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Countering Violent Extremism: Lessons for India

Maya Mirchandani

India's Muslim community will be a key partner in the country's CVE efforts. / Maya Mirchandani

INTRODUCTION

In late 2016, India's National Investigation Agency dealt with a serious predicament. The family of a young Muslim boy from Kerala told the agency that their son, Ashfaq Majeed, was "as good as dead" to them. According to a report in *The Indian Express* on 2 December 2016, Ashfaq's father, Abdul

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Majeed, told the NIA that after sending a WhatsApp voice message to a family member, informing them that he had reached Afghanistan, where he would remain, Ashfaq had called his mother and spoken to her briefly to urge his family to join him in the "land of Islam." Abdul Majeed then told his wife to never again accept any messages or calls from the number Ashfaq had called from, and reported the call to the NIA.[1]

Today, Majeed's case is held by Indian intelligence officials as an example of effective community involvement in identifying terror suspects. However, in early investigations, the case exposed the challenges India's intelligence community regularly faces when it comes to tackling the threat of terror, specifically what is termed "Hinterland Jihadi Terrorism,"that exists outside Jammu and Kashmir. Why had no one in Ashfaq's home, circle of friends and family, or the wider community he lived in, noticed that he was getting radicalised? According to media accounts of his interrogation, Majeed was radicalised primarily via the internet. How serious a challenge is online radicalisation for India's security establishment, whether through subterranean and dangerously violent sites on the "dark net" or simply the wide availability of extremist content on social networking platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter? Is there now a need to go beyond purely strategic, law enforcement-based approaches in tackling the very real threat of terror and violence? These questions have no easy answers globally, and even fewer in India, where the threat of ideological extremism and religion-based violence is taking on new dimensions every day.

LESSONS FROM THE WEST

The West, in its fight against Islamic terror since 9/11 and the more recent threat of so-called 'lone-wolf' attackers radicalised by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) over the internet, has been forced to re-examine its approach to counterterrorism. Intelligence gathering and law enforcement have undoubtedly played their role, but in the fight against "homegrown terrorism," the United States adopted a revised strategy in 2011, under then President Barack Obama's administration, to create a multi-dimensional, multi-stakeholder approach via community networks and governmental–non-governmental collaboration, that could play a role in countering violent extremism, or CVE. In a policy paper entitled "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," the administration used the term CVE to describe initiatives aimed at reducing the spread of violent ideologies. The rationale for the CVE programme in the United States was, and continues to be, to find ways to prevent radical (Islamic) extremism from taking root in communities and prevent the recruitment of young Muslims into terrorist groups, especially Al-Qaeda and ISIS.

America's 2006 National Security Strategy had already underlined the need for long-run success against terrorism by fighting "a battle of ideas". The US government defines CVE as "efforts focused on preventing all forms of ideologically based extremist violence, to include prevention of successful recruitment into terrorist groups. It is distinct from disruptive actions which focus on stopping acts of terrorism by those who have already subscribed to violence."[2]

The decision to adopt and expand the nomenclature for some counterterrorism initiatives indicated a realisation that the military approach—effective to a certain degree on far-flung battlefields—was lacking severely when it came to tackling underlying ideologies, grievances and motivations that encourage new recruits every day at home and abroad. The programme functions under the US counterterrorism umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security, the National Counterterrorism Centre, and the Department of Justice. However, its large and often unwieldy mandate that cuts across several government departments and aid agencies, has made it difficult to be administered and monitored. To streamline it further, the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP), set up in 2015,[3] began to collaborate with other agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. The US initiative is aimed at targeting domestic, homegrown extremism and Islamic radicalism abroad through community participation and the sensitisation of law enforcement. This is done through its programmes that include investing in and/or funding development, education, healthcare, and cultural exchanges and encouraging local leaders—*imams*, political representatives, lawyers, and high-profile voices in the arts—to engage with the youth on the issue of radicalisation and its perils.

Indian Army relief camp in Kokrajhar, Assam, set up during the communal clashes between Muslims of Bangladeshi origin and Bodo tribals, in August 2012. / Maya Mirchandani

Internationally, the US government's funding of various development projects in health, education and employment via aid agencies in countries across the Middle East and Asia often come under the CVE umbrella. While some are successful, others have often been met with a deep-seated suspicion on the ground. A report by the US Task Force on the "Future of Iraq," published by the Atlantic Council in May 2017, recognises that violent extremism "flourishes in societies where state institutions are seen as oppressive, corrupt, ineffective, and illegitimate. Any long-term defeat of violent extremism in Iraq must overcome the failure of the Iraqi state to win the trust and support of wide swathes of the Iraqi population. This does not mean that a mammoth state-building effort is required, but rather that Iraqi progress on key legislative programs and reform initiatives should be seen as a critical part of an overall effort to defeat violent extremism in Iraq."[4]

