Then, the fact that the “world [was] facing largest global convergence of FTFs in history,” an effect of globalization in general, galvanized the UN to pass this resolution (Kopitzke, 2017: 309).

The birth of CVE strategy was a necessary prevention measure because the tactics that had worked to combat Al Qaeda years earlier were not likely to yield success with combatting ISIS. Audrey Kurth Cronin (2015) explains why not in detail. She identifies targeting the group’s leaders, cutting off outside funding, and delegitimizing the group’s primary message as the primary tactics. Regarding the first tactic, ISIS has not had any group step into act as its core of operations (Bakos, 2018; Cronin, 2015). In the past, this has worked because the terrorist organization did not have a clear succession plan in place or because those who would fill the position feared becoming the next victim of a US strike (Bakos, 2018). ISIS is instead set up militarily, so command comes from various parallel positions (Cronin, 2015). Additionally, ISIS differs from most other terrorist organizations in that it controls its own territory. This has provided them with the unique opportunity to earn its funding through a legitimate financial model; at the time of Cronin’s writing, estimates were that ISIS controlled 60% of Syria’s oil production capacity (Cronin, 2015: 4). Between this and other illicit activities, such as hostage ransom, ISIS sustains most of its funding internally (Cronin, 2015). Further, delegitimizing ISIS’s recruitment message is not viable because its “core message is about raw power and revenge, not legitimacy” (Cronin, 2015: 4).

Thus, external counterterrorism alone is not enough. Therefore, countries like the US looked to implement CVE programs at home to prevent violent extremism.

CVE strategy has manifested successfully in other countries in the past. Indonesia and the Philippines experienced victory against terrorist groups in their respective territories “by combining counterterrorism operations with relationship building in local communities, instituting deradicalization programs, providing religious training in prisons, using rehabilitated former terrorist operatives as government spokespeople” (Cronin, 2015: 6). Relationship building in local communities is a primary CVE strategy. The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in fact, provides funding for domestic community outreach in multiple cities in an attempt to foster positive relationships between law enforcement and their local communities in order to deter potential radicalization (Brennan Center for Justice, n.d.). Many grants have been given out by the DHS to US cities in recent years so that they may implement CVE programs (Brennan Center for Justice, n.d.).

With community outreach in mind, the US government attempted to invigorate community CVE programs through two key methods: a) CVE pilot regions in Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, and b) “public outreach events” aimed at fostering law enforcement-community relationships and idea-sharing about CVE planning (Ambrozik, 2018: 4). In theory, the successes from these cases should have inspired other communities to start their own CVE programs. While the federal government plays the principal role in most security initiatives, the CVE initiative is unique in that it has a “principal—multi-agent” structure instead (Ambrozik, 2018: 3). In essence, the government designates the responsibility of individual CVE programs to their respective local communities. At this point, “community stakeholders, such as state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and religious leaders” collaborate on a specific CVE

approach (Ambrozik, 2018: 3). The goal of this is to provide communities with the flexibility to tailor the program as they see fit, but what the community consequently ends up with, often, is a program lead by “stakeholders” who lack familiarity with the subject area at large (Ambrozik, 2018: 3).

Other CVE methods that have been utilized include the use of ex-FTFs. This method entails letting disillusioned returnees from FTF careers share their stories and reasons for disaffiliating from the terrorist organizations (Kopitzke, 2017: 335). According to Peter Neuman, Director of the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, reasons for defecting from ISIS predictably fall into one of four major categories: infighting, brutality against Sunni Muslims, corruption/ un-Islamic behaviors, or overall quality of life (Kopitzke, 2017: 335). Potential FTFs who hear these negative aspects first-hand from defectors will be deterred from beginning their own FTF careers. As a body of strategies, CVE approaches “are potentially more effective in the long run, as they purport to solve the problem at its source rather than reacting to FTFs already radicalized” (Kopitzke, 2017: 341). That is exactly what the early Obama administration pushed for when “a group of administration insiders who worried that the White House had become more focused on killing terrorists than preventing the recruitment of new one” (Miller & Higham, 2015).

Criticisms about CVE range from specific shortcomings of individual project implementation to the concept as a whole. In the extreme, some critics argue that the UN resolution calling Member States to implement CVE “is both unenforceable and provides a tool for oppressive regimes that choose to define terrorism as anything they do not like or find potentially threatening” (Kopitzke, 2017: 319)¹. Based on that notion, it is likely to be abused. Others argue

¹ See Kopitzke for a discussion of the criticisms of CVE.

that CVE is problematic because “the record clearly shows that CVE is an integral part of [traditional] counterterrorism” (Aziz, 2017: 263). Scholars (Kopitzke, 2017; Aziz, 2017) assert that the problem with the association of the two measures—that is, CVE and counterterrorism—is that the federal government, notably the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ends up wielding CVE measures as a tool for targeting known Muslim communities. This becomes a conflict because such agencies’ “missions are to investigate, prosecute, and convict criminal suspects,” not empower communities and individuals (Aziz, 2017: 264). Aziz (2017) notes the disparity between the definition of CVE as a community measure and the implementation of CVE as a federal law enforcement measure.

However, it is plausible that there is inherent overlap between CVE and counterterrorism since they target the same overarching topic, that is, the war on terrorism. In this case, CVE measures are not intended as a tool to sneak government agencies into communities. Rather, there must be a degree of collaboration and open communication for the measures to work. Indeed, regarding CVE abroad, the Defense Science Board (DSB) noted that a liaison for interagency CVE efforts is necessary (Mishory, 2016). This consideration holds especially true on the domestic level in order to distance community-led efforts from the federal government while keeping communication channels open.

Yet, communities with active CVE programs are still in the minority (Ambrozik, 2018). Looking within the US, the government’s attempts to encourage the spread of CVE have backfired; the communities and organizations that the government hoped would unite to craft CVE programs tailored to their own communities “mobilized in opposition to the federal government’s CVE mandate” (Ambrozik, 2018: 4). Twenty-seven organizations expressed concern that CVE would target Muslim neighborhoods and Islamic practitioners in a 2014 letter to security advisors,

followed by forty-eight “human rights, civil liberties, and community-based organizations” reiterating similar concerns, including the targeting of political activism and Islamic practice, in a 2015 letter to representatives (Ambrozik, 2018: 4; Brennan Center for Justice, 2015). A possible explanation for this negative response in the US is that “facilitation at the local level is an important component that has largely been missing from CVE efforts within the United States,” even when government has used initiatives such as the community pilot programs and community events (Ambrozik, 2018: 20). Facilitation requires active involvement of local community leaders.

