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# The Relevance Of Militant Islamist Ideology In Crafting Countering Violent Extremism Policy In The U.S.

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**THE RELEVANCE OF MILITANT ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY IN  
CRAFTING COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM POLICY IN THE U.S.**

A Masters Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of  
Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Defense and Strategic Studies

By

Leena Carmenates

May 2016

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**ABSTRACT**

Militant Islamist ideology and the level of attention and reaction it merits from the United States government has been the point of much contention and debate within both the academic and policy communities. The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the relevance of militant Islamist ideology in crafting and implementing the emerging United States policy of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Militant Islamist ideology provides its adherents with a strong sense of identity, motivation towards a seemingly worthy cause, and an all-encompassing and simplistic worldview. This ultimately points to the importance of engaging with the Muslim community, careful and tactful use of law enforcement, and efforts to minimize Islamophobia in the implementation of the U.S. CVE policy. Chapter One provides a brief overview of militant Islamist ideology, with particular emphasis on how it facilitates identity and what that means in a broader, socio-psychological sense. Chapter Two describes existing CVE programs in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the emerging programs in the U.S as well as the challenges recognized by each program. These programs are then assessed according to the lessons learned in Chapter One in order to advise ways in which U.S. CVE policy can effectively address militant Islamist ideology. To date, there is little certain or validated about how to effectively carry out these programs, due to the fact that they are all the first of their kind.

**KEYWORDS:** countering violent extremism, CVE, ideology, Islam, identity

This abstract is approved as to form and content

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For my Mother, your strength is what got me through this.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Assessing the Relevance of Militant Islamist Ideology .....	7
Overview of Militant Islamist Ideology.....	8
Determining the Relevance of Militant Islamist Ideology.....	21
Chapter Two: Overview of CVE Policies in the UK, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. ....	43
UK’s <i>Prevent</i> Strategy .....	44
Saudi Arabia’s PRAC .....	53
United States .....	58
Conclusions.....	68
Chapter Three: Conclusions and Policy Recommendations.....	71
Bibliography .....	76
Appendix.....	80

## INTRODUCTION

Militant Islamist ideology and the level of attention and reaction it merits from the United States government has been the point of much contention and debate within both the academic and policy communities. The purpose of this thesis is to address the question of whether or not militant Islamist ideology ‘matters’ and posit what that means for the emerging United States Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policy. In doing so, this thesis will argue that militant Islamist ideology does ‘matter’ because it provides its adherents with a strong sense of identity, motivation towards a seemingly worthy cause, and an all-encompassing and simplistic worldview. For the emerging U.S. policy in CVE, this hypothesis ultimately points to the importance of engaging the Muslim community, the civil and carefully calculated use of law enforcement, and efforts to minimize Islamophobia. Chapter One provides a brief overview of militant Islamist ideology, with particular emphasis on how it facilitates identity and what that means in a broader, socio-psychological sense. Chapter Two describes the existing CVE programs in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the emerging programs in the U.S, including some challenges recognized by each program. These programs are then assessed according to the lessons learned in Chapter One in order to advise ways in which U.S. CVE policy can effectively address militant Islamist ideology. The U.S. CVE policy is in its infancy, with only three pilot programs having been established, and as it moves forward it is important to do so with informed and tactful precision; this thesis aims to provide useful insight and suggestions in that forward movement.

The policy initiative of CVE emerged as a result of the realization that military operations alone will not defeat the terrorism we face today and as part of the wider strategic objective of countering terrorism by going beyond military measures to address the underlying roots of terrorism.<sup>1</sup> A flurry of research projects have sought to explore and prove what is at the root of terrorism in order to foster an appropriate policy response that sufficiently addresses it. The contestants for the root causes ranges from social, economic, political, and religious factors, or any combination thereof. As such, CVE programs have responded in kind, utilizing social, economic, political, and historical contexts in order to holistically address the instances in which violence can arise. Generally speaking, CVE aims to produce counter narratives that challenge extremist and violent extremist messages using a wide range of activities such as public diplomacy, social and educational outreach programs, and targeted government campaigns. Furthermore, approaches to CVE also aim to combine hard and soft powers.<sup>2</sup>

Multiple CVE programs have been developed and implemented across the world, and although some programs are more mature than others, such as the UK and Saudi Arabia programs mentioned here, they are all the first of their kind. CVE programs generally recognize that there are multiple underlying causes, although the degree to which each program favors one cause over the others, as well as the types of responses it implements to address them, differs from program to program. Such ambiguity in approach is largely due to the fact that this is uncharted territory—there is no solid

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<sup>1</sup> Diane DiEuliis, “Preface,” In “Countering Violence Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies,” 9, edited by Laurie Fenstermacher and Todd Leventhal. Air Force Research Laboratory, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government Department of Defence, Defence Science and Teachonology Organisation, “Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review,” by Minerva Nasser Eddine et al, DSTO TR 2522 (Edinburgh, South Australia), 18.

evidence, neither in research nor in practice, of how to successfully implement such programs.<sup>3 4</sup> As such, those tasked with crafting CVE programs are faced with many challenges, including deciding what proposed causes to address and how, how to effectively measure the success of the programs, and how to accurately identify and target the appropriate individuals and communities.<sup>5</sup> This thesis argues that, as one of the proposed underlying causes, ideology should not be dismissed, as some would argue, but rather carefully considered.

Much of the debate surrounding whether or not militant Islamist ideology is a cause of Islamist terrorism, and therefore is or is not relevant to crafting CVE policy, is concerned with what militant Islamist ideology is and where it came from. Because militant Islamist ideology is religiously based, this has led to a heated back-and-forth regarding the amount of blame the religion of Islam deserves for producing the ideology.<sup>6</sup> Those fixated on the fact that militant Islamist ideology is religiously based often propose that it must be challenged on its own religious terms in order to be defeated.<sup>7</sup> However, this thesis argues that it is not militant Islamist ideology itself that needs to be focused on,

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<sup>3</sup> Robert B. Deardoff, "Countering Violent Extremism: The Challenge and the Opportunity," Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Amy Zalman, "Countering Violent Extremism: Beyond Words." The EastWest Institute, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> DiEuliis, "Preface," In "Countering Violence Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies," 7.

<sup>6</sup> Tawfik Hamid, "A Strategic Plan to Defeat Radical Islam," 74, In "Countering Violence Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies," 7, edited by Laurie Fenstermacher and Todd Leventhal. Air Force Research Laboratory, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Emman el-Badawy et al, "Inside the Jihadi Mind," Centre on Religion & Politics, The Tony Blair Foundation, 2015, p. 4.

but rather what militant Islamist ideology provides its adherents.<sup>8</sup> Although there is room for the argument that militant Islamist ideology needs to be confronted on a religious level, such a task is best left to the Muslim community and its clerics; the U.S. is not equipped, legally or theologically, to challenge militant Islamist ideology and its leaders.<sup>9</sup> Instead, by looking at what militant Islamist ideology provides its adherents, which this thesis identifies to be a strong sense of self-identity and purpose, policy makers can work to develop alternative, non-violent means by which similar notions can be achieved.

A large part of CVE-related activities and programs is raising awareness of the process of radicalization and how to recognize symptoms of this process.<sup>10</sup> Radicalization can be referred to as the process by which individuals develop extreme views, which may or may not include a turn towards violence.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that there are multiple stages of what has been called the radicalization process toward militant action, as will be demonstrated by the various CVE programs described in Chapter Two.<sup>12</sup> Although there is no agreed-upon-exact process, the existence of multiple stages is generally accepted among scholars. Essentially, there are the beginning, middle, and end stages, each of which merit a different response; someone who displays passive sympathy towards

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<sup>8</sup> Dipak K. Gupta, "Tracking the Spread of Violent Extremism," 46-47, in "Countering Violent Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies," edited by Laurie Fenstermacher and Todd Leventhal. Air Force Research Laboratory, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> DiEuliis, "Preface," In "Countering Violence Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies," 5.

<sup>10</sup> William S. Combes, "Assessing Two Countering Violent Extremism Programs" Saudi Arabia's PRAC and the United Kingdom's Prevent Strategy," *Small Wars Journal* 2013, (hyperlink).

<sup>11</sup> Tom Rieger, "Not All Radicals Are The Same: Implications for Counter-Radicalization Strategy," 29, edited by Laurie Fenstermacher and Todd Leventhal. Air Force Research Laboratory, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Haniff bin Hassan and Kenneth G. Pereire. "An Ideological Response to Combating Terrorism—The Singapore Perspective." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 17, No. 4 (December 2006): 462.

radical Islamist ideas should not be imprisoned in the way that someone actively supporting those ideas would.<sup>13</sup> Instead, it is believed, that those in the ‘beginning’ stages of radicalization warrant more of a social response rather than a law enforcement one. Considering this, this thesis is primarily concerned with the ‘beginning’ stages of radicalization, in which the ideas and sentiments of the Islamist ideology are about to or have recently taken root in an individual. This focus on the beginning stages is due to the fact that the U.S. is not currently faced with fully radicalized communities that actively support Islamist terrorism, such as with communities in the UK, but rather with the task of preventing that situation entirely.<sup>14</sup> As such, this thesis is concerned with arguing for the importance of militant Islamist ideology in formulating an effective CVE policy such that the radicalization of communities, and thereby acts of Islamist terrorism, are successfully prevented.

Concerning ideology, despite much discourse over its definition and for the sake of brevity, this thesis regards ideology to be a set of ideas that make up and legitimize the beliefs, goals, and motivations of an individual or group.<sup>15</sup> In this particular case, the ideology being discussed happens to be religiously based; however, many ideologies are not. The term ‘militant Islamist ideology’ has been purposefully selected over other variations that include the terms ‘Islamic’ and various renditions of ‘jihad’ such as ‘radical Islamic ideology’ or ‘jihadist ideology’; this choice has been made to convey the distinction between the religion of Islam and militant Islamist ideology and the classic,

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<sup>13</sup> Rieger, “Not All Radicals Are The Same: Implications for Counter-Radicalization Strategy,” in “Countering Violent Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies,” 25.

<sup>14</sup> Gupta, “Tracking the Spread of Violent Extremism,” in “Countering Violent Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies,” 52.

<sup>15</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso Books, 2007).

linguistic definitions of jihad versus the ideology's definition of jihad. The ideology in question only bears a portion of the concepts in the religion of Islam and therefore cannot be accurately described as 'Islamic';<sup>16</sup> therefore, 'Islamist' is used in reference to those who believe in and support political Islam. The modifier 'militant' is used to specify those Islamists who tend to use violence as a means to achieve their goals. This violence is often referred to as 'jihad;' however, as militant Islamist ideology only represents a portion of the religion, the ideology's use of 'jihad' only represents part of the concept of jihad.<sup>17</sup> Further discussion on this matter is placed in Appendix A.

Furthermore, in discussing the arguments for and against the significance of ideology, there are occasions in which the words 'religion' and 'ideology' are used interchangeably. This may be confusing given the just-mentioned effort to separate the religion of Islam from militant Islamist ideology; however, in the instances where 'religion' is used in place of 'ideology,' it is used in reference to religion as a general concept, rather than the specific religion of Islam. As a general concept, religion can serve as a pre-established set of ideas that can be used to create an ideology, or as an ideology. Thus, the desired distinction between Islam and militant Islamist ideology is maintained; however, a connection between the general concept of religion and ideology is recognized.