Afghanistan and Pakistan,[5] two of the largest recipients of US financial and developmental aid under CVE,[6] have huge internal challenges when it comes to dealing with suspicion[7] of the West, in spite of the real, daily threat of terrorism that claim a high number of civilian lives.[8,9] According to the Security Assistance Monitor—a website that provides a citizens' guide to US security and defence assistance—Washington has provided US$122 million between 2014 and 2016 for CVE assistance in Afghanistan, over US$44 million to Pakistan, US$11 million to Nigeria, and a little over US$8 million to Somalia.[10]

The increasing threat of online radicalisation makes preventing extremism from taking root—instead of "countering" it—the singular challenge in today's world. Consequently, the term "preventing violent extremism" (PVE) has gained traction, particularly within the United Nations (UN) and European countries, many of whom have devised programmes specific to their own social fabric. While experts might look for distinctions between the two—PVE is proactive, CVE is reactive, for example—they are fairly synonymous, as both include preventative measures that aim to address structural social, economic and political grievances that lead to radicalisation.

The United Kingdom's 'Prevent' strategy is part of CONTEST, its post-9/11 counterterrorism policy. Under CONTEST, the British security and intelligence establishment is meant to "prepare" for attacks, "protect" the public, "pursue" attackers and "prevent" radicalisation. In the wake of the 2005 London bombings, the programme spent £80 million (over US$105 million) on 1,000 schemes over a period of six years after the attacks. The Prevent framework outlines three important objectives:

- Working with the ideological challenges;
- Preventing people from turning to terrorism; and
- Working with institutions and key sectors.

CRITICISMS AND CORRECTIONS

After the recent suicide bombing at the Manchester Arena that killed 22 people, the Prevent strategy came under sharp criticism for having missed the radicalisation of Salman Abedi, the British Muslim suicide bomber, and being too "soft" an approach. In the US, civil liberties groups have argued that the US government's CVE programme has become a politically correct cover for racial profiling and is based on "false premises." In a report, the New York University Law School's Brennan Center for Justice argues that ideology is not always a predictor of terrorism.[11] However, experiences in the UK and the US are seemingly different. While the new Trump administration is reviewing its CVE policy overall, the UK's top government and security officials have reiterated their intention to stay the course. On 21 August 2017, President Donald Trump outlined his policy for Afghanistan, which once again looks at sustained military intervention and calls on India to provide more economic assistance in the war-torn country. Trump reiterated America's demand that Pakistan crack down on terror groups, warning them of cutting back aid and stopping short of cutting military assistance.[12]

As the UK's law enforcement reviewed lapses, Cressida Dick, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, went on record to say that an increasing number of British Muslims were reporting in to the anti-terrorism hotline when they saw or heard something suspicious, and that at least five attacks had been stopped successfully with their help between March and July 2017.[13] British Home Secretary Amber Rudd praised the programme's good work and said it would be "uplifted". The UK's *Telegraph* newspaper quoted her as saying that it had helped stop 150 people, including 50 children, from leaving Britain to fight in Syria in 2016 alone.[14]

Australia, for its part, has its own problems with *jihadi* extremism and has tailored its CVE programme to work on a case-by-case basis, recognising that the paths to radicalisation may be different across individuals. The Australian government claims to have foiled four major terror plots since 2000 and convicted 22 people, mostly born in Australia, as a result of counterterrorism operations. Australia's CVE strategy targets homegrown radicalism, as well as threats from the South East Asian region,[15] especially Indonesia.[16] The Australian government's "Living Safe Together Grants Programme"[17] addresses "push factors" such as those with real or perceived socioeconomic grievances, ethnic/racial tensions, or government/military actions, as well as "pull factors," which are more psychological and ideological in nature and draw individuals to the path of violent extremism.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: ORTHODOXY VS. RADICALISATION

Given the proliferation of content on the internet, delinking religious orthodoxy from extremism remains a major challenge in individual states' CVE efforts. An early criticism of UK's Prevent strategy was that it had shown the tendency to club non-violent groups with extremists, controversially linking violence with religious conservatism. In the wake of the Manchester attack, the Mayor of the Greater Manchester Area had said that Prevent needed a review to address the complaints of many members of Britain's vast Muslim community that they were being "picked on".[18] However, investigations after the Manchester bombing revealed that despite concerns over Prevent alienating the very people it seeks to reach out to, and fears that it would deter Muslims from sharing information, community leaders had reported Abedi to the anti-terror hotline two years earlier, because they thought he was involved with terror activities.

The idea behind CVE not only predates the Obama years, it has also had takers outside the western world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the first amongst Middle Eastern countries to launch a wide-ranging counterterrorism campaign in 2003, two years after the 9/11 attacks. Given its leadership in the Muslim world and close alliance with the US, Saudi Arabia has been under pressure to demonstrate determination in fighting those who have "perverted" the values of peace in Islam.[19]

At that time, the Saudi government, in collaboration with the US through a joint task force, arrested and questioned thousands of Al-Qaeda suspects, captured or killed their leaders, and seized massive caches of arms. The bombing of a compound in Riyadh in May 2003, however, was a turning point in pushing a domestic anti-terror policy.