Unfortunately, most existing CVE research is centered on the effectiveness of existing programs rather than why the majority of communities have difficulty implementing CVE programs at all (Kopitzke, 2017). Additionally, research on terrorism and related fields like criminology lack significant collaboration (Harris-Hogan & Barrelle, 2015). Considering that “CVE is almost exclusively about crime prevention,” this divide means that policymakers could be overlooking viable and constructive strategies (Harris-Hogan & Barrelle, 2015: 3).

Fundamental problems surrounding the implementing of and inspiring public support for CVE measures exist also. In order to formulate a strategy against something, policymakers must have a clear idea of what it is that they are countering. However, radicalization is an ambiguous term, thus countering radicalization to violent extremism is an ambiguous task (Harris-Hogan & Barrelle, 2015: 1). According to some, the words only carry general, non-specific meaning. “The term (CVE) likely emerged from a policy department which, after determining that concepts such as terrorism and radicalization were too poorly defined and stigmatised to use, resolved to introduce into the discourse the best new poorly defined term a focus group could generate,” criticize Harris-Hogan and Barelle (2015: 1). Without a clearly defined focus about what CVE measures entail, results are difficult to assess.

Further, the effectiveness and value of CVE is hard to assess (Kopitzke, 2017; Ambrozik, 2018). Even counterterrorism is a bit easier to assess because that process deals with eliminating already existing threats (Cronin, 2015: 2). Thus, one can assess the success of counterterrorism based on whether the number of existing threats diminishes. On the other hand, CVE aims to eradicate threats and potential actors before they even come into existence. Quantifying the number of events that did not happen is inherently ambiguous. This makes it difficult for stakeholders to decide whether the benefits justify the costs of participating in CVE (Ambrozik, 2018: 2). Assessing the number of FTFs who have traveled to the Middle East after radicalization in another country also proves “hard to estimate with any accuracy” (Kopitzke, 2017: 310).

Another roadblock to successful implementation of CVE is the collective action game theory problem—something that is also observed in traditional plans for national security. Because everyone in the nation benefits from increased security, regardless of whether he contributes to it, the decision to participate is raised to a higher stake than “mere interest in CVE programming” alone (Ambrozik, 2018: 8). The fuzziness of assessment strategies coupled with this game theory analysis do not inspire enthusiasm for CVE strategy among the population. Consequently, the DSB emphasized the need for a “better articulated” definition of CVE, of the Department of Defense’s role in CVE, and of measurable goals and metrics in order to prioritize activities related to CVE (Mishory, 2016).

Methodology and Selected Cases

For the purpose of this paper, I will look at CVE as divided into three categories: programs in the public domain to promote empowerment, programs in the religious domain to prevent

extremism, and effective deradicalization for returning FTFs.² In the US, emphasis is placed in the first two domains, whereas in other countries, such as Morocco, deradicalization and reintegration have played a leading role in strategy. While CVE is inherently proactive, the first two categories utilize preventative proactive measures while the third champions proactive reintegration strategies. Reintegration refers to the immersion back into non-extreme societal situations after having been a part of one. These situations include practicing radicalized beliefs promoted by a terrorist organization from one's home country, going to live with and assist a terrorist organization, or learning one's Islamic religious foundation in a violent or skewed environment, such as prison. Religious outreach in prisons for newly converted inmates is imperative to "prooting a proper understanding" of Islamic teaching (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 11).

The first category, CVE in the public domain, includes areas such as youth empowerment, both in schools and peer networks, and mental health professional help. Those who are in search of "personal significance" are vulnerable to the messages of violent extremist terrorist groups (Kruglanski et. al, 2014: 73). Therefore, establishing other methods that will empower at-risk youth through community engagement will create resilient youth. Empowerment can be achieved, for example, through teaching job skills that will give youth utility in the job sector (Cataldi, 2017: 5). This gives individuals the impression that their actions contribute to change, productivity, or conflict resolution of some sort.

School also provides one setting in which CVE methods can be established. One school-based program by the name of Peer to Peer (P2P) that was used in 95 universities in over 30 countries as of November 2016 serves as an example of this concept. P2P "tasks university students

² For other discussions regarding types of CVE programs and their categorizations, see (Brennan Center for Justice, n.d.; Kopizke, 2017; Kruse, 2016; McDonnell, Burbridge, & Salloum, 2017; Moffett and Sgro, 2016; Tameez and Khalid, 2014).

across the globe to counter extremism among their peers and in their communities, by creating and implementing, over the course of a school term, a social or digital initiative, product, or tool designed to empower their peers and counter hate” (Moffett and Sgro, 2016: 1). Not only does this program empower youth by engaging them in counter hate measures, it aims to proliferate empowerment to a wider network of peers.

Some initiatives also use schools as places to coach adults on detecting early warning signs of radicalization and extremist attitudes (Brennan Center of Justice, n.d.). This is often met with controversy in the Muslim activist community, though, because radicalization is an ambiguous concept which means that warning signs can also be very general and vague (Boorstein, 2015; Harris-Hogan and Barelle, 2015,1). Thus, Seamus Hughes, deputy director of George Washington University’s program on extremism, (as quoted in Boorstein, 2015) warns that while “schools can be an important space in spotting and combating radicalization, as teachers are often best positioned to see concerning signs...this needs to be done right, with proper training, respect of civil liberties and without stigmatizing.”

In the religious CVE sector, the second broad category in which CVE can take place, effective religious leaders are a crucial element. The primary focus is often on engaging religious leaders to communicate proper, non-extremist interpretations of Islamic doctrines (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 7; McDonnell et. al, 2018: 13). Terrorist groups use “rhetorical approach” to justifying the use of violence “under specific circumstances” which they establish (Kruglanski et. al, 2014: 77). If religious leaders cannot clearly respond to these elaborate claims with well-explained interpretations of the Islamic doctrines, at-risk individuals may become or remain radicalized (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 16). However, the *Strategic implementation plan for empowering local partners to prevent violent extremism in the United States* (Executive Office of

the President of the United States, 2011, 8) makes a specific point to caveat that “strong religious beliefs should never be confused with violent extremism.” The goal of CVE is never to compromise free practice of religion.