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<sup>16</sup> Indeed, what exactly can be deemed 'Islamic' is debatable in many instances, as the Muslim community does not have an authoritative body to make such decisions such as the Papacy in Catholicism.

<sup>17</sup> Maher Hathout, *Jihad vs. Terrorism*, (Los Angeles: Multimedia Vera International), 17-20.

## **CHAPTER ONE: ASSESSING THE RELEVANCE OF MILITANT ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY**

This chapter will briefly delineate militant Islamist ideology and its sources in order to make the argument that the ideology does matter and explain why. This is a topic of much contention in both the policy and academic communities. There are those who argue that Islamist terrorism is simply the most recent strain of ideological terrorism and other socio-political factors matter more; then, there are those who argue militant Islamist ideology matters because of its religious nature, causing its adherents to be particularly violent because they believe they are divinely sanctioned to do so. Both sides of the argument are compelling, well sourced, and likely correct in their own ways; however, after delineating both arguments, the case will be made that is important to consider when crafting CVE policy, but not because it is religious, or Islamic, in nature, but because, as an ideology, it provides its potential and current members with a strong sense of identity, a cause to believe in and fight for, and a simple explanation and solution for all that is wrong in the world—all of which can be difficult to find and obtain in an ever globalized and technological world. As such, understanding this ideology is crucial, not just for the sake of understanding it, but also for the sake of understanding what its adherents believe they are obtaining in order to find and provide alternative, non-violent methods to achieve similar concepts and stem the tide of Islamist terrorism.

## Overview of Militant Islamist Ideology

In the aftermath of 9/11, Americans were reeling trying to understand what reasons those men had for killing three thousand innocent civilians in a seemingly unprovoked attack. “The list of explanations offered by analysts and scholars was long and varied—U.S. policies in the Middle East (most especially America’s support for Israel), U.S. arrogance, imperialism (cultural, political, and economic), and the poverty and oppression endemic in many Arab countries were all blamed as the root causes for the attacks,” other explanations turned to the simple existence of the United States and its characteristics—the freedoms, democracy, power, and wealth of the United States—as reason for the attacks. However valid and relevant any of these explanations may be, the only explanation that’s worth understanding when seeking to counter it, is the explanation provided by the assailants themselves.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the following section will briefly provide an overview of that explanation, as explained and viewed by the assailants.

While it is arguably incorrect to equate terrorism with Islam, it would also be incorrect to say Islam has nothing to do with the militant Islamist movement;<sup>19</sup> through a largely selective process, Islam provides the militant Islamist movement with seemingly valid religious ammunition from which it builds its ideological arsenal. As the analogy suggests, the ideology’s developers and advocates only select the pieces of Islam that are conducive to their desired strategy of peace through warmongering; “the jihadis play fast and loose with both historical fact and traditional religious interpretation, in order to

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<sup>18</sup> Mary R Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

understand their past as they believe it must be understood,” and “to justify whatever actions they wish.”<sup>20</sup> Through this selective process, they have created, and continue to perpetuate, a neatly packed ideology that explains all of history, the future, and the answers to their perceived ailments, which justifies their violence. In a nutshell, militant Islamist ideology calls for the relentless pursuit of divinely sanctioned violence in order to dislodge Western civilization as leader of the world and right all the wrongs it has caused; namely the demise of a peaceful and just Islamic society for the sake of the democratic, capitalistic, and godless rule of men.<sup>21</sup>

A fundamental concept to understand and accept, for the sake of argument, is that the ultimate goal of militant Islamists is peace. Recognizing and temporarily accepting this notion will open the doors to truly understanding militant Islamist ideology and its appeal. The catch here, of course, is that the notion of peace is subjective; what peace means to one entity may be the complete opposite of what it means for another. For the purposes of understanding the current issue at hand, it must be fundamentally declared that peace, in the mind of militant Islamists, is universal acceptance of Islam, and more specifically, the creation of an Islamic world. Thus, the militant Islamist way of war is actually, in their eyes, the way to peace.

**Reliance on Divine Sources.** Militant Islamists base their ideology and methods of warfare on the divine sources of Islam—the Quran, hadith, and sunna.<sup>22</sup> As described by Pakistani General S.K. Malik, the Quran is a complete, perfect, and heavenly revelation sent down by God that is “an unlimited reservoir

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<sup>20</sup> Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, 7-8; 53.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> While it may seem that parts of this section are an exegesis of Islam and its sources, such explanations are necessary in order to understand the issue at hand.

of knowledge, wisdom, science, logic, light and guidance for mankind till Eternity;” it is “perpetual and never-ending and free from all forms of mutilations, modifications, additions and subtractions.”<sup>23</sup> Mary Habeck, Adjunct Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University, extensively explains militant Islamist ideology (though she refers to it as jihadist ideology) and its foundations as viewed by its adherents in her book *Knowing the Enemy*. While many of the concepts she explains are universally accepted by all Muslims, she focuses on how militant Islamists use those concepts to pursue their militant and political agendas. Regarding the sources of Islam, she states, “because the sacred texts are unchanging—and unchangeable—Islam, the Shari’a, and, by extension, jihadist ideology, can never be altered.”<sup>24</sup> Essentially, at any point in time, the tenets of Islam will always be the same and will always stand true, unlike secular codes of law that allow for amendments and abolishment.

Habeck explains that the Quran and its message are also believed to be universal. “Islamic jurists believe that the Torah and Gospels were sent down for a particular people at a particular time, while the Quran is for all of humanity throughout all of time.”<sup>25</sup> This is why Muhammad was sent as the last prophet, or the seal of the prophets; “that Muhammad was the last prophet means as well that there will be no more divine revelation to alter or adapt Islam to fit in the modern world. It is, rather, the world that must be changed to reflect the Quran.”<sup>26</sup> Sayyid Qutb, one of the pioneers and most renowned militant Islamist theorists, describes this notion in saying, “According to the

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<sup>23</sup> S. K. Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War*. (Lahore: Wajidalis, 1979), 4-5.

<sup>24</sup> Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Islamic concept, the whole universe has been created by God. The universe came into existence when God willed it, and then he ordained certain natural laws that it follows and according to which all its various parts operate harmoniously.”<sup>27</sup>

Altogether, the sources of Islam, and Islam itself, are seen as divine, perfect, unchanging, and universal. While most, if not all, Muslims would likely agree with these notions to one degree or another, the selective approach taken by the militant Islamists regarding these notions creates far-reaching and violent implications for their ideology and actions. First, because Islam is universal and unchanging, that means its stories and lessons are seen as archetypes that are applicable in every instance—past, present, and future—in every part of the world; “the stories, individuals, and nations described in the Quran are archetypes that express eternal truths about the nature of good and evil,” and “within the Quran are the secrets of the future as well as the past and its pages hold the knowledge necessary to understand the plans and intentions of the Muslims’ enemies.”<sup>28</sup>

For example, the stories of battle victories in the ancient past “foretell the victory of the ummah and the final defeat of the unbelievers.”<sup>29</sup> Two specific archetypes often used by militant Islamists in such fashion are the stories of the Battle of Badr and the Battle of the Trench. The former was the first victory of Muhammad and the Muslims against unbelievers and the latter was a battle in which severely outnumbered Muslim forces held out against their enemies; both of which, in the eyes of the militant Islamists, convey the message that victory is promised to Muslims so long as they have faith in

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<sup>27</sup> Jim Lacey, *The Canons of Jihad: Terrorist's Strategy for Defeating America*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 26.

<sup>28</sup> Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

God, persevere through hardship and persecution, and fight the unbelievers if outnumbered.<sup>30</sup> Another example, regarding foretelling the intentions of enemies:

A jihadist sheikh, discussing the reaction to September 11, especially the war in Afghanistan and reports that the U.S. government was considering an attack on Arabia, said in an interview, “Many analysts and observers inside and outside America were astonished by the ridiculous justifications... However one group of observers was actually not surprised. This is the group of Islamic thinkers that examine the world affairs and the international developments and events in light of the Holy Quran... Fourteen centuries ago, Allah Most Great, revealed what is in their hearts and warned us from becoming allies with them and He assigned us to call them to the path of Allah and to perform Jihad against them and not to take them as intimate friends and allies.”<sup>31</sup>

Second, because Islam is all encompassing and the only way to find peace, government by any other means other than Islam and its sacred sources, particularly by man, is unjust and seen as slavery. This implication stems from the first and most important tenet of Islam, *tawhid*, or the unity of God. This tenet is clearly portrayed by the *shahada*, which is the creed uttered by every Muslim that marks the beginning of their faith. This declaration of faith says, “there is no God but God, and Muhammad is the prophet of God.” This forms the basis of Islamic thinking in stating that there is no other supreme entity other than God. “Militant Islamists have redefined this central belief and given it an all-embracing significance.”<sup>32</sup>

Firstly, the unity and supremacy of God means that he is the only being who deserves worship, and thus, he is the sole ruler of the world. Qutb said, “people should devote their entire lives in submission to God, should not decide any affair on their own,

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<sup>30</sup> Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Chapter 4.

but must refer to God's injunctions concerning it and follow them."<sup>33</sup> However, as Habeck explains, this proper relationship between humanity and the divine has been overturned by the dominion of man over man. Given this, Qutb contends, "any system in which the final decisions are referred to human beings, and in which the sources of all authority are human, defiles human beings by designating others than God as lords over men... Those who have usurped the authority of God... are oppressing God's creatures," and "we reject them all, as indeed they are retrogressive and in opposition to the direction toward which Islam intends to take mankind."<sup>34</sup> This, of course, is the modern state of world affairs and, in the eyes of militant Islamists such as Sayyid abul a'la Mawdudi, another pioneer militant Islamist theorist, is the root-cause of all evil and mischief in the world. As such, militant Islamists are wholeheartedly working to re-establish the dominion of God on earth and abolish the dominion of man, which, therefore, is synonymous with freeing mankind from its slavery to the rule of man.

Second, if *tawhid* means that only God is to be worshipped, then it also holds that only his laws matter and only he has sovereignty. This means that no man has the right to legislate any law, nor does he have the right to enforce any such laws; this right belongs exclusively to God alone. "The only role left for nation's 'leaders' is to implement God's laws."<sup>35</sup> This reasoning stands as the conceptual basis for militant Islamists' aversion to western democratic models of government, international law, and the United Nations. The laws created and enforced by these institutions are seen as illegitimate because they are manmade and deliberately exclude religion. Furthermore, this implication of *tawhid*

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<sup>33</sup> Lacey, *The Canons of Jihad*, 18.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 33.

<sup>35</sup> Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 4.

also stands as reason for their opposition of modern economic models, namely capitalism. There are two points of contention in the opposition of capitalism: one, the Quran specifically forbids the use of usury, and so the widely-used practice of charging interest is seen as a direct disregard of that rule, and two, “according to the jihadis, God is the true owner of all property, and man is allowed to use it only when he does so in an Islamic, correct way.”<sup>36</sup> Such far reaching and practical implications indicate just how deeply consideration for *tawhid* goes in the mind of militant Islamists.