Central to its Sakinah Campaign has been the recrafting of traditional "hard" counter-terrorism strategies to include the use of unconventional, "soft" measures targeting fundamentalist ideologies that regularly create breeding grounds for violent extremism. The objective is to combat what the Saudi government calls an ideology based on "corrupted and deviant interpretations of Islam." The Ministry of Education runs school programmes that begin at early ages, warning students of the dangers of extremism. However, Saudi Arabia's PRAC (Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare) policy seeks to expand responsibility well beyond the government to private citizens, and includes counselling programmes that draw on local traditions

and religious culture to underscore both the importance given to rehabilitation for criminals and the use of religious figures in prisons. The Saudi experience indicates re-arrest rates are low: at one to two percent.[20] From this, it can be extrapolated that counselling and aftercare programmes do create an impact.

Saudi Arabia's results are encouraging other nations to adopt comparable programmes. Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have all established rehabilitation and engagement programmes. Singapore's CVE programme, run by its government, not only focuses on rehabilitation and countering ideology but also includes psychological rehabilitation and the continuous assessment of detainees. Like Saudi Arabia, their programmes for detainees include counselling by religious leaders, vocational training, and even financial support to families.

GLOBAL INTENT, SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES

During its fifth biennial review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in July 2016, the UN encouraged individual nations to expand and develop local, sub-regional and regional plans to support an overall PVE strategy and include active participation from civil societies and NGOs that engage and empower communities at the local level.[21] The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF),[22] comprising 29 founding countries and the European Union, has made the need to delink orthodoxy from radicalisation a key focus of CVE measures.

When they met in September 2016, India, too, signed on and agreed on the need to separate religion from terrorism and adopt new strategies to combat it. At over 12 percent of India's 1.3 billion people—with a tradition of Sufism and tolerance, and a history of Indo–Islamic composite culture—the community of Indian Muslims have been largely peaceful and inclusive through history. Therefore, India's realities when it comes to countering violent extremism are different and must necessarily consider the nature of social and cultural norms within India's vast Muslim community, as well as the faultlines of religion and identity that exist, sometimes violently, between Hindu and Muslim communities on the subcontinent.

At the GCTF, India pointed specifically to the need to control extremist propaganda online and its impact on radicalisation. During its intervention, India said, "Ironically, the very tools and facilities—internet and modern communications—that propel significant business and economic development are being misused for promoting terrorist activities."

CHANGING DYNAMICS: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND THE CHALLENGE OF ONLINE RADICALISATION

Unlike the West, where lone-wolf attacks by individuals who pledge allegiance to the Caliphate have become the most urgent security challenge, in India, ISIS detainees and arrests currently account for only 0.0002 percent of all terror suspects in the country so far. According to available information, the number of ISIS-related arrests stands at 90 people between January 2014 and June 2017. A total of 88 Indians or members of the Indian diaspora are believed to have joined ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and another 80 people have so far been prevented from joining the group via different means employed by agencies, including family intervention.

The figures point to two realities:

- A negligible percentage of India's Muslim population supports or subscribes to extremist, violent ideological Islam; and
- The community will likely be a critical partner in Indian CVE efforts.

Given the percentage, it is invaluable for India to adopt a formal CVE strategy without delay. The numbers are small, but the reach is spreading fast over the internet. ISIS-related arrests in the last three years come close to those of the Indian Mujahedeen (IM) and Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) over a much longer timespan. Between 2008 and 2014, 58 IM members were arrested by Indian intelligence. That number fell to two (people) during 2014 and June 2017, in the wake of increased ISIS-related arrests. As for SIMI, 30 core cadre were arrested between 1995 and 2017, along with about 100 others from "splinter groups."[23] Of the total number arrested, approximately five percent have studied in madrasas and religious schools, and just 10 *maulvis* or religious leaders have been arrested for fomenting radicalism from mosques over a 27-year period from 1990 to 2017. One reason cited for this is that a "pan-Islamic" objective that ISIS propagates is easier for Indian recruits to identify with, as opposed to Pakistan-sponsored groups that back IM and SIMI, with their primary goal to act on Pakistan's behest. The Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba have provided ideological, tactical and logistical support to the IM and SIMI since their inception.