The three cases studied in this paper examine various possible implementations of CVE programs in the context of different national climates. In Yemen and Morocco, where religion is integrated into the structure of government, CVE programs within the religious domain that call upon effective religious leaders are prominent. In the US, programs in the public sector for the betterment of the community are mostly used, while religious leaders are also called upon. Morocco, which has high numbers of FTFs and returning FTFs, has a cluster of general—or “loose”—policies making up its CVE deradicalization measures rather than an organized, linear program (Masbah, 2018: 6; Kruse, 2018: 203). Deradicalization is less focal in the US which is geographically further from the host cells of the largest Islamic violent extremist groups, particularly ISIS. Combined, the cases provide a cross-section of CVE programs that allows for a holistic analysis of CVE.

Yemen.

Yemen is a member of the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT) along with thirty-three other Muslim countries (Kruse, 2016: 200). This is one of the many multinational partnerships aimed at fostering global partnership to combat terrorism. The alliance specifically focuses on achieving “a comprehensive and holistic approach to defeating terrorism and violent extremism by using multiple methods” that include preventative measures against violent extremism i.e. CVE (Kruse, 2016: 201). However, compared to the other cases studied, Yemen faces the unique challenge of being involved in an ongoing civil war while also dealing with the

issue of extremism. Because of this climate, “conflict resolution” plays a prominent role in CVE initiatives (International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, 2018).

The International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD)³, “an organization that uses faith-based diplomacy to resolve conflict and promote interreligious understanding,” has been providing assistance to Yemen regarding CVE implementation and peacebuilding in the recent years (Berkley Center, n.d.). Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the organization “holds official consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is a registered Private Volunteer Organization (PVO) with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)” (Organizational Report 2015-2017: 6). Although the organization is based out of the U.S.’s capital, it is not funded by the government; it is a non-profit organization (Organizational Report 2015-2017: 13). The ICRD primarily directs its aid and programming to areas experiencing ethnic, tribal, or religious conflict, such as Yemen, and has conducted projects in places like Afghanistan, Iran, Kashmir, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United States (Berkley Center, n.d.).

The strategy that the ICRD implemented in Yemen falls into three general initiatives. The first initiative was aimed at giving voice to marginalized communities in Yemen’s southern territory. Yemen’s south experienced frequent insurgencies after the overthrow of the country’s ruling dictatorship in 2011, indicating conflicts that needed to be resolved (ICRD, 2018). In order to structurally incorporate these disgruntled insurgent groups, the ICRD fostered dialogue in 2014 by surveying and interviewing over 400 southerners to determine their attitudes toward a national conference that had taken place the previous year and political transition of the nation as a whole

³ ICRD Mission Statement: To bridge religious considerations with the practice of international politics in support of peacemaking (Organizational Report 2015-2017: 5). For further information, see <https://icrd.org/>.

(ICRD, 2018). As a result, the southern communities were engaged rather than disenfranchised and participated in dialogue the fostered interest and involvement.

A second initiative focused specifically on community conflict-resolution strategy as a CVE measure. Because Yemen is in a civil war, an “increase in local conflicts and breakdown of services and rule of law” exists (Cataldi⁴, 2017: 4) Consequently, there exists greater uncertainty, instability, and vulnerability within communities that increases the prevalence of at-risk areas, so CVE efforts must place special attention on those areas while “taking a ‘whole society’ approach” in programs (ICRD, 2018). This entails “working to build the capacity of local religious leaders, educators, and civil society leaders in countering violent extremism – focusing on areas at direct risk of incursion by violent extremist groups” (ICRD, 2018). The skills that the ICRD aimed to teach during its grant program in Yemen were primarily the abilities to resolve conflict, augment tolerance, and implement CVE programs to address issues within the communities (Cataldi, 2017: 4, 15).

The first activities included workshops conducted by ICRD to train members of civil society organizations (CSO) in conflict resolution and CVE so that they could then train other members of their respective communities (Cataldi, 2017: 4). Topics covered in the sessions included: “drivers and warning signs of radicalization, context analysis, strategies and methods of addressing violent extremism, the role of identity and religion in addressing violent extremism, and critical thinking” (Cataldi, 2017: 6). This resembles the structure of CVE implementation use within some US CVE pilot programs. However, in Yemen the trainers hosting the workshop came

⁴ Cataldi provides a breakdown of the specific programs and strategies that the ICRD used in Yemen, including key goals of the measures and many direct quotes from participants to reflect community opinion and reception of the events. Other reviews about the ICRD and CVE programs in Yemen were not widely available. This could be due to the fact that, at the time of writing, these programs are relatively new so not much analysis of them exists yet, or due to the fact that some of the reviews could be written in Middle Eastern languages and have not been translated into English, thus were not available to me for this study.

from ICRD, an external organization focused on conflict resolution and peacemaking, rather than affiliates of the national government (Berkley Center, n.d.). To address the fact that ICRD trainers were, in fact, external actors, training sessions used cross-cultural teams to introduce training, making it possible for regional leaders to lead dialogue on sensitive topics surrounding religion while the ICRD counterparts on the teams were able to coach about common issues surrounding extremism and radicalization that both the US and Yemen face (Cataldi, 2017: 5). Training was able to include discussion of sensitive topics such as tolerance and religious freedom without being met with negative feedback from community leaders (Organizational Report 2015-17; 4). The cross-cultural teams insured that the proper tools to address all topics were accessible in CVE discussions.

After the initial round of training, the attendees at the workshop separately brought the skills that they had learned into their communities through similar training events for religious or tribal leaders, community dialogues, and projects tailored to address violent extremism within their communities (Cataldi, 2017: 4). ICRD called this the Training of Trainers (ToT) model in which the original trainees became the trainers at the more local level. The trainees adapted what they had learned to their own community contexts, using “local examples” to drive home concepts (Cataldi, 2017: 16). Both follow-up workshops hosted by ICRD and independent workshops organized by the trainees were used (Cataldi, 2017: 15). Importantly, they worked the concepts into religious terms and Islamic principles that communities held (Cataldi, 2017: 16). This sort of proliferation model enabled the training to reach a broad audience.