All of the implications above, each of which stem from the unchanging sources of Islam, demonstrate how militant Islamists are of the conviction that they are working towards peace and harmony; the establishment of an entirely Islamic world is seen as “a sort of liberation theology, designed to end oppression by human institutions and man-made laws and to return God to his rightful place as unconditional ruler of the world.”<sup>37</sup> As Qutb said, “the foremost duty of Islam in this world is to depose *jahiliyyah* from the leadership of man, and to take the leadership into its own hands and enforce the particular way of life that is its permanent feature. The purpose of this rightly guided leadership is the good and success of mankind.”<sup>38</sup>

**Jihad.** Thus far, this thesis has demonstrated the significance Islam and its sources hold for militant Islamists; simple, basic beliefs have far-reaching implications for seemingly unrelated matters. The religion represents an organized system that is meant to touch all corners of the world and all aspects of life. Thus, the rise of the West and its secular system of government was seen as a threat to the Islamic system,

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<sup>36</sup> Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Lacey, *The Canons of Jihad*, 32.

prompting theorists to turn to jihad, a Quranic concept from which the theorists crafted their violent call to action as the means to defeat the threat of the West and reestablish Islam to its rightful place.

The perceived threat began with the Crusader attacks of the Romans and European Christian kings, has perpetuated through the British invasion of Muslim lands until present day, and will continue until the ‘Crusader threat’ is either defeated by Islam or successful in fully conquering and subjugating Muslims. This means that the various events of conflict with non-believer entities are not viewed as separate, individual wars but rather they are all, in the eyes of militant Islamists, a part of the same war that started with the Crusades. This centuries-long war has resulted in the establishment of secular schools in Islamic lands, the replacement of God’s laws with laws of humans, apostate rulers, and the installation of money and business institutions that utilize forbidden methods of usury and banking filled with trickery and corruption. It has further resulted in a Muslim population in which the majority of them possess only, what former senior al-Qaeda official Abu Firas al-Suri calls, a superficial form of the religion; he claimed the Muslim population had forgotten God and instead, “America and the West, their culture and ideas, have become the god of the times, worshipped, sanctified, and believed in by the people more than they worship God...And there is no longer among them any association to the people of Islam except by name and by adhering to a few traditions with religious roots.”<sup>39</sup>

This sentiment has been echoed through various Islamist theorists in various parts of the world. While Syrian-born al-Suri’s *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance* was

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<sup>39</sup> Jim Lacey, *A Terrorist's Call to Global Jihad: Deciphering Abu Musab Al-Suri's Islamic Jihad Manifesto*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 33.

published in more recent years, the same rhetoric can be found decades ago in Egypt-born Hassan al Banna's *Jihad*. In it al-Banna says, "the Muslim world today is faced with tyranny and injustice," and explains that the love of wealth, the wish for glory, and conquering using unjust methods are forbidden to Muslims."<sup>40</sup> He goes on to say, "it is essential for mankind to have new leadership! The leadership of mankind by Western man is now on the decline...because it is deprived of those life-giving values that enabled it to be the leader of mankind. Islam is the only system that possesses these values and this way of life."<sup>41</sup> He, and other militant Islamist writers, called for a rising up of the Muslim community in order to take back leadership of the world. For example, Qutb said, "it is necessary to revive that Muslim community that is buried under the debris of the manmade traditions of several generations and is crushed under the weight of those false laws and customs that are not even remotely related to the Islamic teachings, and that, in spite of all this, calls itself the 'world of Islam'."<sup>42</sup>

Qutb recognized, however, that it would be impossible for the Muslim community to compete with the West in material and scientific productions in such a way that would make the world bow its head to them. So instead, he explains they must have something more to offer other than material progress, which he determined is their faith, which has the ability to fulfill "the basic human needs on the same level of excellence as technology has fulfilled them in the sphere of material comfort."<sup>43</sup> He predicted, though, "those who have usurped the authority of God and are oppressing God's creatures are not going to give up their power merely through preaching," because if that were the case, it would

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<sup>40</sup> Lacey, *The Canons of Jihad*; 4, 9.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

have already been done. Thus, he, among others, calls for a vanguard that will march through the vast ocean of ignorance that has encompassed the entire world and fight in the name of God to re-establish the rule of Islam, which again, is seen as peace and freedom from servitude.

Similarly, al-Banna explains, “Islam is concerned with the question of jihad and the mobilization of the entire ummah into one body to defend the cause with all its strength.”<sup>44</sup> He also claims that the Quran and the Sunnah of Muhammad are filled with verses that summon the people “to jihad, to warfare, to the armed forces, and to all means of land and sea fighting.”<sup>45</sup> He assures his reader that anyone who reads the Quran and pays attention to its true meaning will clearly see the call to arms; “clarifications are not required.”<sup>46</sup> Most notably, al-Banna argues that the verses of the Quran associate warfare with prayer and fasting, “establishing it as one of the pillars of Islam.”<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that this is a clear example of the manipulation of the Quran in order to support the profoundness of jihad. Though not actually one of the pillars of the faith, al-Banna managed to present jihad in a way that makes it seem as if it is just as important. Examples of this can be seen throughout various texts, indicating just how much jihad means to these men, so much so that they distort the one source they hold to be purest on earth.<sup>48</sup>

The significance placed on offensive jihad makes for a violent ideology that has specific implications for tactics in warfare, such as what to target and how to handle

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<sup>44</sup> Lacey, *The Canons of Jihad*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 4.

treaties. Theorists such as Pakistani General S. K. Malik and Majid Khadduri, founder of the Middle East Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University, have dedicated works to codifying sort of an Islamic equivalent of just war theory in order to ‘wage jihad’ effectively and according to Islamic principles. According to Malik, the Quranic maxims on the conduct of war are: the art of decision making, the supremacy of the aim, selection of objectives, constant striving and struggling, comparative evaluation of situation, domination and aggressiveness, will and determination, patience and perseverance, firmness and steadfastness, sacrifice, unity of thought and action, security and precautions, discipline and obedience, and prayer. Therefore, while the methods of warfare used by militant Islamists may seem erratic and illogical, they are actually strategic realizations of their deep-seeded beliefs in their interpretation of Islam and jihad.

Most importantly, because the goal of militant Islamists is a world dominated by Islamic rule, the purpose of warfare is not victory or glory in any given battle, but rather to fight in the name of God and to advance towards their goal of an Islamic world. This means they are thinking in long-term goals. This also means that they will keep fighting until they either achieve success or are somehow neutralized. For the West, this means that no matter how large of an operation is launched against them, no matter how many of them are killed, as long as militant Islamist ideology exists, it is likely that the militant Islamist campaign will continue. As one scholar put it, “firing cruise missiles at select

targets is like using half a dose of antibiotics to treat an infection—the infection is not cured, but resistant strains of bacteria arise.”<sup>49</sup>

Regarding Malik’s maxims of Quranic warfare, the maxim of selection of objective draws from the Battle of Badr in which the Quran issued instructions to the Muslims regarding the selection of their objectives. The Quran says, “smite ye above their necks, and smite all their fingertips off them.” Malik explains that this was said in order to direct Muslims towards the most sensitive parts of the body. Thus, it is prescribed that effort should be put forth to strike the most sensitive and vulnerable points of the enemy. This includes choosing targets that will deprive the enemy of its ability to fight back.

The sacrifice maxim is based off of the Quranic perspective that supreme achievement lies in supreme sacrifice, which can be in the form of bearing suffering, hunger, fatigue and death. However, it must be motivated by a selfless spirit. “The reward of sacrifice is a life of honor in this world and salvation in the hereafter.”<sup>50</sup> Not only does this legitimize the use of suicide attacks and martyrdom, but it also gives meaning to the often bleak and harsh lifestyle of a soldier.<sup>51</sup>

In terminating war, Khadduri explains, “the cessation of hostilities by a people who had already been promised victory by God could only mean that Islam’s enemies must capitulate at the end. For inherent in Islam is God’s power: failure would certainly be on the side of its enemies since success could not be divorced from Islam. If the imam, or his commanders in the field, found victory difficult to attain, he was advised to have

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<sup>49</sup> Tawfik Hamid, “A Strategic Plan to Defeat Radical Islam,” 74, In “Countering Violence Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies,” 7.

<sup>50</sup> Lacey, *The Canons of Jihad*, 121

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-121.

continuous patience for the continuation of fighting until victory is achieved however long it might take to reach at the end.”<sup>52</sup> If there is a catastrophe a truce may be called that will last no longer than the Hudaibiya treaty, which is 10 years. In cases of defeat, “defeated Muslims always maintained that their battle with the enemy would be resumed, however long they have to wait for the second round.”<sup>53</sup>

In the end, it can be said that militant Islamist ideology begins and ends with God and the divine sources he handed down to man. Militant Islamists seek to bring back the rule of Islam over Muslim lands and to extend it over the entire planet. The era when Islam was the law of the land represents a time when the tenets of Islam were believed in and actively practiced—all was, essentially, right in the world. Daily interactions and dealings were carried out in accordance to God’s laws and the rulers of the land felt it was their duty to uphold Gods laws on the earth. This era satisfied all of the major beliefs of militant Islamists; God and his law were sovereign and supreme and Muslims ruled the land. This society, however, was taken away from Muslims as the West began to rise and continue its Crusader attack on the land of Islam. Thus, in response, militant Islamists have used the divine sources given to them as a means to develop a strategy that is, allegedly, in line with God’s ordained laws in order to fight, repel, and overcome the enemy to once again achieve an Islamic world.

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<sup>52</sup> Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), 133.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

## Determining the Relevance of Militant Islamist Ideology

In the years leading up to and following 9/11, scholars and experts had been in the process of defining a ‘new’ form of terrorism that focused on millennial visions of apocalypse and mass casualties.<sup>54</sup> The prominence of religion is a key, if not the main, characteristic of ‘new’ terrorism as it is no longer focused on the conventional, political goals that ‘old’ terrorism was. Many scholars allege the period between the late 1960’s and 1980’s as the era of ‘old’ terrorism during which terrorism was often secular in motivation, hierarchically organized, and discriminate in nature.<sup>55</sup> Where exactly the beginning of ‘new’ terrorism starts is difficult to pinpoint, though many point to the mid 1990’s, with the ’93 Trade Center and ’95 Aum Shinrikyo attacks, as the beginning. ‘New’ terrorism, as the argument goes, is marked by indiscriminate violence due to its religious nature; “for the religious terrorist, violence is a divine duty...executed in direct response to some theological demand...and justified by scripture.”<sup>56</sup> Additionally, ‘new’ terrorism is believed to typically be networked in structure and less hierarchical.<sup>57</sup> Though each characteristic of ‘new’ terrorism has been categorically challenged, for the purposes of this thesis, this section will focus on the characteristic of religiosity<sup>58</sup> in order to determine the relevance of militant Islamist ideology in crafting CVE policy.

Arguments demonstrating the irrelevance of militant Islamist ideology will first be

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew Morgan, “The Origins of the New Terrorism,” U.S. Army War College, (2004): 1,

[www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/04spring/morgan.pdf](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/04spring/morgan.pdf)  
<sup>55</sup> Alexander Spencer, “Questioning the Concept of ‘New Terrorism,’” *Peace Conflict & Development*, Issue 8, (January 2006): 9-13, [www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk](http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk)

<sup>56</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (London: St. Andrew’s University Press, 1998), 20.