It is interesting to note that ISIS recruits, unlike several of their predecessors who joined IM or SIMI, were all reasonably well educated and urban,[24] with no dearth of internet savvy and secure online access. This points to the need for a greater understanding of socioeconomic backgrounds of those at risk.[25]

Fishing nets in Fort Kochi. Kerala has traditionally been a religious and cultural melting pot. Today, a large number of ISIS sympathisers are being recruited from the state. / Maya Mirchandani

A news report in the *Daily Mail* highlights Uttar Pradesh as the new major breeding ground for young ISIS supporters, after southern states such as Kerala, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.[26] Communal tensions and unemployment are proving to be a combustible combination as disaffected Muslim youth are lured by romanticised ISIS videos online of life in the Caliphate and brutal retribution for those who are targeting Muslims, in India and the world.[27]

Figure 1. Drivers of Extremism in India: The Sociopolitical Climate[28]

Push Factors	Pull Factors
(Socioeconomic, Political and Cultural)	*(Individual in nature and directly impact recruitment)*
Religious/communal tension between Hindus and Muslims	Ideological: a sense of calling for those seeking a higher "purpose," sense of belonging/adventure/peer respect
Revenge and retaliation against perceived or real discrimination/ disaffection/rights violations	Romanticised pull of a "better life" under the Caliphate (specific to ISIS)
Unemployment and economic despair and poor governance	Political motivations and defending the "glory" of religion/religious identities
Breakdown of social networks/social marginalisation	Personal relationships with particular leaders, either personal or via following on the internet

Source: Author's own

A broken lantern, in the debris of a home caught in violence. / Maya Mirchandani

Any approach to successfully tackle terrorism through hard or soft measures must consider these layers of complexity that include, but also go well beyond, the simplified spectre of "Islamic Extremism." Outside of and apart from Jammu and Kashmir, security and intelligence officials in India believe drivers that can lead someone to the path of violent extremism include motivators, a cause, and logistical backup. Whether it was the Mumbai blasts of 1993, acts of terror after the 2002 riots in Gujarat, or those that took place after a series of false arrests in 2008, "push factor" motivators such as communal tensions and violence were both taken advantage of and fuelled by forces from across the border in Pakistan.

However, in the instances of those who are being influenced or recruited by ISIS, the motivators are primarily online, i.e., "pull factors" that are creating a new set of challenges for a government trying to straddle the fine line between security and personal freedoms/privacy. Before the arrival of ISIS and the group's luring of youth through their computers and cell phones (pull factors), major drivers pushing them towards violence were communal tension and the sentiment of persecution—perceived or real—fuelled by Islamophobia and profiling. In today's socially isolationist online world, internet ideologues are using the current political climate, with heightened religious tensions to fuel radicalism and thereby increase the risk of violence.[29]

The National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and intelligence agencies monitoring internet activity have recorded high volumes of traffic on such sites during times when Hindu–Muslim tensions in India have been in the news.[30] In the current political and social climate, while agencies broadly make the case that terrorism spreads because of indoctrination and violent propaganda, there is tremendous concern about the rise of such numbers in an

overall political climate of religious polarisation and tension, a tacit admission that in many instances, the radicalisation that took place did so in a context.

India's neighbourhood, too, has provided enough proof of the need for an effective regional CVE policy that tackles extremist violence online and in the real world.[31] The July 2016 attack on Dhaka's Holey Artisan Bakery, which killed 29 people, not only shook Bangladesh but was a wake-up call for India as well. Two of the five attackers—well-educated, well-off teenagers in their early 20s—were following on social media Mumbai-based Zakir Naik, the controversial Islamic preacher and founder of the Islamic Research Foundation (IRF). Another, Nibras Islam, the son of a businessman and nephew of a Bangladeshi bureaucrat, was also following a Twitter account of an Islamic State propagandist, Mehdi Masroor Biswas aka Shami Witness, arrested in Bangalore in late 2014 and facing trial for running IS propaganda. But Naik—banned in the UK and Canada for hate speech against other religions and one of 16 banned Islamic scholars in Malaysia—was wildly popular in Bangladesh through his Peace TV that aired from Dubai. While India and Bangladesh had banned the TV channel, Naik's IRF functioned relatively freely out of Mumbai. And of course, his speeches were widely distributed online.

CONCLUSION: INDIA'S CHALLENGES

Despite the clear disapproval, and reporting, of his activities by his own parents, Ashfaq Majeed's radicalisation and departure from India had been funded by a member of Naik's IRF, someone he came into contact with in his hometown. Were there any warning signs of his radicalisation at all, and if so, were they undetected, or worse, ignored? Did those in his home or community who could have picked up the signs dismiss them as the distractions of a vast, jobless youth population? Has there been such an irreparable breakdown of social networks and structures that might in the past have detected or prevented a kind of radicalisation that Majeed went through? How do societies recognise signs in those who spend their time watching videos or reading sites that spawn hate and violence in private, with devices that eliminate the need for any human contact?

The Indian government defines terrorism as "the peacetime equivalent of a war crime. An Act of Terror in India includes any intentional act of violence that causes death, injury or property damage, induces fear and is targeted against any group of people identified by their political, philosophical, racial, ethnic or any other" identity. Targets of terror can be random (chosen based on opportunity) or selective (symbolic or representative targets).