During the sessions, “interactive role-play” was used to provide coaching on mediation (Cataldi, 2017: 6). The benefit of this style was two-fold. First, the inclusion of trainees in instruction created a relaxed and informal environment (Cataldi, 2017: 6). Second, it created a less

intrusive coaching style than simply lecturing on CVE ideas would. Participants were allowed to use their own existing strategies and methods before new methodologies were introduced (Cataldi, 2017: 6) As a result, they were able to contribute their own ideas and perspectives, uninfluenced by an outside organization, into CVE strategy. The environment was collaborative, “designed to first honor the indigenous approaches and provide space for participants to share and learn,” rather than condescending (Cataldi, 2017: 7).

Analysis of case studies was another technique used during training sessions. A film called *Back from the Brink* explored ways that individuals became radicalized to join Los Angeles street gangs in the US, terrorist activities in Pakistan, and the Lebanese civil war (Cataldi, 2017:12). Each case clarified understanding of a different aspect involved with radicalization (Cataldi, 2017:12). Another aspect that training focused on was models and methods of critical thinking (Cataldi, 2017: 14). Paired together, CVE programs could be developed by trainees through an understanding of what causes radicalization and critical analysis of how to attack the issues at the sources.

The issue of community conflict and empowering vulnerable populations was addressed through the implementation of constructive community projects. Community trainees transferred their newly learned skills to youth empowerment. In one instance, in a community with water-related conflict, youth were engaged to help resolve the conflict by installing pipes (Cataldi, 2017: 5). Though this may seem unrelated to violent extremism prevention on the surface, the activity combats a root cause of radicalization by giving the at-risk youth a sense of empowerment and purpose. Further, it taught youth the skills that they could use to obtain future employment and strengthened commitment to the community that may deter them from readily identifying with extremist groups over community bonds (Cataldi, 2017: 2019). Also, after “providing job skills

and a sense of civic responsibility” to the vulnerable youth, community leaders were able to train them in peacebuilding and CVE skills, continuing the proliferation of the initiatives so that the youth are now taking initiative to mitigate community conflicts (Cataldi, 2017: 5).

Yemen is an interesting case because, thanks to ongoing civil war, there was no stable government to help fund or initiate CVE programming. Instead, the CVE education and training had to enter the country through entirely external actors. Specifically, the ICRD, a Westernized non-profit, took responsibility for this task. Despite the fact that such intervention could be seen as an intrusion, the organization has no ties to the Yemeni government which could have potentially fueled intra-national civil conflict further. The ICRD also took precautions to not be seen as an intruder by focusing on trust and cooperation as a primary initial goal during its involvement in projects (Organizational Report 2015-2017: 6). The CVE here, also, was coupled with a heavy focus on conflict resolution. Since Yemen is still engaged in civil war, conflict is inherent and conflict resolution strategy will play a valuable role in fostering stability and confidence. With such an emphasis on conflict resolution existing, whether the CVE training will have as much of a positive impact after the war has ended is yet to be determined.

Currently, though, the training seems to have had success empowering communities based on quotes reflecting positive feedback from those participating in the CVE programs (Organizational Report 2015-2017; Cataldi, 2017). Also, CVE programs have focused in the areas which community members believed needed improvement, indicated by public surveys (McDonnell et. al, 2017). Through CVE training and planning in Yemen, trainees developed the notion that “without effective action at the government level, ... there was much that they could do at the community level to address violent extremism” (Cataldi, 2017: 15). One crucial element that the ICRD trainers paid attention to was securing cooperation and community bonds before

implementing projects (Cataldi, 2017: 19). This ensured that training did not seem forceful but, rather, cooperative. The ToT model of proliferation allowed CVE skills and programs to reach those that may not have been comfortable working with outside organizations from the Western world. It seemed to work well considering that between training and community organization partnerships, the initiatives have “directly engaged” more than 1400 participants from various Yemeni governorates (Cataldi, 2017: 4). While this seems like a small number compared to overall population, the participants came from a variety of marginalized groups such as women and youth (Cataldi, 2017: 4). This indicates that the strategy was successful as a goal of CVE is to empower marginalized groups. The specific inclusion of "often-marginalized groups" is a way to minimize the likelihood that they will turn to extremism to have their needs met; instead they are given a voice and legitimate inclusion. Successful CVE was further defined as having programs that integrate into communities. This is evident in Yemen by the fact that these initiatives have reached the community groups that they intended to target.

In terms of gauging success, the CVE programs seemed to have integrated well into local communities. Observable proof that the ideas of CVE have taken root in the minds of community-level individuals is the fact that trainees have "launched new initiatives independently, such as a training program for imams on religious tolerance and CVE, and a Peacemakers' Council in Taiz" (Cataldi, 2017: 4). Another example is that a CSO updated its peace training manual to include CVE content that its representatives learned during ICRD training sessions (Cataldi, 2017: 4).

Further, CVE was able to bring a concrete element to countering abstract concepts of radicalization within communities. One Yemeni trainer concluded that trainees gained “scientific tools” that they could apply to local conflict resolution when blended with existing religious methodologies (Cataldi, 2017: 17). The trainees themselves also had positive feedback. One youth

trainee positively summarized: “we participated in drawing the current condition of Yemen and another beautiful picture for the future of Yemen. Pictures and discussions raised our optimism, persistence and determination” (quoted in Cataldi, 2017: 18). Therefore, community empowerment was fostered. Finally, by framing the CVE in concepts in religious terms, religious leaders who originally had negative reactions to the modern CVE tools saw how the concepts could be useful and changed their outlooks to positive (Cataldi, 2017: 16).

The third ICRD initiative used in Yemen was the integration of conservative religious leaders into CVE Strategy (ICRD, 2018). The program is ongoing but began with an assessment of the roles of religious leaders in the community to identify gaps that could be leaving opportunities for radicalization open. When ICRD addressed the integration of conservative religious leaders into CVE, it did so on the observation that religion is an integral part of Yemeni society and culture and is likely to be an important part of citizens’ personal values and identity to varying degrees (Cataldi, 2017: 22). Therefore, the organization wanted to critically assess how those religious leaders with a “unique influence with and access to those at-risk of radicalization” could be used to play a “constructive role” in CVE (ICRD, 2018).