<sup>57</sup> Spencer, “Questioning the Concepts of New Terrorism,” 9-12.

<sup>58</sup> It is in this section where the terms ‘religion’ and ‘ideology’ may be used interchangeably as described in the Introduction.

presented followed by those that argue for its relevance. It should be noted that the purpose of presenting arguments against the importance of ideology is not to propose what matters more, but simply that ideology does not. Where proponents of new terrorism identify religion as a key motivation and propellant of terrorism, those arguing against a new terrorism insist that religion as a propellant of terrorism is not only nothing new but also a nonissue.

**Arguments Demonstrating the Irrelevance of Militant Islamist Ideology.** In her article “Old vs. New Terrorism” Martha Crenshaw tackles the notion posited by the new terrorism perspective that the content of a particular ideology is a direct or instigating cause of terrorism by systematically combing through each alleged characteristic of new terrorism in order to argue that “religion is neither sufficient as an explanation of the cause of the ‘new’ terrorism, in general, nor necessary as an explanation of what does seem to be ‘new’ about terrorism.” She argues against each one, except for the notion that terrorism has become more deadly over time, explaining that “the only characteristic of new terrorism that is fundamentally impeachable is the increasing lethality of terrorist action.”<sup>59</sup> In general, Crenshaw argues, “what is typically lacking in new terrorism advocacy is an explanation for why religion would have only recently emerged as a cause of ‘new’ terrorism, given that religion has been a strong force in human history since well before the ‘new’ terrorism arose. This fact suggests that non-religious contextual factors play an important role in causing terrorism today.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Rik Coolsaet, *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 64.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

Her argument goes on to say that even if and when religion appears to be an instigating cause, it is only so in certain social and historical contexts. Neumann (2009) explains this context to be structural change; religious identities form in reaction to the influences of globalization and modernity as a solution to insecurity and loss of control, or humiliation, in the face of rapid and confusing social and economic change. In a more specific example, Hegghammer describes the emergence of the pan-Islamist ideology as the construction of Muslim solidarity in the face of non-Muslim aggressors such as the Soviet Union. As described in a comprehensive study of militant Islamist ideology, “in the eyes of jihadis, deliverance from the perceived humiliation is so important because this state of disgrace represents a direct attack against the faith itself.”<sup>61</sup> In these cases, the ideology was not the cause of the terrorism, but rather the means by which its adherents responded to the actual cause; namely structural change and foreign invasion.<sup>62</sup>

Also assenting that ideology serves as an insufficient driver of terrorism, Rik Coolsaet in *Cycles of Revolutionary Terrorism* provides a comparative analysis of contemporary Islamist terrorism by linking it to the notion of revolutionary terrorism in order to shift the emphasis away from ideology and onto “the wider circumstances that act as preconditions—factors that set the state for terrorism over the long run—for the emergence of a specific variety of terrorism.”<sup>63</sup> Revolutionary terrorism is defined by Coolsaet as “a form of political behavior taken by groups and individuals in their attempt to seize political power from established regimes, both domestic and global, that will

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<sup>61</sup> Emman el-Badawy et al, “Inside the Jihadi Mind,” Centre on Religion & Politics, The Tony Blair Foundation, 2015, p. 31.

<sup>62</sup> Coolsaet, *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, 64.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

result, if successful, in fundamental political and social change.”<sup>64</sup> In his analysis, he argues that Islamist terrorism is the most recent of four waves of revolutionary terrorism—anarchist terrorism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the separatist-fascist wave of the 1920’s and 1930’s, radical left wave in the late 1960’s, and finally the Islamist wave starting in the 1990’s—though his analysis mostly focuses on comparison to the first wave of anarchist terrorism.

The assassination of French President Sadi Carnot on June 24, 1894 was, as explained by Coolsaet, to anarchist terrorism what 9/11 was to Islamist terrorism; it marked the climax of a succession of anarchist attacks in France, and was among many other attacks in various countries including Germany, Russia, and the United States. These anarchists “strived for a just society where private property was abolished and exploitation of men by men no longer existed. They were revolutionaries who believed that in order to establish this utopian world, the old one had to be destroyed.”<sup>65</sup> With the invention of dynamite, the 1890’s became ‘the decade of the bomb,’ in which cities lived in permanent fear of attacks where kings, presidents, and government buildings were targeted as symbols of the arrogance of the ruling class. Across the board, the anarchists “referred to social grief they deemed universal and to the injustice resulting from the inequality between the privileged and the oppressed.”<sup>66</sup>

Since simultaneous attacks had taken place in several different countries, the image of a well-run international movement was projected and believed, bringing the term ‘international terrorism’ into fashion for the first time. However, Coolsaet argues,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

“the fact that attacks occurred in several countries at the same time had less to do with a well-run international organization than with similar social contexts that acted as breeding grounds, or preconditions, for groups and individuals to choose terrorism as their preferred form of political action.”<sup>67</sup> As a result of his comparative analysis, Coolsaet argues that revolutionary terrorism, and therefore Islamist terrorism, is bred not by poverty or ideology, but by generalized feelings of exclusion and marginalization. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, people began to produce for export, the car was invented, as well as film and aircraft; “thanks to globalization and progress in technology, communication and transport, it became possible, for the first time in human history, to refer to a true world market where goods, services, money and people moved back and forth, almost without regard to national borders.”<sup>68</sup> This new world, however, was only adjusted to by some; “despised and feared, the worker was physically separated from the bourgeoisie and pushed to the margins of society.”<sup>69</sup> Such marginalization, Coolsaet argues, is caused by widespread and profound social and economic dislocation resulting from globalization and rapid technological change.

In essence, radicalization leading to terrorism always begins with a sentiment of injustice and moral outrage. “In the weltanschauung of the radicals of the 1990’s, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, the West in general and United States in particular...convey the same image as the nineteenth-century bourgeois state did to the contemporary anarchist terrorists: the symbol of the arrogance of power and thus the

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<sup>67</sup> Coolsaet, *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, 89.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

culprit for all that went wrong in the world.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, according to Coolsaet’s reasoning, today’s militant Islamists probably would have joined the anarchist terrorist movement, as well as the radical left groups, and the separatist-fascist groups. “Neither anarchism as political philosophy nor Islam as religion is at the origin of the process of political radicalization drawing an individual into terrorist violence. It is the circumstances, which make the terrorist...’It’s unfair’ has always proved to be a potent force in politics and a prime mover for change. When people resent inequity, they are prone to radicalization. In itself this is a highly moral attitude. But it becomes problematic from the moment it moves into extremism, which eventually ends up luring some individuals into terrorism.”<sup>71</sup>

Consequently, the argument, then, is not only that ideology is an insufficient reason for radicalization, but also that the behavior of the Islamist terrorist movement is not *sui generis* and is actually akin to earlier forms violent political movements. It is unsurprising, then, that scholars of Social Movement Theory (SMT) have recently incorporated Islamist movements into the theory, further demonstrating that ideology is more of an accessory detail rather than a valid explanation. Quintan Wiktorowicz mentions that, in actively searching for a new framework for understanding Islamic contention, specialists on Islamic activism have begun exploring theoretical developments that parallel trends in SMT. Though movements aren’t violent per se, the lessons taught regarding them by SMT provide valuable insights into the radicalization

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<sup>70</sup> Coolsaet, *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge*, 96.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

process, which is ultimately the process officials are aiming to understand and prevent.<sup>72</sup>

In his book *Islamic Activism*, Wiktorowicz and co-authors demonstrate how the dynamics, process, and organization of Islamic activism can be understood as important elements of contention that transcend the specificity of “Islam” as a basis of collective action.<sup>73</sup>

The arguments posed by Crenshaw and Coolsaet above are, whether or not they are intended to be so, examples of early approaches to the study of social movements, which were derived from functionalist social psychology accounts of mass behavior and system equilibrium. In such accounts, system disequilibrium occurs when exogenous structural strains produce grievances and “erode the efficacy of institutions, producing pathological dysfunctions that can cause political instability. If institutional capacity cannot accommodate newly mobilized societal demands, the result is social frustration and political disorder.”<sup>74</sup> As such, early SMT accounts posited a linear causal relationship from structural strains, to psychological discomfort, to collective action. Examples of structural strains included industrialization, modernization, and foreign invasion and globalization. “Movements were thus seen as escapist mechanisms through which individuals regain a sense of belonging and empowerment.”<sup>75</sup> Given the history much of the Islamic world has had with many of these so-called structural strains, early renditions of SMT fit quite well in explaining the rise of Islamic movements and Islamist terrorist movements.

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<sup>72</sup> Gupta, “Tracking the Spread of Violent Extremism,” 44, in “Countering Violent Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies.”

<sup>73</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (United States: Indiana University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

Given such an attractive causal relationship, there were those who questioned the simplistic formula, which ultimately led to the rise of Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) as a new forefront of SMT. “Rather than viewing movements as constituted by irrational or psychologically deprived individuals who join in response to structural strains, RMT views movements as rational, organized manifestations of collective action....Movements are not seen as irrational outbursts intended to alleviate psychological distress, but rather as organized contention structured through mechanisms of mobilization that provide strategic resources for sustained collective action.”<sup>76</sup> RMT arose in response to and to address anomalies in the structural strain model, including the fact that structural strain and the distress it causes are ubiquitous, but movements are not. “In fact, poor countries with limited resources or political freedom often produce few social movements, despite the ubiquity of strain and discontent. Western democracies, on the other hand, which enjoy much higher standards of living, political freedom, and stability, are ripe with robust movements.”<sup>77</sup> Early strain models also tended to disregard the political and organized nature of movements; “movements are not merely psychological coping mechanisms, they are often explicitly focused and directed toward the political arena.”<sup>78</sup> These anomalies meant that central questions about the emergence of and dynamics of Islamic activism could not be addressed. For example, why do some groups use violence while others eschew it, and under repressive conditions, how do movements collectivize individual grievances and mobilize participants? RMT seeks to

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<sup>76</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 9-10.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

address these questions among others, fine tuning SMT where structural strain models did not.

As the name indicates, RMT suggests the need for resources and mobilizing structures in order to collectivize individual grievances and to bring money, support, media attention, and alliances to the movement. Without these, movements will likely be unable to truly get off the ground and become effective in producing desired change. The mosque is an obvious mobilizing structure for Islamic activism, preaching and disseminating religious messages as well as providing its members with a network, a vital resource, which connects them across space. Other mobilizing structures include Islamic NGOs and student organizations; such structures provide goods and services like medical clinics, culture centers, and charities, which reinforce solidarity ties and demonstrate examples of what Islam can provide in comparison to other non-Islamic structures. Such examples are often used as leverage and proof for the claim that “Islam is the solution” to all problems, physical and spiritual. “These organizations represent a friendly public face that promotes the Islamic message without directly confronting the regime,” providing and participating in activities that inadvertently “highlight the inability of the state to effectively address socioeconomic problems.”<sup>79</sup> Activists capture and usurp these resources and structures to solidify the movement and further disseminate the movement’s message.