Women in Srinagar, watching with worry as clashes erupt between stone pelters and security forces on the street below. / Maya Mirchandani

Out of the 36 terror groups proscribed[32] in Schedule 1 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 14 are Islamic. These include Pakistani groups and indigenous Kashmir-based groups. The Indian government identifies four major categories of terrorism:

• Ethno-nationalist (ethnicity-led terror groups, with the intention of separating from the Indian state)

• Religious terrorism

• Left Wing Extremism (LWE) based on (Communist) economic ideology, where socio-political structures are challenged via "violent revolution".

• Narco-terrorism or drug-related violence and terror that creates illegal narco-trafficking zones, especially in Northwest India.[33]

The classifications point to a key difference between the West's, especially the US', target and implementation of CVE, which is solely directed at the largely immigrant Muslim community, and India's own concerns with different groups involved in violent extremism. This makes it imperative to devise a country-specific strategy that will address the complexities of India's religious, social, political and cultural landscape.

CVE strategies have a single key objective, i.e., to help hard counterterrorism policies through a softer approach by:

• Empowering communities and civil societies;

• Creating messaging and counter-messaging online and offline; and

- Addressing cause driving (push and pull) factors that lead people onto an extremist path.

The question of how much influence the internet has on social interaction is critical to answer. Social interaction has historically been key to community safety and security in many parts of the country. Community policing—village elders, local beat constables, urban Residents' Welfare Associations—have all, in their own ways, been at the forefront of such efforts. The Code of Criminal Procedure even has sections[34] that can be interpreted to empower such efforts at various levels. However, the internet is challenging these systems, especially in towns and cities. Many people being radicalised online go undetected before it is too late, simply because they do so in isolation, without any human contact that could alert someone in their homes or communities. India's CVE efforts need to encourage methods that help families recognise signs of radicalisation in their homes.

With the experience and frameworks of several international CVE programmes to help India devise one specifically suited to its own concerns, the challenge will also be to ensure collective political will to include non-state actors in what has traditionally been the government's work, especially to offset its complete reliance on hard security and law-enforcement mechanisms while walking the fine line between security and privacy.

When it comes to dealing with terrorism, especially in the hinterland, the government will have to overcome its hesitations and use communities and civil-society networks to help counter terror through the various methods and means available. The Andhra Pradesh police experience in dealing with violent Naxalism[35] is a lesson in engagement with an aggrieved community, thereby taking away local support that is so often available to extremists seen to be acting for a cause, underscoring the emphasis on engagement and awareness to create effective counter-narratives.

Combing operations by security forces are a regular feature of counterinsurgency operations, especially in tribal areas prone to Naxal violence. / Maya Mirchandani

Interview with Shesh Pal Vaid, Director General of Police, Jammu and Kashmir[36]

Q: Many countries have devised specific policies for countering violent extremism, or CVE, which look at using community-based efforts or softer approaches, along with hard counterterrorism strategies to try and stop radicalisation from taking place. Do you think there is scope for such initiatives in Jammu and Kashmir?

A: Absolutely. There is an urgent need for that. At the moment, we are only dealing with the situation as a law-and-order issue, but there is a requirement for other agencies to chip in and do their bit. There may be reforms in education, may be social or many others at both government and NGO levels, which can be adopted to try and save society from extreme radicalisation, especially in South Kashmir.

Q: Why is South Kashmir so much worse than other parts of the state?

A: The influence of Jama 'at is much more. I think they are playing roles that are not conducive.

Q: CRPF jawans we met on the highway tell us that there is a lot of local support for militants and that people don't report their presence. How will you deal with that mindset?

A: I think initiatives that connect the community as a whole are required. Initiatives that show people what a better future, a better healthy life, better mental health can be like.

Q: Could there be scope for the sensitisation of the police and security forces in this regard?

A: In my view, sensitisation will help; the forces that come from outside have a preconceived view about Kashmir. But it will be better if it is done in a more organised way. We have a giant system of training the local police, paramilitary and CRPF, once they are inducted in J&K.

While broadly avoiding the US' narrow focus on Islamic radicalism, India can still adopt some of its methodologies:

- Use local police and law enforcement to discourage or actively prevent those at risk of engaging in terrorism.

- Sensitise wider communities about racial, linguistic and cultural differences and the need for harmony amongst them.

- Collaborate with NGOs, schools, community centres and religious organisations.[37]

UNESCO studies have shown that early childhood intervention in schools goes a long way in ensuring that youth stay on course and are not swayed by extremist thought. However, in an increasingly networked world, where radicalisation is now taking place globally, effective counter messaging must have a global outlook, with a local impact. Counter strategies in the Middle East, that target all at risk-including Indian migrant workers who find work in those countries, must also reach the workers' hometowns in India- where his or her community interactions are still strong.

The need for local communities to be networked into the larger CVE effort—via social media, better communication between all stakeholders on the ground, and those in government—is a key imperative today. In this regard, a more detailed study is invaluable, but the role of women as agents in an effective CVE policy in India is crucial. Women as educators and women as partners in development, health, and politics go a long way in ensuring a vocabulary of peace.[38] Any government would be remiss in not involving them in CVE efforts.