In particular, there is a need to include Salafi leaders in CVE. Salafism is a specific type of Islam that is present in both Yemen and Morocco, among other Middle Eastern countries (McDonnell et. al, 2017; Masbah, 2018; McDonnell et. al, 2018). Salafi-jihadism is also the driving doctrine behind Al Qaeda and its affiliates and similar groups (Moghadam, 2008). As such, conservative Salafi Muslims are candidates for radicalization to extremism, although it goes without saying that not every Salafi Muslim is or will be an extremist. Because eliminating the fundamental beliefs of the Salafi religion that is associated with Jihadist terrorist groups is not viable or culturally sensitive, this program aimed to have leaders use religion constructively.

For this, special attention needs to be given to proper religious instruction. In fact, lack of adequate religious education is perceived as the leading factor causing someone to become a violent extremist (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 13). This is especially crucial in Salafi Islam. Because Jihadi terrorist groups champion extreme interpretations of Salafi doctrines as their fundamental basis, those who follow the religion need clear education for understanding how to interpret conservative doctrines. In assessment of what would make religious leaders most effective, community members highlighted the importance of leaders being available to provide guidance and education (McDonnell et. al, 2017: 19).

Unfortunately, the current satisfaction rate with religious teachers is low for almost every responsibility or activity in which they partake (McDonnell et. al, 2017: 19). A low satisfaction rate with the existing religious teachers and advisors will leave people discontent and searching for another source of legitimacy. Ultimately, they may find this through violent extremism and participation in terrorist groups as FTFs if left unguided. Therefore, there is an immediate need to address the failure of religious leaders to live up to their ideal incorruptibility. Respondents in the ICRD assessment cited morality as of higher importance than charisma for effective religious leadership but also indicated dissatisfaction with the current corruption of leaders involved in the public sphere (McDonnell et. al, 2017: 18).

Part of the issue with the satisfaction rates of religious leaders, such as imams, in Yemen is that the education of leaders is limited and only loosely regulated. While the Ministry of Endowments and Guidance (MoEG) technically has jurisdiction to install imams, the actual power to do so comes from local community support (McDonnell et al, 2017: 20). Furthermore, there are only few religious educational establishments within Yemen and they are all relatively new (McDonnell et al, 2017: 20). Consequently, one must either have the means to travel abroad for

formal education or attempt gaining an adequate education at one of the limited in-state choices. Although the MoEG has implemented programs aimed at providing better education to imams and religious scholars, there has not been marked progress (McDonnell et al, 2017: 20). Programs like these need to become more of a focus in Yemen to ensure that non-violent understanding of sensitive or conservative religious doctrines is possible. Also, to ensure proper interpretation of sensitive doctrines, the government has cracked down on private religious education facilities in order to better monitor (McDonnell et al, 2017: 19).

Although proper religious education is lacking, community members perceive that religious leaders are even less effective at “coordinating relations between government and community” (McDonnell et al, 2017: 19). This shows that religious leaders have performed extremely poorly in community engagement. Overall, there is evidence that “even apart from their role in preventing extremism, religious actors may not be adequately meeting the needs of their community” (McDonnell et. al, 2017: 17). This inability is dangerous because community engagement appeared to be one of the more critical tasks for preventing violent extremism (McDonnell et al, 2017: 19).

In the end, this ICRD initiative aims to “harness religion as a tool for peacebuilding” (Cataldi, 2017: 5). The initiative indicates that this can be achieved by working to improve religious actors’ ability to facilitate community relations and properly educate community members on interpretations of sensitive Salafi doctrines. However, the inclusion of religious leaders into CVE requires immense cultural sensitivity that must be kept in mind at all times (Cataldi, 2017: 5).

Morocco.

The communities that Moroccan CVE focuses on most closely—in other words, what those in charge believe to be the most at-risk communities—include those with Salafi religious leaders, radicalized individuals in prison, and economically marginalized populations (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 3,8; Masbah, 2018: 2). The principal actors in Moroccan CVE appear to be the religious leaders. Through a series of interviews conducted by the ICRD, Moroccan responses have indicated that the population views the religious leaders in Morocco as serving a central role in educational activities rather than “traditional social roles” that include activities such as charity and conflict resolution (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 14). This public perception places them in a central role for CVE since implementation of CVE should come from prominent figures within individual communities.

In general, most of Morocco’s responses to addressing radical groups were security actions, similar to traditional national security measures or counterterrorism strategy, yet the country also made an effort to introduce some CVE measures (Masbah, 2018: 2). One of the first such measures launched was the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) in 2005 after the 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca (Masbah, 2018: 2). The initiative was based on the notion that “poverty and social inequality constitute serious problems with respect to maintaining political stability and social cohesion” (Masbah, 2018: 2) By investing \$1.2 billion, Morocco aimed to lower overall poverty by “reducing rural poverty and social exclusion in slums” (McDonnell et.al, 2018: 9).

Other national strategies that are used to counter violent extremism in the Muslim world are the promotion of a culture of moderation and emphasis on deradicalization programs. The culture of moderation strategy aims “to promote a culture of moderation across all sectors of society,” including religious (Kruse, 2016: 202). In the Moroccan state, this concept materialized

in the project of King Mohammed VI to nationally promote a more moderate version of Islam through embracing and version of Islam based on a Sunni Maliki doctrine that would “unify religious discourse” and heightening the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ control over religious schools (Masbah, 2018: 3). Further, Morocco aimed to promote moderation in the government sector through “the inclusion of moderate Islamists in formal politics” (Masbah, 2018: 3). The King proved his commitment to this assertion by allowing the Party of Justice and Development (PJD), a religious political party that was born out of an Islamic movement, to stay involved with government, despite criticism from some secular groups that it was a “breeding ground for hate speech and terrorism” (Masbah, 2018: 3).