The utility of these structures, other than of the raw services provided, lies in their ability to articulate and disseminate frameworks of understanding that resonate with potential participants and the public to elicit collective action. According to David Snow

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<sup>79</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 11.

and Robert Benford, social movements utilize this ability, commonly referred to as framing, in three ways; first, movements diagnose a condition as a problem that is in need of redress, second, movements offer solutions to the problem including tactics and strategies on how to achieve those solutions, and third, they provide rationale to motivate support and collective action.<sup>80</sup> The framing process will be most successful in the instances where frame resonance is established; “the ability of a movement to transform a mobilization potential into actual mobilization is contingent upon the capacity of a frame to resonate with potential participants. Where a movement frame draws upon indigenous cultural symbols, language, and identities, it is more likely to reverberate with constituents, thus enhancing mobilization.”<sup>81</sup> Islam is ripe with its own distinct culture, as well as a rich and complicated history, both of which extend across multiple ethnicities and countries, making frame resonance, and therefore collective mobilization, quite easy to achieve.

If one focuses on the case of Islamic activism without the broader reference frame of SMT, it’s reasonable to conceive that Islam is the ‘problem’. Indeed, all the elements that are attributed by SMT as necessary and/or sufficient for the start and sustainment of a movement are readily and easily provided by Islam; it provides multiple, well-established mobilizing structures that provide its members and the public vital resources for the life of a movement such as networks, money, and media attention, and it serves as a common historical background from which activists can build frame resonance.

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<sup>80</sup> David Snow and Robert Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization” in Bert Klandermans et al., *International Social Movements Research: V. 1: From Structure to Action - Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures*, ed. Hanspeter Kriesl (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1989), 197-217.

<sup>81</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 16.

However, with the broader reference frame of SMT in mind, it's clear that these elements are consistent across all movements, such as the Civil and Gay Rights movements.

Considering this, it becomes evident that Islamic movements are simply another cut from the same cloth, and that Islam and its affiliates (Islamism, jihadism, etc) are only the means by which its adherents have responded to further underlying causes.

### **Arguments Supporting the Relevance of Militant Islamist Ideology.**

Regardless of how compelling or valid the above arguments may be, there is no denying that Islamist terrorism and its ideology do, at least superficially, stem from the religion of Islam; “without the beliefs, values, principles, and objectives of ideology, its (Islamist terrorism) methods and ends could neither be articulated nor legitimized in the eyes of its sympathizers.”<sup>82</sup> Essentially, without the religion, there would be no militant Islamist ideology. It is this religiosity that leads many scholars, such as those advocating a ‘new terrorism’ mentioned above, to be convinced of its importance. “Monotheistic faiths are characterized by exclusive claims to valid identity and access to salvation. The violent imagery embedded in their sacred texts... establish the legitimacy of killing as an act of worship with redemptive qualities. In these narratives, the enemy must be eradicated, not merely suppressed.” Islamist terrorism, and its other religiously motivated counterparts including Christian and Jewish fundamentalism, are thus described to be distinctly concerned with cosmic, moral values purported by the faith, which therefore makes it more lethal and indiscriminate, arguably leaving few policy options for the United States.

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<sup>82</sup> Jeffrey B. Cozzens, “Identifying Entry Points of Action in Counter Radicalization,” *Danish Institute for International Studies*, (2006), [http://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/56493/DIIS\\_WP\\_2006\\_6.web.pdf](http://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/56493/DIIS_WP_2006_6.web.pdf), 5.

Although religious terrorism has been around for centuries (albeit not being called terrorism in its earliest years), it has seen a distinct increase in existence and occurrence in recent decades. According to Magnus Ranstorp, by 1996, the number of religious fundamentalist movements had tripled since the mid-1960's.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, according to Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole, only two out of 64 international terrorist groups in 1980 could be identified as religious, compared to 25 out of 58 in 1995. Although scholars of religious terrorism recognize the contribution of non-religious elements towards its rise, it is argued that they are more so predisposing factors rather than sufficient causes. Instead, it is the groups' religious, millenarian-apocalyptic beliefs that are seen as sufficient for their existence and as reason for their excessively lethal nature.

In her discussion on why religious movements become violent, L. L. Dawson first and foremost recognizes apocalyptic, religious beliefs, namely by the three Abrahamic religions.

The refrains of apocalyptic rhetoric can be heard throughout history and the world, though they are most pronounced in the three great religious traditions of the West; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each of these traditions rests on a core of millennialist beliefs and expectations, expressed repeatedly in the prophecies and perceived codes of their scriptures," and "in times of particular social distress and disorder, and even more under the influence of charismatic prophets, the relatively passive popular response to apocalyptic beliefs can result in more dangerous forms of social and even political activism."<sup>84</sup>

Millennialism refers to the fundamental eschatological belief that the end of time, or apocalypse, is imminent, at which point God will judge the living and the dead and bring peace on earth. Driven by such imminence, millenarian-apocalyptic believers are

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<sup>83</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, "Terrorism in the Name of Religion," *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 1 (1996), 44.

<sup>84</sup> Lorne L. Dawson, "The Study of New Religious Movements and the Radicalization of Home-Grown Terrorists: Opening a Dialogue," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 1 (December 22, 2009), doi:10.1080/09546550903409163, 11.

inclined to revolt against the sociopolitical order in an attempt to bring about the promised kingdom of peace.<sup>85</sup> As Richard Landes explains, apocalyptic millennial beliefs have a significant direct impact on history because they call for active participation in revolutionizing history.<sup>86</sup> It is this millenarian-apocalypticness, particularly, that ultimately distinguishes militant Islamist ideology and its other religiously motivated terrorist counterparts from ‘traditional,’ politically driven terrorism.

Such religious millenarian-apocalyptic beliefs lead its violent perpetrators to perceive themselves as unconstrained by the political, moral, and practical constraints of the modern world; “believers are cosmic warriors in the battle with evil...no longer bound by customary rules, no longer prisoners of conventional expectations...They live in an enchanted and exciting world, and they want nothing more than to bring the rest of us in it. Or, if we refuse, they will bring it to us.”<sup>87</sup> As such, violence is a religious duty in the war between good and evil, in which non-believers are dehumanized because they are infidels or apostates. “When they look at humanity, many see not a wide and nuanced spectrum of people, but a few saints and a vast sea of sinners, some redeemable, some (most) not. They are quite clear on who will suffer punishment, and who will gain reward at the final Revelation. And when they believe the moment has come, they do not believe in compromise.”<sup>88</sup> This disposition leads, almost naturally, to indiscriminate violence that is markedly more lethal than political terrorism.

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<sup>85</sup> [Britannica.com/topic/millennialism](http://Britannica.com/topic/millennialism)

<sup>86</sup> Richard Allen Landes, *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21.

<sup>87</sup> Landes, *Heaven on Earth*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Instances of such deadly and indiscriminate violence are not hard to find across various religions. As Bruce Hoffman explains, examples can be found within militant Christian white supremacists as well as in some radical Jewish messianic movements.<sup>89</sup> He refers to the indictment of 14 American white supremacists in 1987 for plotting to poison municipal water supplies in two U.S. cities as well as the conviction of Israeli fanatics in 1984 for plotting to blow up the Dome of the Rock. Hoffman also refers to the violence perpetrated by Sikh's in India against Hindu's, albeit recognizing there is a lack of millenarian-apocalyptic visions. The use of suicide attacks has also been argued as another indication of the distinct lethality and indiscrimination of religious terrorism; "whereas most action by 'old' terrorists involved an escape plan, 'new' terrorists seem more willing to give their own life while orchestrating a terrorist attack...new terrorists are more prepared to die because martyrdom is seen as a way of reaching heaven."<sup>90</sup>

In regards to policy implications, some scholars have claimed that such destructive and un-earthly inclinations leave few policy options for the U.S. Indeed, the sentiment is, 'what are we going to do in the face of such outlandish violence? How do we try and negotiate or use diplomacy to achieve peace with an enemy that figuratively speaks, thinks, and operates according to their own religious rule and deliberately disregards ours?' Magnus Ranstorp ended his pre-9/11 article saying, "At present, it is doubtful that the United States or any western government is adequately prepared to meet this challenge."<sup>91</sup> Steve Simon started his post-9/11 article saying,

The social, economic, and political conditions in the Arab and broader Islamic world that have helped give rise to al-Qaeda will not be easily changed. The

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<sup>89</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 275

<sup>90</sup> Spencer, "Questioning the Concepts of New Terrorism," 10.

<sup>91</sup> Ranstorp, "Terrorism in the Name of Religion," 62.

maximalist demands of the new terrorists obviate dialogue or negotiation. Traditional strategies of deterrence by retaliation are unlikely to work, because the militant Islamists have no territory to hold at risk, seek sacrifice, and court Western attacks that will validate their claims about Western hostility to Islam.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, Simon describes prospects for successful policy options as bleak and ultimately suggests “a strategy of containment, while seeking ways to redress, over the long run, underlying causes.”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, after over a decade of largely kinetic operations against our enemy, and the rise of ISIS, a deadlier al-Qaeda, Simon’s strategy of ‘contain while figuring something else out’ arguably reflects the U.S. strategy to date.

When looked at through the lens of religious, ‘new’, millenarian-apocalyptic terrorism, particularly that of militant Islamist ideology, perceptions of hopelessness or bleak prospects as just described are understandable. When looked at through the lens of the arguments and theories in the section above, however, such millenarian-apocalyptic motivations seem less alarming. Undoubtedly, the degree to which militant Islamist ideology matters is arguably one of the most contentious debates of national security, with each side adamantly supporting their argument and disproving the other. After careful deliberation over variations of both sides of the argument, this thesis argues that ideology is relevant, but not because it is religious, or Islamic, in nature, but because as an ideology, it provides its potential and current members with a strong sense of identity, a cause to believe in and fight for, and a simple explanation and solution for all that is wrong in the world.

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<sup>92</sup> Steven Simon, “The New Terrorism: Securing the Nation Against a Messianic Foe,” *The Brookings Review* 21, no. 1 (2003), doi:10.2307/20081085, 1.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Various scholars have noted the importance of developing a distinct identity for youth development.<sup>94</sup> Accomplishing the task of creating a distinct identity, and thereby a sense of purpose, fosters healthy development and psychological ease. Adolescent psychiatrist Lois Flaherty explains that youth years, those of the early 20s, are a time of consolidation of identity during which individuals are unsettled, trying to work out their place in the world, and are determined to make a difference through changing themselves or the outside world. By the time the individual reaches young adulthood, ties with parents have been loosened and identity consolidation has largely been achieved. The next phase involves a transitional period between late adolescence and adulthood in which “fitting in, being accepted, and feeling good about oneself—sustaining a sense of dignity and self-esteem—are the key developmental tasks of this era.”<sup>95</sup> If these tasks are sufficiently achieved, the end result is an established identity with an understanding of where it fits within society. However, if these tasks are not achieved, “the result may be a sense of not fitting in, not accomplishing anything worthwhile, not making any difference, and being unimportant.”<sup>96</sup>

Concurrently, Flaherty explains that developing a cultural and ethnic identity is another important feature in late adolescence. Cultural identity, as described by Flaherty, “involves the story of one’s people and how they came to be where they now are in the

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<sup>94</sup> Lisa Wexler, “The Importance of Identity, History, and Culture in the Wellbeing of Indigenous Youth,” *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 2, no. 2 (2009), doi:10.1353/hcy.0.0055, 268.