Making things even more complicated for India's security establishment is the cracking open of religious fault-lines over the issue of cow protection and slaughter, something Prime Minister Modi has spoken out against.[39]

As concerns grow over CVE/PVE strategies becoming a euphemism for racial profiling and surveillance in the West, the UK is making small attempts to address complaints of Islamophobia and go beyond just Islamic radicalism to include Neo-Nazi groups as well. Last December, British Neo-Nazi group National Action was banned by the Home Secretary under Britain's terrorism laws. Amber Rudd called the group racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic. The proscribing of such groups is important, given that intelligence agencies around the world now recognise Islamophobia as a key driver of extremism.[40]

In India, too, where religious polarisation and communal or ethnic tensions feed fear and radicalisation, community leaders still have a great role to play in areas where internet penetration is low. Local religious figures, artists and entrepreneurs can be enlisted to spread awareness about the dangers of radicalisation and underscore the "faithlessness" of violence, and the consequences of following such a path. The government—local, state and central—can identify several such individuals across the country and enlist their support.

Given India's multireligious, multilingual and multicultural social fabric, it is imperative for CVE efforts to address specific local considerations and

grievances. Any successful effort will, therefore, require governments—and indeed all stakeholders—to accept the reality that terrorism and extremist violence in India is spread across religions and ethnicities. A narrow approach will only address a part of the problem, not its many nuances. ⦿RF

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maya Mirchandani is a Senior Fellow at Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

ENDNOTES

1. "Kerala youth calls up mother, says he is in Afghanistan following 'true Islam'." http://indianexpress.com/article/india/nia-zakir-naik-kerala-youth-calls-up-mother-says-he-is-in-afghanistan-4406002/.

2. See "A Comprehensive US Government Approach to Countering Violent Extremism."US Department of Homeland Security. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/ default/files/ publications/US%20Government%20Approach%20to%20CVE-Fact%20Sheet.pdf.

3. "OCP implements a full range of partnerships to support and enhance efforts by faith leaders, local government officials, and communities to prevent radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist organisations. OCP also provides these stakeholders with training and technical assistance to develop CVE prevention programmes in support of resilient communities. OCP leads the department's CVE mission with the following objectives: https://www.dhs.gov/ countering-violent-extremism#."

4. US policy in Iraq is undermined by Iraqi perceptions that US engagement is superficial and transitory. Both ISIS and Iran promote the idea that the US cannot be relied on for a long-term partnership.

    http://www.publications.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ Future-of-Iraq-Task-Force-web-0531.pdf.

5. In February 2014, the Pakistan government's Ministry of Interior issued its first integrated National Internal Security Policy (2014–18), which acknowledges the CVE role of the civilian government, the military, civil-society stakeholders (including religious leaders, educational institutions and the media), Pakistanis living overseas, and the international community.

6. Pakistan continues to receive financial assistance from the US, despite consistent, worried commentary in Washington over its being a safe haven for Al Qaeda and the Taliban, as well as terror groups that operate against India.

7. In July 2012, the New York Times reported that the campaign to eradicate polio in Pakistan had fallen victim to the CIA's decision to send a polio vaccination team into the Bin Laden compound in Abbottabad to gather DNA samples. The report says angry villagers chased legitimate vaccinators out, accusing them of being spies for the US.http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/10/health/cia-vaccine-ruse-in-pakistan-may-have-harmed-polio-fight.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

8. "CSOs find it difficult to engage in CVE activities as the sociopolitical climate in Pakistan becomes increasingly dented by anti-Americanism. There is a perception among many Pakistanis that CVE programmes are conducted only at the behest of the US as part of a broader western agenda to interfere in Pakistan's affairs."

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Empowering-Pakistans-Civil-Society-to-Counter-Violent-Extremism-English.pdf.

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

10. Afghanistan and Pakistan were top recipients for requested aid under CVE assistance between 2014–16. http://securityassistance.org/fact_sheet/us-countering-violent-extremism-aid?gclid=Cj0KCQjwh_bLBRDeARIsAH4ZYEO_ JcbakTQ3Dw6y QmPHsXmV06w2w2L-PAT8oBhmJ71Oq_OWbRSUnjoaAonXEALw_wcB.

11. "New documents obtained via Freedom of Information Act requests by the Brennan Center for Justice suggest these fears were well-founded. In an internal memo, officials at the FBI—one of the main agencies involved in CVE—acknowledged that engagement with radical ideas is not a clear predictor of terrorist acts. And, in another document, the Bureau described CVE as a means of strengthening its 'investigative [and] intelligence gathering' abilities, which seems to contradict the Obama administration's claims that CVE is not about law enforcement." https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/ countering-violent-extremism/519822/.

    https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Brennan%20Center%20CVE%20Report.pdf.