Then, pertaining to the de-radicalization concept, Morocco has implemented what can best be described as a cluster of “looser policy initiatives” that collectively facilitate the de-radicalization process (Kruse, 2018: 203). The Moroccan process is “looser” in regard to deradicalization programs that follow a linear, step-by-step progression like, for example, the programs in Egypt. In Egypt, the deradicalization process begins when an individual or group consciously decides to begin the deradicalization course provided (Kruse, 2018: 203). On the other hand, Morocco continuously provides programming to inmates during their time in prison in hope that the exposure will deradicalize the extremists’ beliefs. For example, one of Morocco’s de-radicalization initiatives entails providing religious education by legitimate religious leaders to prisoners. Especially after the 2003 Casablanca terrorist attacks that led to the mass arrest of Salafi leaders, many actors with extremist beliefs were concentrated in prisons (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 8). This program paired religious scholars with participating prisoners to provide instruction and counseling which would eventually allow prisoners to graduate from the program and reintegrate into society with the help of the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Prisoners that

provides assistance with employment and education of newly released prisoners (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 8).

These CVE programs that were implemented did reduce activity of already-operating terrorists within the country (Masbah, 2018: 1). However, given that “number of Moroccans who have joined armed groups in the Middle East since 2011 surpasses the number who did so between 1980 and 2011,” the CVE programs’ ability to prevent new radicalization cannot be considered a success (Masbah, 2018: 4). In the beginning most of Morocco’s response to handle radical groups were security actions, similar to traditional national security measures or counterterrorism strategy (Masbah, 2018: 2).

The Moroccan King tried to exercise moderation by embracing the PJD in the political sphere. However, the inclusion of moderate Islamists in formal politics does not give voice to those of the lower socioeconomic class who identify as moderate Islamists because the individuals involved in government may come from different walks of life than those in a low class and not accurately represent the voices and wishes of the entire moderate Islamist demographic. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a nation in the Muslim world with a developed CVE plan, does a better job at addressing the voice of the Muslim community through its “Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies” which invites scholars and researchers, all with varying concentrations and perspectives, to discuss issues related to violent extremism and inter-Islamic relations and to develop better CVE strategies (Kruse, 2016: 202). The forum has suggested the creation of other forums such as the Muslim Council of Elders (MCE) to address issues of infighting and the sources of conflict (Kruse, 2016: 202).

In the same way that the voice of the low socioeconomic class is not represented by having moderate Islamists in government, its economic insecurity is not addressed by the INDH plan:

“there is a weak correlation between INDH allocations and the geography of poverty” (Masbah, 2018: 5). Part of the shortcoming in effective implementation of the INDH could be “the fact that the Ministry of the Interior was tasked with managing a socioeconomic program [which] also suggests that the program was dictated by a security agenda rather than in furtherance of citizens’ well-being” (Masbah, 2018: 5). CVE programs are meant to be tailored for individual communities; when the programs are treated as national security measures, this individualization does not occur.

Further, efforts to promote moderation of religious thought by preventing the spread of extremism, using measures such as closing religious schools promoting extreme fatwas⁵, are not accepted as positively within the Salafi community. The case of Sheikh Mohamed El Maghraoui is one example. Maghraoui was preaching controversial fatwa that “girls as young as nine” could marry (Thorne, 2008). This angered many moderate Muslims such as lawyer Mourad Bekkouri, who went on to file a complaint about the Sheikh on the grounds that he was inciting child rape (Thorne, 2008). Sheikh Mohamed argued that he simply had issued a recommendation, not a fatwa, but his teachings caught the negative attention of moderate Muslims, human rights groups, and the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MEIA) nonetheless (Thorne, 2008; McDonnell et. al, 2018) The MEIA took action by shutting down many of his Quranic schools (McDonnell et. al, 2018; Lamzouwaq, 2013).

Negative feedback from the Salafi community surfaced, as seen in an editorial in Morocco World News. In it, Saad Eddine Lamzouwaq explains that he was appalled by the decision of the

⁵ Fatwā: an Islamic legal pronouncement, issued by an expert in religious law (mufti), pertaining to a specific issue, usually at the request of an individual or judge to resolve an issue where Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), is unclear (as defined by The Islamic Supreme Council of America, <http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.org>.)

ministry to shut down Quranic schools, seeing it as a politically motivated and “uncalculated” move (Lamzouwaq, 2013). In fact, these are the type of instances that members of the Salafi community cite as founts of tension between the government and Salafi Community (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 22).

Further, while these types of strategies have succeeded at augmenting control over religious moderation, their implementation often comes “at the expense of the credibility of the official imams” (Masbah, 2018: 6). The King publicly supported the “expansion of religious bureaucracy,” but in order for the programs to be welcomed with trust and accepted within the community, the facilitators need to be prominent, trusted community figures (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 1). In Moroccan society, religious leaders play a prominent and respected role, so their use in CVE can be very influential. However, because the official imams in Morocco are selected by the government and, in some respects, censored, they lack authenticity in the eyes of community members. Another notable mistake in Moroccan CVE is that there is no attempt to work with NGOs within local communities to address causes of radicalization (Masbah, 2018: 6). In fact, there is “particular concern being raised that the state has not approached the issue holistically enough to address the structural grievances that fuel radicalization” (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 3).

Finally, with the current expectation “that many of the approximately 700 remaining Moroccan foreign fighters will return home” while “some [who have returned already] have even already completed their sentences and been released into Moroccan society,” focus in the deradicalization and integration category should be primary in Morocco (Masbah, 2018: 6). Yet drawing from the current situation in Morocco, the CVE measures in place are too grounded in traditional national security to combat the roots of radicalization and address de-radicalization (Masbah, 2018: 6). The religious counseling provided in the prison rehabilitation/de-radicalization

programs often falls short of its goals to neutralize extremist ideas. As one participating prisoner explained, the counselors sometimes fail to answer some of the extremists' most difficult questions, which the extremist prisoners then see as a sign that their extreme beliefs are more legitimate than the religious counselors' (McDonnell et. al, 2018: 16).

One solution that has been recently studied is the heightened inclusion of Salafi religious leaders in CVE programs within Morocco. Religious authorities have a lot of influence in Moroccan societies, so their words and teachings have vast impacts, as seen with the Muhammad Maghraoui case. Therefore, if they feel disenfranchised, disgruntled, or neglected, they may turn to more extreme teachings. We have seen how empowering youth and low socioeconomic populations is used as a strategy to prevent extreme ideologies from seeming appealing. In the same way, empowering Salafi religious authorities can deter them from teaching extreme Jihadist interpretations.