<sup>95</sup> Lois T. Flaherty, “Youth, Ideology, and Terrorism,” in Lois T. Flaherty, ed., *Adolescent Psychiatry: Annals of the American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry: Volume 27* (United States: The Analytic Press, Inc., 2003), 46.

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

world.”<sup>97</sup> Wexler describes cultural identity as “recognizing one’s cultural attributes—beliefs, values, practices, norms, traditions, and heritage—along with understanding how they are (and are not) reflected in one’s self. These cultural attributes are both internally and externally defined, as they come from personal choices as well as ascriptions of others.”<sup>98</sup>

In the simplest of situations, a consonance exists between all of these points of reference. The views of one’s family, school, and friends regarding life are basically similar, resulting in patterned interactions with the environment that reflects one’s views of oneself and are mutually reinforcing. In times of rapid social change and a high degree of social mobility or when social institutions such as schools espouse different ideas from parents’...dissonance is likely to be the rule. Whatever the case, the individual is still faced with the task of sorting out for himself or herself a separate and unique identity. A daunting task at best, but much more difficult when the choices are seen as offering no rewards.

During this process, youth are looking for something strong and dependable to believe in, and their choices are limited by the available possibilities--any mentor, group, or activity that is accessible could facilitate the process. Establishing a cultural identity “helps individuals find their place in larger temporal and social contexts and situates them as actors in their community and in the world. This is important developmentally since young people tend to do better if they identify with values that transcend themselves.”<sup>99</sup> Such cultural identity, of course, reinforces a sense of individual identity; Joane Nagel illustrated how the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged

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<sup>97</sup> Flaherty, “Youth, Ideology, and Terrorism,” 49.

<sup>98</sup> Wexler, “The Importance of Identity,” 69.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

American Indian individuals to claim their native ancestry such that the U.S. Census recorded triple the number of people claiming American Indian heritage.<sup>100</sup>

In the case where individual and cultural identities are insufficiently developed, the perception may be that the misery (caused by the lack of a distinct identity) is caused by outside persons or groups. Such perceptions can also be shared by an entire group of people, “strengthened and reinforced within the community, and transmitted from one generation to the next.<sup>101</sup> In these cases, “ideologies that pin the cause of anomie on an enemy and groups that offer the individual a sense of purpose and self-worth by rejecting the system are naturally appealing.”<sup>102</sup> Becoming a part of these groups and adopting their ideologies one puts on “trappings of power and superiority by adopting an ideology that tells them they are special, important, and have a glorious role to play.... thus, belonging to the group and believing in its ideology protect against the shame and humiliation that the youth would otherwise feel.”<sup>103</sup>

Considering all of this, it is facile to see how militant Islamist ideology can and does provide individuals with a sense of identity. Firstly, militant Islamist ideology’s use of Quranic archetypes readily explains history, the present, and the future as explained earlier. This allows those attracted to militant Islamist ideology to have an understanding of their cultural history, its story of how it came to be, and where it stands now, as Flaherty described. As the story goes, the Crusaders of the West have been actively attacking Islamic lands and working to subjugate Muslims across the world for centuries

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<sup>100</sup> Joane Nagel, “Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture,” *Social Problems* 41, no. 1 (February 1994), doi:10.1525/sp.1994.41.1.03x0430n, 152-76.

<sup>101</sup> Flaherty, “Youth, Ideology, and Terrorism,” 50.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

to achieve godless power. As a result, the once great Kingdom of Islam has been dismantled and its Muslims have been forced to live in conditions of poverty, despair, and godlessness. This helps the individual place themselves within the larger temporal and social context of that history as an active member of the community as Wexler explained. Militant Islamist ideology's blaming of the West and apostates also helps the individual make sense of their misery as someone else's fault. Thus, the individual assumes the identity as a Muslim participating in the wider Islamist mission to reinstate Islam as the law of the land. This cultural and individual identity gives the individual the key post-adolescent elements of purpose, self-esteem, and dignity; it fulfills the need to find meaning in life.

To demonstrate, Maajid Nawaz, a former member of Hizbu-al-Tahrir (HT), describes his path towards and away from being a radical Islamist in his book *Radical*. Nawaz, of Pakistani descent, was born in the seventies and grew up in the predominantly white neighborhood of Southend in Essex, England. Growing up in England meant Nawaz did not readily identify with his Pakistani culture; however, growing up as a member of a minority in England meant that he also did not feel affiliated to England.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, with the rise in concern for AIDS in the mid-eighties as well as the rise in skinhead, neo-Nazi culture, Nawaz was consistently on the receiving end of racism and prejudice, from both his peers as well as the authorities, throughout his adolescence. Initially, hip-hop music and culture provided Nawaz and his fellow ethnic friends with a sense of identity and purpose; in describing his acclamation to hip-hop culture Nawaz

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<sup>104</sup> Maajid Nawaz, *Radical: My Journey from Islamist Extremism to a Democratic Awakening* (United Kingdom: W H Allen, 2013), 57.

said, “we felt we had a way to fight back,”<sup>105</sup> and that they “were buzzing on a sound, an identity, that we could finally claim as our own”<sup>106</sup>

However, Nawaz’s experience with racism and prejudice grew increasingly violent with multiple knife fights and unfair run-ins with the police. Meanwhile, Islamist groups and ideology were on the rise across the world in response to the war in Bosnia. “In Bosnia, white, blond-haired, blue-eyed indigenous European Muslims were being massacred just because they were Muslim...In reaction to these atrocities, Muslims in Europe began asserting their religious identities even more.”<sup>107</sup> At the brink of another knife fight, Nawaz’s brother, already a committed Islamist, managed to avoid the fight by identifying himself as an Islamist terrorist; “I told him we’re Muslims and we don’t fear death. We’re like those Palestinian terrorists he sees on the televisions blowing up planes.”<sup>108</sup> Their opponents backed down, scared, “and that came from the assertive new identity Osman [brother] had adopted. *Islamism*. It had done what years of knife fights could not. It had won the psychological war and defeated our enemy...In one conversation, Islamism did what hip-hop couldn’t do”<sup>109</sup>

That moment was the first time Nawaz realized the power of Islamism and he wanted more. “I realized Islamism could give me the respect that I’d craved since primary school”<sup>110</sup> As a result, Nawaz moved to London to become an active member of HT, living in a house with other members, attending study groups, and lobbying for their cause. “So there was a real vacuum in my identity, which was the ideal place for someone

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<sup>105</sup> Nawaz, *Radical*, 25.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

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

to be before recruitment to an Islamist organization. They [HT] were able to offer me an identity that had previously been absent”<sup>111</sup>; “after the typical town atmosphere of Southend, and the feeling of being part of a fractional minority, I now felt plugged into a far larger community, a thriving London network buzzing with ideas.”<sup>112</sup>

Thus, as Nawaz’s experience demonstrates, Islamist and militant Islamist ideologies provide those susceptible to them with identity, purpose, and motivation, validating the relevance of the ideology. The arguments and theories posited by Crenshaw, Coolsaet, and others may suggest militant Islamist terrorism is just another cut of the same cloth, and that terrorism is not new and religious terrorism is not special; however, that does not mean that militant Islamist ideology lacks significance in comparison to other driving factors. Furthermore, though scholars of ‘new’ terrorism and millenarian-apocalyptic ideologies suggest the religious nature of religious terrorism serve as a legitimizing factor for violence and causes its adherents to operate according to their own, cosmic rules, this thesis argues that those characteristics are not what make militant Islamist ideology significant. Describing and distinguishing the religious nature of the Islamist ideology does little in the way of stemming its tide, and instead, suggests that little can be done or worse, that the religion of Islam as a whole is the problem. Thus, in considering the lessons in the above section, this thesis proposes considering what militant Islamist ideology provides its adherents rather than what it is as reason for its relevance. Dawson mentions an old adage in her article, which states that no one joins a dangerous cult or terrorist cell. “Converts invariably see the act of joining in positive

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<sup>111</sup> Nawaz, *Radical*, 55-56.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

terms, as beneficial for both themselves, their society, and the cosmos.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, in looking at militant Islamist ideology through the lens of identity, it becomes apparent what benefits its adherents believe they are getting, which happen to be benefits that can be easily provided elsewhere, through other non-violent means. This, arguably, is where CVE should begin.

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<sup>113</sup> Dawson, “The Study of New Religious Movements and the Radicalization of Home-Grown Terrorists,” 7.

## CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF CVE POLICIES IN THE UK, SAUDI ARABIA, AND THE U.S.

The initiative of CVE emerged as part of the wider strategic objective of countering terrorism by going beyond military measures and addressing the underlying roots of terrorism through multi-faceted programs. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the CVE initiatives in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the emerging programs in the U.S in order to discover ways in which the U.S. can effectively address militant Islamist ideology per the lessons learned in Chapter One. While the programs in the UK and Saudi Arabia are each profoundly shaped by cultural, political, and legal elements unique to its country, they bear significant characteristics and challenges that could benefit the U.S. in its implementation of its own CVE programs.

CVE arose in response to the various terrorist attacks that took place across the world in the early 2000's. Generally speaking, CVE aims to produce counter narratives that challenge extremist and violent extremist messages using a wide range of activities such as public diplomacy, social and educational outreach programs and targeted government campaigns in addition to existing security measures.<sup>114</sup> A large part of these activities is an effort to raise awareness of the process of radicalization and how to recognize symptoms of this process.<sup>115</sup> Essentially, due to the multi-dimensional nature of the radicalization process and of terrorism, CVE programs have responded in kind,

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<sup>114</sup> Ziad Alahdad et al., "Countering Violent Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies." Airforce Research Laboratory, 2011.

<sup>115</sup> William S. Combes, "Assessing Two Countering Violent Extremism Programs: Saudi Arabia's PRAC and the United Kingdom's Prevent Strategy," *Small Wars Journal* 2013, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/assessing-two-countering-violent-extremism-programs-saudi-arabia%EF%BF%BDs-prac-and-the-united-king>, 1.

utilizing social, economic, political and historical contexts in order to holistically approach the instances in which violence can arise.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, “approaches to CVE generally aim to combine hard and soft powers. Hard powers being means to achieve desired outcomes via the use of military and economic sanctions, soft power being power that ‘co ops people rather than coerces them.’”<sup>117</sup> Given the recent rise of CVE as a policy initiative, it is noteworthy that there is, thus, little empirical evidence to go off and therefore a lack of conclusive scholarship on what exactly CVE is, how it should be done and its positive and negative effects. Regardless, in a recent literature review of CVE, Nasser-Eddine and other scholars found that despite the lack of concrete definitions, CVE “stands as a phenomenon that is both self evident and taken for granted,” and “the dominant frame for understanding the threat of violent extremism and terrorism, as presented in the contemporary literature, is that of transnational Islamist networks.”<sup>118</sup> Indeed, the programs within the UK, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. fall within that framework.

### **UK’s *Prevent* Strategy**

Following the 2005 London subway bombings, the UK recognized that it needed to tackle support for, and the promotion of, violent Islamist ideologies within British society. This resulted in the creation of *Prevent*, an add-on to the UK’s existing counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST. In 2011, the UK government published a revised

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<sup>116</sup>Australian Government Department of Defence, Defence Science and Technology Organisation, “Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review,” by Minerva Nasser-Eddine et al, DSTO-TR-2522 (Edinburgh, South Australia), 18.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Nasser-Edine et al, “CVE Literature Review,” 16.