12. "We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars; at the same time, they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting." Mr Trump said on 21 August 2017 at Fort Myers in a speech outlining his administration's Afghanistan and South Asia Policy: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/21/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-and-south-asia.

13. "Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Cressida Dick, told a radio show that she gets more information now from Muslim communities than we ever have on the antiterrorist hotline. However, given recent examples of people who've carried out attacks or are violent extremists who are home-grown or may have travelled or been influenced by someone overseas but are living in our communities, the UK needs more people to talk to the police. The comments came in the wake of attacks onFinsbury Park, London Bridge, and Westminster. Lone-wolf terrorist Khalid Masood rammed into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge in March before stabbing a policeman outside Parliament." http://www.standard.co.uk/ news/crime/five-terror-attacks-stopped-in-london-over-past-12-weeks-some-with-just-minutes-to-spare-met-police-a3587781.html.

14. Despite criticism over its failure to stop the Manchester attack, and concern expressed by British Muslims over fuelling surveillance, profiling and Islamophobia, British Home Secretary Amber Rudd defended the Prevent programme in the British press. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/anti-terror-prevent-programme-controversial/

15. "Indonesia, Australia host counterterrorism meeting to address rising threat of Islamic militancy." http://www.firstpost.com/world/indonesia-australia-host-counter-terrorism-meeting-to-address-rising-threat-of-islamic-militancy-3869551.html.

16. In May 2016, the Abu Dhabi based Hedayah Center's report on "Countering Violent Extremism in South East Asia" highlighted the need for regional approaches. Participants suggested that South East Asians finding religious identities rooted in localised, contextualised Islam could be one way to counter the violent extremist claim of being "the only pure" form of Islam. http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-2792016102253.pdf

17. The Countering Violent Extremism Unit in the Australian Attorney General's Department supports a comprehensive and coordinated strategy across government, and develops initiatives to address extremist influences before these influences threaten Australia's security. https://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/pages/home.aspx.

18. The UK government's strategy to counter Islamist extremism is affecting the discussion of terrorism, the UN's special rapporteur on the right to Freedom of Assembly, Maina Kiai, has said. Attempts to identify and counter Islamist extremism through the Prevent programme had "created unease and uncertainty around what can be legitimately discussed in public." Critics of PREVENT believe it is counterproductive and discriminates against Muslims, while others have said there is no clear way to measure its effectiveness. https://www.theguardian.com/ politics/2016/apr/21/government-prevent-strategy-promoting-extremism-maina-kiai.

19. Fighting radical religious beliefs and extremist ideology in Saudi Arabia is no easy task, given that politics and government are viewed through the prism of religious practice. The Saudi government has been forced to confront the perversion of faith that foments radicalismand separate it from religious conservatism and orthodoxy. http://www.mepc.org/combating-extremism-brief-overview-saudi-arabias-approach.

20. The increasing use of unconventional, "soft" measures to combat violent extremism in Saudi Arabia is bearing positive results, leading others in the region, including the US in Iraq, to adopt a similar approach. Roughly 3,000 prisoners have participated in Saudi Arabia's rehabilitation campaign. Saudi authorities claim a rehabilitation success rate of 80 to 90 percent, having re-arrested only 35 individuals for security offenses. http://carnegieendowment.org/ 2008/09/22/saudi-arabia-s-soft-counterterrorism-strategy-prevention-rehabilitation-and-aftercare-pub-22155.

21. The UN General Assembly Resolution 70/291. (The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review). Adopted on 1 July 2016, it "recognises the role of the regional organisations, structures and strategies in combating terrorism and encourages those entities to enhance interregional dialogue and cooperation and consider using best practices developed by other regions in their fight against terrorism, as appropriate, taking into account their specific regional and national circumstances. It encourages member states, UN entities, regional and subregional organisations, and relevant actors to consider instituting mechanisms to involve the youth in the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance, and intercultural and interreligious dialogue and develop, as appropriate, an understanding of respect for human dignity, pluralism and diversity, including, as appropriate, through education programmes, that could discourage their participation in acts of terrorism, violent extremism conducive to terrorism, violence, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination. The resolution also encourages member states to empower youth through the promotion of media and information literacy by including youth in decision-making processes and considering practical ways to include them in the development of relevant programmes and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism. It urges member states to take effective measures, in conformity with international law, to protect young people affected or exploited by terrorism or violent extremism conducive to terrorism."

22. The GCTF was set up in September 2011 to focus on capacity-building and countering violent extremism. The aim is to increase the capability of countries to address terrorist threats within their own borders and in their region.

23. Author interviews with members of India's security and intelligence community.

24. Data accessed by Hindustan Times newspaper shows about 70 percent of 152 Indians arrested, detained or counselled for links to IS were from middle and upper-middle

classes, with half of them holding graduate degrees and 23 percent completing their masters. Only a quarter of them had religious degrees. In contrast, an overwhelming majority of 645 terrorism suspects interrogated between 2000 and 2014, before the rise of IS, was from poor families. More than 90 percent of them did not complete school, and their trigger for radicalisation was mostly perceived victimhood at home, not a desire for global jihad. http://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/is-snares-mostly-educated-young-men-from-india/story-jAQapsm9f1YJs4YMTY8a7I.html.