United States (Houston).

Houston was identified as prime candidate for CVE. First of all, the city is highly diverse, which makes in “a model for pioneering intervention activities across the country” (Brennan Center, n.d.). In fact, at the time that the city filed for a CVE grant, Houston was the most diverse city in the US (City of Houston, 2016: 2). The city also has a particularly high concentration of refugees and Muslim citizens (Brennan Center, n.d.; Ambrozik, 2018: 13). Of course, the goal of CVE is not to target the Islamic community. However, the goal is to prevent people from being persuaded by the violent-extremist messages, spread by groups like ISIS, to become FTFs. Therefore, the communities that have high populations practicing non-radical Islam⁶, are good

⁶ Non-radical Islam includes both moderate Islam and conservative Islam that does not promote extreme ideologies calling for violence.

places to test whether CVE can *prevent* the adoption of extremist beliefs where non-radical ones exist. CVE is not meant to target hotspots of extremists, but rather create communities that are resilient to violent extremism (Ambrozik, 2018: 14; Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 1). This can be done by alleviating community tensions before they cause radicalization to take place.

Aside from the makeup of the population, Houston is a prime candidate because it “has a history both conducting community engagement initiatives and creating multidisciplinary solutions to common problems” (Ambrozik, 2018: 12). Houston’s CVE strategy is multidisciplinary effort, drawing on governmental, interfaith, non-profit, law enforcement, community, and academic sectors (City of Houston, 2016). Partners in the initiative include Alliance for Compassion and Tolerance, Shifa Clinic, Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs, River Oaks Islamic Center, EMERGE USA Houston, Salaam Reentry Program, WISE, Muslim Professional Association, Amaanah Refugee Services, Anti-Defamation League, World Affairs Council of Houston, Houston Police Department, Harris County Sheriff’s Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Intersections International, Islamic Society of Greater Houston among others (Brennan Center, n.d.).

In the beginning, the Harris County Sheriff Office (HCSO), which was tasked with taking responsibility for CVE efforts in this community placed emphasis on preventing extremism in at-risk youth (Ambrozik, 2018: 14). After issuing its strategic implementation plan for CVE in 2011, the US federal government conceded that it was “ill-suited” to interact with communities on the level necessary to counter violent extremism causes (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2011). Therefore, it recruited the help of a more locally based department. The HCSO subsequently recruited the help of even more locally based parties, employing active community member Mustafa Tameez as a member of the Outreach Strategists team and Wardah

Khalid, an activist in the American Muslim community, as a co-facilitator (Ambrozik, 2018: 14). Utilizing the help of active community members not only can make programs more appealing to communities, but it will allow the facilitators to create programs with understanding of and empathy for the community in mind. The United States Institute of Peace (as cited in City of Houston, Mayor's Office of Public Safety & Homeland Security, 2016) highlights the key role that empathy plays in CVE implementation, noting that it is often overlooked in the programs that are received negatively.

The initiative that the partners and community leaders created, the Houston CVE Training and Engagement Initiative, primarily aimed to address “parental engagement,” “youth understanding and engagement,” and establishment of “culturally competent trained community educators/facilitators” of CVE (City of Houston, 2016). The particular challenge with implementing such an initiative, especially in such a diverse city, was articulating the programs in ways that respect all minority groups while keeping the city safe (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 3). In order to do so, Tameez and Khalid systematically broke down the challenges they saw within the community and proposed opportunities to address those challenges.

A key challenge Tameez and Khalid focused on addressing was mental health, especially for youth. Overall, the mental health initiative aimed to combat the lack of Muslim mental health professionals and the stigma surrounding receiving help during “emotional crises” (Tameez & Khalid, 2014: 5). One strategy the facilitators suggested was augmentation of existing services at the Houston Shifa Clinic which offers specialized medical services, including that of a psychiatrist, on a monthly basis (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 6). Not only did they suggest that the clinic increase the frequency of the care offered, they identified additional professionals that needed to be included in the services such as psychologists, social workers, and substance abuse and addiction

specialists (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 6). They further called for “workshops for parents to better understand the issues their children face, help them become familiar with the mental health warning signs, and strengthen family bonds between generations” (Tameez & Khalid, 2014: 5). These improvements would address the disaffection that many second-generation youths feel. Following up on this mental health approach, the city of Houston, when filing for its CVE grant in 2016, detailed a plan called Crisis Intervention of Houston. The plan encompasses an anonymous crisis hotline and training for parents and community leaders coming from over 100 local mosques and Islamic schools on the early signs of extremism (Brennan Center, n.d.).

Another key principle emphasized in the Houston CVE implementation was dialogue and open communication. This is important to many of the challenge areas identified by Tameez and Khalid, including education programs, new Muslim converts, guidance from community leaders, and partnerships with law enforcement. In religious education, “youth safe spaces” are paramount so that youth feel empowered when discussing their religious beliefs rather than marginalized (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 18). With open dialogue, educators can “debunk” the claims of terrorist groups to make them less appealing; Tameez and Khalid suggest that this dialogue take place as a community center or mosque initiative that takes place on a regular basis (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 6). Also, they urged that “parents should encourage children to view the police through a cooperative rather than adversarial lens” (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 14). During all training sessions and workshops for youth and parents, the focus area was “reinforcing lines of communications with and among families and the communities” (City of Houston, 2016: 6).

A very important aspect to note is that, while conversations described in the last paragraph take place within Islamic religious communities, the emphasis on open dialogue extends outside of it. Instead of targeting solely the Muslim population to empower youth, Tameez and Khalid

(2014: 7) suggest modeling faith education programs after those of the Islamic Networks Group that aims to “counter prejudice and discrimination against Muslim Americans by teaching about Muslim traditions and contributions in the context of America’s history and cultural diversity.” This was meant to eradicate the feeling of being targeted that may cause Muslims to feel isolated from their community in the first place. This is a highly proactive strategy that focuses not on helping disempowered youth before they turn to extremism but on preventing them from feeling disempowered in the first place.