CONTEST, and therefore Prevent strategy, that corrected various flaws that surfaced in the early stages of implementation, and committed to issuing annual updates on its counterterrorism policies. As per the 2011 revision, the aim of Prevent is to “stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting them.”<sup>119</sup> The most recent annual report of 2014 identifies that while no terrorist attack had occurred in the UK during 2014, the frequency of terrorist attacks worldwide had increased about 40%, to 12,000 in 2013, and with the rise of the group known as ISIL, or Daesh, in Iraq and Syria, the threat level for the UK was raised to ‘SEVERE’ from ‘SUBSTANTIAL.’<sup>120</sup>

Aspects of the Prevent strategy published in 2011 continue to be executed; however, due to the evolving nature of the threat, the 2014 annual report has implemented a change in emphasis. The 2011 revision of CONTEST and its Prevent components was in response to rising criticisms that the strategy was narrowly focused on the Muslim community and needed to, instead, address all forms of extremism. Thus, the 2011 revision made it a point to broaden its scope<sup>121</sup>; however, due to the evolving nature of the threat since 2011, the 2014 report specifically identifies militant Islamist terrorists as the principal threat to the UK, most notably those in Iraq in Syria. This is also a change from the 2011 publishing, where al Qaeda and its affiliates were identified as the biggest terrorist threat. The 2014 report does mention, however, that there were several attempted attacks on army recruitment centers by “Dissident Republicans,”

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<sup>119</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *Prevent Strategy*, (United Kingdom: The Stationary Office Limited, 2011), 6.

<sup>120</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *CONTEST The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2014*, (United Kingdom: The Stationary Office Limited, March 2015), 7.

<sup>121</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *CONTEST The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism* (United Kingdom: The Stationary Office Limited, July 2011), 59.

indicating that a threat from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism does still exist. Far right extremism is also identified as a threat but is described as low in comparison to the principal threat of Daesh and other Islamist terrorists.

Given this context, the specific objectives of the *Prevent* strategy are:

1. Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it;
2. Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
3. Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalization, which we need to address.

And success in *Prevent* will mean:

1. There is a reduction in support for terrorism of all kinds in this country and in states overseas whose security most impacts on our own;
2. There is more effective challenge to those extremists whose views are shared by terrorist organizations and used by terrorists to legitimize violence; and
3. There is more challenge to and isolations of extremists and terrorists operating on the Internet.

**Objective One: The Ideological Challenge.** *Prevent* determines challenging ideology as an essential part of its counter terrorism strategy because “ideology is one of the key characteristics of terrorism and a central factor in the radicalization process.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, it utilizes projects in education, communities, and the criminal justice system that “enable people to effectively challenge terrorist ideology;” however, it specifies that it will not engage in matters of theology, but rather will support the key roles of mosques and imams who have already taken a leading role in reaching and engaging with young

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<sup>122</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *CONTEST*, 63.

Muslims as well as ensure that work done by theologians, academics, and communities is wide circulated. Examples programs of this nature funded by *Prevent* include:

- The Islam Citizenship Education Project - develops educational projects within madrassas and universities that encourage and develop awareness of extremist speakers on campus and balance them with speakers of different perspectives.
- National Offender Management Service - supports Muslim chaplains in prisons to challenge extremist views.
- Radical Middle Way - a Muslim-led project which specializes in bringing traditional Muslim scholars to speak to young British Muslim audiences.
- M-Power - reaches out to young Somalis to provide them with safe discussion spaces to debate issues such as radicalization, terrorism and democracy.
- The FCO and DCLG also sponsored a series of ‘road shows’ by Muslim community groups around the country involving lectures, debates and cultural events aimed at promoting a mainstream message of Islam on a number of key issues, including terrorism. The FCO supported further initiatives overseas, networking imams from this country with counterparts elsewhere to understand extremist issues and how they might best be addressed.

Furthermore, the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) was established in the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) in order to conduct research and develop proposals on ways to describe the terrorist threat. It aimed to primarily work with local and national organizations to develop and disseminate counter narratives and has focused on geographical areas where evidence indicates high levels of extremist propaganda. “In its first few years, RICU developed proposals about ways to describe the terrorist threat which were accurate, likely to be understood and accepted but which would not inadvertently lend credence to the claims about counter-terrorism made by extremist and terrorist groups. Some of these proposals were adopted by Government and reflected in the language which Government used (the term ‘war on terrorism’, for example, was judged to be prone to misinterpretation and has generally been avoided in

this country).”<sup>123</sup> The work on producing counter-narratives, however, has been described as ‘variable’ and ‘not as successful as we want,’ in separate documents. Their work struggled to have an impact and was difficult to evaluate. “Although RICU was right to focus on working with local and national organizations to develop and disseminate counter-narratives, some of those organizations have struggled to make themselves heard and failed to draw a clear line between messages about counter-narrative and cohesion. More care now needs to be taken to identify credible partners and to develop powerful and specific narratives across a range of communications channels, especially on the Internet.”<sup>124</sup> In reference to future expectations of RICU it was expressed, “much greater emphasis will also be given to measuring the impact of RICU’s programme,” and “to ensure value for money, there will be independent scrutiny of RICU’s projects and the help they provide to non-Government organizations.”<sup>125</sup>

*Prevent* also utilizes censorship methods as part of its strategy. Given that social media and the Internet are thoroughly utilized by Islamist groups, “removing terrorist material remains a high priority” for CONTEST and *Prevent*.<sup>126</sup> Per the laws in the UK, the government is permitted to remove Internet content that is deemed conducive to terrorism. A dedicated specialist police unit, the Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU), has continued to be funded to refer content that breaches UK terrorism legislation. In 2014, the volume of unlawful content removed was at about 46,000 and about 70% of CTIRU’s caseload was related to Syria and Iraq.<sup>127</sup> Between 2010 and

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<sup>123</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department , *Prevent*, 48.

<sup>124</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *Prevent*, 51.

<sup>125</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *CONTEST*, 64.

<sup>126</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department , *CONTEST 2014*, 15.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

2011, over 4,000 URLs were taken down.<sup>128</sup> The increase in material removed is attributed to a new public referral platform that was launched in March 2014. A newer, Internet-related initiative involves engagement with the Internet industry to see whether filtering products are an effective tool to protect vulnerable people from content that is not illegal, but is extremist and possibly harmful. In a more extreme censorship method, the Home Secretary, equivalent to the U.S. Secretary of State, has the power to exclude or deport non-British citizens on grounds of national security if they engage in what is termed ‘unacceptable behavior.’ By 2011, over 130 individuals had been excluded and in the 2012 reports it was stated that increasing use of this power has been made.

The 2011 revision found several issues in regards to the implementation and effectiveness of activities geared towards responding to ideological threats. The first issue identified was the absence of a clear explanation of ideology and “what it means, what it includes and what needs to be done about it and by whom.” Further issues of clarity were found, including the lack of a clear audience, of direct impact on those targeted, and of overall understanding on how terrorist ideologies draw on and make use of extremist ideologies. However, as of the 2012 annual reports, the government has reportedly significantly improved its understanding of the people and organizations who are most heavily engaged in radicalization. It claims to have learned that far right and Islamist groups “feed off one another and try to create enmity, suspicion, and hatred between our communities” with their respective ideologies that are each anti-democratic, intolerant,

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<sup>128</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *CONTEST The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2012*, (United Kingdom: The Stationary Office Limited, March 2013), 22.

and conducive to violence.<sup>129</sup> Regardless, the *Prevent* strategy repeatedly recognized the need for further research in various areas in 2011, and given the also recognized evolving nature of the threat, it is likely that the need for further research remains in 2015.

**Objective Two: Protecting Vulnerable People.** “This area of *Prevent* is based on the premise that people being drawn into radicalization and recruitment can be identified and then provided with support.”<sup>130</sup> The purpose of the support is to dissuade individuals from engaging in terrorist related activity and to remove them from the sphere of terrorist influence and contact. Allegations have been made that efforts in this area of *Prevent* go against freedom of expression and are a form of spying and intelligence gathering for the sake of policing. To rebut, the revised strategy states, “taking early action to protect people from radicalization is not the same as surveillance or intelligence gathering. It is intended to pre-empt not to facilitate law enforcement.”<sup>131</sup> It is posited that if carried out proportionally and handled properly, programs in this area can work to positively influence cognitive and behavioral change related to terrorist tendencies.

The majority of the activity in this area has been delivered through *Channel*, “a police-coordinated, multi-agency partnership that evaluates referrals of individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism, working alongside safeguarding partnerships and crime reduction panels.”<sup>132</sup> The referral process is comprised of three steps: identification, risk and assessment, and referral and support. The identifications go through frontline staff who are responsible for assessing the individuals reported to them as to whether or not they are at risk of being drawn towards terrorism. As of 2011, Channel covered about 75

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<sup>129</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *CONTEST 2012*, 22.

<sup>130</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *Prevent*, 56.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

local authorities and 12 police forces. The Workshop to Raise Awareness of *Prevent* has been developed to help coordinators identify signs of vulnerability and has been delivered to roughly 15,000 frontline staff. Following identification, those deemed as vulnerable are referred to coordinators, typically from a police background, who assess the individual and decide whether or not they should move onto the support stage or exit the program. If the coordinator decides to advance the individual onto the support stage, various options are available such as counseling, faith guidance, and civic engagement. Various institutions have provided these services, including community-based projects funded by local authorities, local religious or community leaders, teachers and organizations directly funded by the OSCT.

Overall, the use of *Channel* to identify and intercept those at risk of radicalization has provided a set of statistics that can be used to tangibly gauge progress, something that is near absent in other areas of evaluation. Since December 2010, 1120 people have been referred to the Channel program, 286 of which were assessed to be in need of an intervention.<sup>133</sup> Though not mentioned in the 2011 revision, a noteworthy statistic from Sir Norman Bettison, the lead for Prevent Policing of the Association of Chief Police Officers, states that, “thus far, not one of the 1,500 people that have been intervened with have been arrested for any terrorist related offence.”<sup>134</sup> This demonstrates the implementation of *Prevent*’s aim to use soft power as a counter-narrative.

**Objective Three: Supporting sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalization.** Based off of evidence that suggests radicalization occurs in places where

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<sup>133</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *Prevent*, 59.

<sup>134</sup> Lorenzo Vidino and James Brandon, “Countering Radicalization in Europe,” *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, (London, UK, 2012), 18.

terrorist ideologies go uncontested, this part of the strategy aims to work with institutions within those places to ensure there is an understanding of radicalization and how to develop an effective response. These areas are schools and children, higher education, the internet, faith institutions, health, the criminal justice system, the charitable sector and overseas. *Prevent* engages specifically with these sectors because it is believed that they are capable of addressing and resolving some of the challenges posed by radicalization. Given the wide range of sectors, *Prevent* recognizes that it needs to be extremely flexible when working with each of these sectors; indeed, “measures that are suitable in a prison will not be suitable in a university.”<sup>135</sup> Generally speaking, within each of these sectors, *Prevent* seeks to equip existing institutions with information and support necessary to recognize, assess and deal with symptoms of radicalization. For example, informational DVD’s have been provided to primary schools for teachers to present to children and student unions of university campuses are being utilized to disseminate counter-extremist narratives.