25. "Facebook and Twitter are patronised for exchanging trivialities, but there is a large segment of people who use the internet for less peaceful ends. There are groups and chat rooms that entrench radical positions in individuals. Those then sometimes translate to terrorist activity." Nehchal Sandhu's keynote address during a workshop on "Realities of Terrorism in India." https://www.thequint.com/india/2015/09/24/why-over-30-indians-chose-baghdadis-isis-over-hafiz-saeeds-let.

26. In 2016, according to home ministry data, the NIA arrested 36 radicalised IS supporters, while the state police in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu arrested 18 IS supporters. http://www.livemint.com/ Politics/ZIT3LeDi Dnit80XPF9LpHN/Social-media-apps-radicalization-tools-for-Islamic-State.html.

27. About 15–20 youths are being de-radicalised by the UP Anti-Terrorism Squad, while over 100 sympathisers are under surveillance from various security agencies. The reports come days after state police gunned down a suspected ISIS-inspired home-grown terrorist in Lucknow during an operation that lasted about 13 hours. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-4302620/Uttar-Pradesh-breeding-ground-ISIS-recruits.html#ixzz4og9P6LnK.

28. "Structural 'push' factors create conditions that foster the rise or spread in appeal of violent extremism... often work indirectly and in conjunction with other variables. There has been an under-emphasis on 'pull' factors and the role of human agency." http://www.cipe.org/publications/detail/drivers-violent-extremism.

29. One example is of ISIS member Mohammad Shafi Armar alias Yusuf al-Hindi, who recruits people by sending them a message after tracking the activity of a particular Facebook page. Intelligence inputs reveal a skype account is then created to send messages and conduct discussions on instances of anti-Muslim acts of violence.

30. *Such traffic peaked during 23–29 July 2015, coinciding with the hanging of 1993 Mumbai bombings convict Yakub Memon.

    *More people logged into jihadist websites from India between 17 and 23 April this year, around the time as a controversy over the National Investigation Agency softening its terrorism charges against people linked to Hindu radical groups. http://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/is-snares-mostly-educated-young-men-from-india/story-jAQapsm9f1YJs4YMTY8a7I.html.

31. The Global Terrorism Index of 2016 classified South Asia as the second region most affected by terror globally, with Afghanistan, Pakistan and India dealing with the highest impact of terror. http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf.

32. List of Banned Terrorist Organisations Under Section 35 of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (As on 30 June 2015). http://mha.nic.in/bo.

33. Schedule 1 of India's Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) lists 36 terrorist organisations proscribed by the Indian state. http://arc.gov.in/8threport.pdf.

34. Sections 37 to 39 of India's CrPC refer to the public's role in assisting magistrates and law enforcement, give information regarding offences as well as aid those enforcing a warrant.

35. "The success of Andhra Pradesh in containing the Naxalite problem cannot merely be attributed to the military one-upmanship the police enjoyed over the Maoists, but on a comprehensive strategy encompassing military tactics supported by a successful surrender and rehabilitation package." http://www.thehindu.com/ todays-paper/tp-national/success-of-ap-model-in-containing-naxalism/ article3171323.ece.

36. Interview with the author at Jammu and Kashmir Police Headquarters in Srinagar on 27 June 2017.

37. The Australian government's Living Safe Together Grant Programme is focused on strengthening community-based organisations to do two things: "identify and disengage individuals from extremist ideology, and deliver services such as employment support, counselling and mentoring to those who could be susceptible or vulnerable to such recruitment."

38. Including women and girls and gender mainstreaming improves the design, implementation, and evaluation of CVE efforts. It brings additional resources by promoting the unique and significant roles of women and girls in CVE. It also ensures that CVE efforts counter female radicalisation and the various ways women and girls are involved in violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Comprehensive approaches to CVE should also consider how violent extremism and counterterrorism impact women and girls differently and give a fuller picture of security concerns, including within those communities where radicalisation is taking place and where more engagement may be sought. Family and community relationships are critical determinants in the process of radicalisation, and both women and men are part of that dynamic process. https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework% 20Documents/A/GCTF-Good-Practices-on-Women-and-CVE.pdf.

39. At Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in June 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi criticised vigilantes involved in violence in the name of cow protection. He said India is the land of non-violence, and we must not forget this. The statement came on a day a man was beaten to death by a Hindu mob in Jharkhand on suspicion that he was carrying beef in his vehicle.

40. There are currently 70 organisations proscribed under the act. The majority are Islamist groups. A further 14 organisations in Northern Ireland were proscribed under previous legislation. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/neo-nazi-national-action-ban-home-secretary-amber-rudd-terror-laws-a7470371.html.