Further, Tameez and Khalid address the systematic lack of trust and cooperation that exists between the Muslim community and law enforcement by focusing on the dialogue produced by law enforcement agencies (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 13). They warned that in emergency situations that may involve violent extremists, law enforcement should not use generalized words that “paint all community members with a broad brush” which could reinforce stereotypes and marginalization (Tameez and Khalid, 2014: 13). By shifting the focus from the Muslim community to those outside of it and their perceptions and preconceived notions of it, the concern that CVE targets a single population is placated.

In their original CVE proposal, the facilitators Tameez and Khalid (2014: 4) asserted that the challenges they sought to address that cause marginalization within the Muslim community are issues that “raise real barriers between the Muslim community and law enforcement. Breaking down these barriers is essential to community safety.” They promoted the programs by using their existing connections to contact within the community to “motivate community members to participate” and conducted interviews, meetings, and follow-up focus groups to create their holistic plan to address the community issues (Ambrozik, 2018: 14). The finished product, the Harris

County CVE plan, that focused on assisting at-risk youth and filling in gap areas within the Muslim community was met with positive feedback (Ambrozik, 2018).

The main takeaway from the Houston project is the importance of individual community leaders in facilitation of CVE programs. In the study conducted by Ambrozik, survey responses from the Houston community indicated that not all of the members who were involved in implementing the CVE programs were objectively in favor of developing CVE within the community; they participated in the programming because of the benefit they thought it would directly have on the community (Ambrozik, 2018: 17). This led to Ambrozik's conclusion that "support for CVE is neither necessary nor sufficient for participation on the micro-level" (Ambrozik, 2018: 17). This indicates that another factor must have motivated them to participate. The factor could be as simple as their personal rapport with the facilitator, in which case the emotional personal connection is more important than commitment to CVE in general. In other words, effective CVE strategies may highlight the assistance to the community that new programs will provide, as Tameez and Khalid did within their peer networks, rather than the importance of CVE. Ambrozik's analysis supports this perspective, noting that "the facilitators in Houston framed the initiative more broadly as a community resilience initiative rather than solely relying on a 'CVE' frame" (Ambrozik, 2018: 17).

Based on the literature review, communities in the US tend to be wary of CVE implementation. For this, Houston facilitating partners were careful to create plans based directly on community needs according to community leaders. One factor that Houston CVE possessed that other programs in the US, such as the Columbus programs, lack was active community stakeholder contribution (Ambrozik, 2018: 13). Houston's CVE experienced relatively more success than other programs implemented within the US (Ambrozik, 2018: 13; Hoq, 2018).

Yet, Houston's CVE program is not completely immune to criticism. The city's grant proposal claims that "protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties is of utmost importance" to the program but does not include specific information on how this will be accomplished" (Brennan Center, n.d.). Furthermore, when the grant describes its plan to train parents and religious educators of warning signs of extremism, it does not specify what these signs are (Brennan Center, n.d.). These gaps are possible entrances for the negative aspects the public associates with CVE, such as stereotyping behaviors within the Islamic community. Other methods that were aimed at helping individuals, specifically those within the school setting, "spot and prevent radicalization of youth" were negatively received by activists in the Muslim community who worried that the program would only "foment discrimination among Muslims" (Boorstein, 2015). When not executed with enough sensitivity and consideration to the Muslim community CVE "committees [can seem] like an effort to institutionalize an informant system" within the Muslim community (Boorstein, 2015).

Conclusion

Resolution 2178 was passed by the UN to address the issue of FTFs. This explicitly brought CVE strategy to the world's attention, although programs had existed in many countries already by then. Based on the different political, religious, and geographical situations that exist within differing countries, CVE programs can manifest differently. Although there are countless possible ways that CVE programs can manifest at the community level, they generally can be grouped in one of the three major categories, which are public domain, religious sector, and deradicalization strategies.

A common criticism of CVE from US communities, as addressed earlier on in this paper, is that programs are viewed as government-controlled and having ulterior motives, such as

surveillance. However, in Yemen, one of the take-home messages received by trainees was that CVE could be used as conflict resolution “at the community level to address violent extremism” (Cataldi, 2017: 15). Another trainee affirmed, similarly, that CVE added tools to repertoires of CSOs that allow them to address conflict and extremism through civil society measures (Cataldi, 2017: 15). If anything about the relationship between government and CVE can be discerned through their statements, it is that the government is, in fact, not an integral part of CVE strategy. Thus, it is viable that CVE is genuinely supposed to be a cluster of community-led initiatives rather than the federal law enforcement attempting to sneakily monitor communities.

In Yemen, the Training of Trainees (ToT) model was used to reach audiences that were not comfortable working directly with an outside, Westernized organization. Similar strategy could be used in the US in order to remain sensitive to the feelings of those who are not comfortable with direct contact from government, or even local police department. It seems that in Yemen, where the US is an obvious outside actor, the US organization took ample precaution to respect local sentiments and beliefs. As long as the US also takes ample precaution not to marginalize its own Islamic communities, it should be possible to implement successful CVE.

Evidence from the Houston programs show that framing CVE programs within communities correctly may be a necessary prerequisite in order to be met with positive feedback from community members. In Houston, facilitators secured community participation by emphasizing programs formed for the good of the community. In Yemen, programs were accepted because implementers emphasized stability and interactive participation in securing community stability. It seems that there is a stigma associated with the term CVE and that highlighting a program’s benefit to the community is less controversial than highlighting that it can combat the FTF issue. The stigma may come from the ease with which certain CVE

programs can cross the line to becoming marginalizing to strongly religious individuals.

However, with proper implementation CVE empowers and engages community members

It is also crucial to CVE's success that programs be implemented by the right facilitators. This generally means that the facilitators are active community members with strong community connections. The constructive working relationship between trainers and trainees is an important connection as well.

The goal of this assessment was to understand the general types of CVE strategy as well as under which conditions their implementation is most successful. Success is not only defined as statistical reduction in the number of radicalized violent extremists or FTFs within a community but also the positive acceptance of CVE among community members. CVE programs work best when the strategy implementation comes through trusted, prominent community figures and the programs have direct, specific goals. Understanding the positives and negatives of the programs and local implementations in these three cases can provide a general framework for designing and troubleshooting CVE programs in other countries and communities.

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