In the end, the UK’s *Prevent* strategy has fully surfaced as an all-encompassing CVE program. Though it has seen heavy criticisms of spying on its citizens and being too-broadly based, it is a robust program with intentions of addressing the roots of terrorism and is currently in the process of correcting its mistakes and fine-tuning its capabilities.

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<sup>135</sup> United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Home Department, *Prevent*, 63.

## **Saudi Arabia's PRAC Strategy**

The CVE program in Saudi Arabia materialized in response to militant Islamist domestic terror campaigns between the years of 1995 and 2003. Like the UK program, Saudi Arabia recognized that security measures alone could not effectively address the issue of violent extremism and therefore developed the Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare (PRAC) strategy. Also like the UK, Saudi Arabia sees violent extremism as a result of radical ideologies, specifically radical Islam. However, unlike the UK, Saudi Arabia has the advantage of being able to address the messages of radical Islam from a point of legitimacy due to its Islamic roots. Thus, the PRAC strategy aims to “cast extremism as illegitimate for having perverted true Islam” and “aspires to help misguided believers return to the correct understandings of Islam.”<sup>136</sup> Where a key concern of *Prevent* is avoiding taking the position of religious arbiter, Saudi Arabia and PRAC seek to do just that. In doing so, Saudi Arabia's CVE program not only works to advocate and develop an Islam supported by the government, but also works to reaffirm state authority.<sup>137</sup>

PRAC is composed of three separate but integrated programs:

1. Deterring individuals from becoming involved in extremism.
2. Rehabilitation of extremists and individuals who get involved with them.
3. Providing aftercare programs to facilitate reintegration into society after their release from custody.

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<sup>136</sup> Christopher Boucek, “Saudi Arabia's ‘Soft’ Counterterrorism Strategy: Prevention, Rehabilitation and Aftercare,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. No. 97 (September 2008), [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp97\\_boucek\\_saudi\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp97_boucek_saudi_final.pdf), 4.

<sup>137</sup> Abdullah F. Ansary, “Combating Extremism: A Brief Overview of Saudi Arabia's Approach.” *Middle East Policy Council* 15, No. 2 (2008).

**Prevention.** The government has established hundreds of programs aimed at prevention, ranging from educational programs to advertisement programs. These institutions, most of which are implemented through the “guidance department” at the Ministry of Interior, are designed to short-circuit radicalization by confronting extremism through the promotion of a moderate, pious Islam. The target audience of this effort isn’t extremists, but rather the larger population that may sympathize and support extremism and beliefs that might lead to extremism. In essence, this part of PRAC is similar to Objective Three in *Prevent*, in that it works with existing institutions in order to develop and disseminate a counter-narrative to violent extremism. The difference with this area of PRAC, as mentioned before, is the ability to utilize religion as a means to develop that counter-narrative. Examples include:

1. Some schools hold writing contests and art competitions in which students “depict different topics such as the impact of terrorism on the population or the role of the public in protecting the country from terrorism.”<sup>138</sup>
2. Evidence suggests that a large portion of radicalization within schools come from teachers who use their position to preach radical ideas to their students. Thus, a teacher monitoring process has been implemented that sends problematic teachers to King Fahd Security College where they go through a series of five classes aimed at retraining. Those with little progress are placed in positions away from students while those who fail to progress are dismissed.
3. Government supported activities such as sporting events, car racing, and camel racing in an effort replace summer camps and questionable religious retreats often organized by extremist groups.
4. Large-scale public information and communication campaigns utilize billboards and other advertisements to focus on the evils of terrorism and support moderate Islam. One image featured two clasped hands, one of a person in traditional Arab dress, and the other in uniform, encouraging cooperation with security personnel and shunning extremists.

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<sup>138</sup> Boucek, “Saudi Arabia’s ‘Soft’ Counterterrorism Strategy,” 9.

**Rehabilitation.** Where the Prevention area of PRAC is focused on the population surrounding extremists, this section is a concerted effort geared towards rehabilitating and reeducating violent extremists and its sympathizers through “intensive religious debates and psychological counseling.”<sup>139</sup> The center of gravity for this area is a counseling program that is administered by the Advisory Committee in the Ministry of Interior. This Advisory Committee is made up of four subcommittees, each tasked with different portions of the counseling process. The Religious Subcommittee is the largest one, made up of over 100 clerics, scholars and university professors, and engages in religious dialogue and debate with detainees. The Psychological and Social Subcommittee, comprised of roughly 50 psychologists, psychiatrists, social scientists and researchers, is responsible for evaluating a detainee’s behavior and psychological progress throughout the program. The Security Subcommittee is tasked with monitoring security risks, behavior and making release recommendations. They are also responsible for monitoring detainees after release. Lastly, the Media Subcommittee produces materials that reinforce various messages that counter extremist ideas and support basic tenets of Islam. These materials are used throughout mosques and schools and come in various formats such pamphlets, books and TV programs. Together, these subcommittees work together to convey to the prisoners that extremists do not care about them, but rather use them to advance their own violent agendas. In conjunction, the subcommittees work to demonstrate that they and the Saudi government do care about them and that it will do as much as it can to support them.

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<sup>139</sup> Boucek, “Saudi Arabia’s ‘Soft’ Counterterrorism Strategy,” 11.

The counseling process begins inside prison and subsequently moves to a rehabilitation facility. Central to the success of the rehabilitation program has been the declaration on behalf of the Advisory Committee upon initially meeting a prisoner that they are not employed by or associated with the Ministry of Interior. Instead, they stress that they are independent religious scholars, which is intended to create a necessary level of credibility in the eyes of the prisoner. Furthermore, the program stresses that those interacting with detainees must not lecture them, but instead engage with them in discussion and debate. Thus, in the first meeting, Advisory Committee members simply listen to the detainee and ask questions regarding the motivations behind their actions and their beliefs. Only after listening to the detainee explain their motives and opinions do the scholars attempt to convince them that the religious justifications for their actions are wrong and based upon a corrupted, incomplete understanding of Islam. To do this, the Advisory Committee runs two programs, one short program lasting a couple of hours and a long program that lasts several weeks. After the respective program is complete, an exam is given to address the prisoner's progress. Those who pass the exam move onto the next phase, those who do not pass repeat the course. Due to the discursive nature of this process, the advancement from one stage to the next is not always clear.

Though significant attention is attributed towards counseling and reeducating the prisoner, similar, if not equal attention is given to the prisoner's family. If the prisoner is the head of the household, the Advisory Committee has the ability to support the prisoner's family by providing them with an alternate salary, schooling and health care. The motive behind this is "to offset any hardship and further radicalization brought on by

the arrest of family members.”<sup>140</sup> Thus, not only is the issue of radical ideologies addressed at the individual level, but it is also mitigated at the family level.

**Aftercare Programs.** Aftercare programs work to ease the process of transitioning from life within the program into society. Once a prisoner has completed the previous process to the satisfaction of the Advisory Committee members, they are transferred to an external rehabilitation facility. This facility, called the Care Rehabilitation Center (CRC), acts as a halfway house, facilitating the transition back into society. The CRC offers an improved living environment from prison; detainees live in dormitory-style housing, have access to open grassy areas, and participate in group activities. Additionally, guards in the CRC do not wear uniforms and frequently socialize with detainees, often participating with them in group sports. The CRC provides the detainee with brief and recurring exposure to life outside the state’s custody while also providing staff members the ability to observe and monitor the detainees behavior in an environment that is similar to real life, allowing them to test the sincerity of the detainees progress. After spending roughly 8-12 weeks at the CRC, the detainee will be released if staff members deem they are ready.

Once they are released, continuous social support is provided in order to prevent recidivism. Such support includes assistance in locating a job, obtaining a mode of transportation and leasing an apartment. Furthermore, former detainees are encouraged to continue meeting with those staff members they interacting with while in the program. They are also encouraged to settle down and start a family, since evidence suggests doing so will likely prevent any engagement in violence. To support this, the government offers

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<sup>140</sup> Boucek, “Saudi Arabia’s ‘Soft’ Counterterrorism Strategy,” 15.

to pay for weddings, dowries and other pre-marriage arrangements. In essence, through these efforts, the PRAC strategy goes beyond the end of the program to continue support and ensure sustainment.<sup>141</sup>

## **United States**

In 2011, the White House published Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States and its subsequent Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), both of which emanate from the National Security Strategy published in May of 2011 and embody the US CVE programs. The SIP was ultimately the product of collaboration between various agencies including DOJ, FBI, DOS, DOD, HHS, and NCTC and it determined that traditional national security or law enforcement agencies such as DHS, DOJ, and the FBI would execute many of the programs and activities outlined. As such, DOJ, DHS, and NCTC selected three cities, Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis, to run pilot CVE programs “to identify promising practices” that would inform and inspire community efforts to help eliminate conditions that lead to alienation and violent extremism. According to the Attorneys General office, these cities were chosen “based on their existing achievements with community engagement;” however, considering the Boston Marathon attacks in 2015 and the fact that Minneapolis is home to the largest Somali community in the U.S. from which several individuals have left to join al-Shabaab, the reason for the choice of these cities is up for argument. Led by the U.S. Attorneys in each district, these cities developed CVE frameworks that outlined the ideas and efforts to be pursued in order to meet the stated goals. Across the board, each pilot

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<sup>141</sup> Boucek, “Saudi Arabia’s ‘Soft’ Counterterrorism Strategy,” 15.

program aims to engage the local community such that all efforts are community-driven. Additionally, each program seeks to utilize the collaboration of some combination of government agencies and non-government local stakeholders such as Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), social service providers, schools, and faith-based organizations.

**Los Angeles.** The LA Framework<sup>142</sup> was published in February 2015 after years of development between multiple agencies and stakeholders. The three pillars of the framework are prevention, intervention, and interdiction, which are meant to mitigate a variety of risk factors, as described below:

Prevention addresses communal needs and focuses on expanding engagement as well as promoting healthy and resilient communities through community-driven programs and initiatives. Intervention, or “Off Ramps,” focuses on individual needs. The interdiction component addresses security and community safety risks. Both prevention and intervention are early mechanisms of risk mitigation, whereas interdiction is a mechanism for disrupting criminal threats.

Prevention in the framework is defined as collective efforts aimed at closing a range of gaps and social openings by which violent ideologies can find legitimacy.

Prevention is achieved, according to the framework, through the progression of expanding engagement, building networks, and collaboratively delivering community driven programs. These prevention strategies “aim to build healthy, resilient communities where it is more difficult for violent ideologies to take root,” and form the bedrock of the LA Framework.

*Expanding Engagement.* The engagement component of prevention is meant to produce ongoing dialogue between government agencies and the local community, in

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<sup>142</sup> United States Department of Justice, *The Los Angeles Framework for Countering Violent Extremism*, (February 2015), <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Los%20Angeles%20Framework%20for%20CVE-Full%20Report.pdf>.

which the government agencies are to be at the forefront of the engagement efforts. Formats identified for government-driven engagements include public forums, town halls, and interfaith events, among others. The City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission (City HRC), an already existing entity that provides a space to convene diverse communities and connect needed resources, plays an active role in advocating for access and inclusion of diverse communities, which local community leaders reciprocate to create open, two-way dialogue. Additionally, law enforcement agencies are to work towards strengthening trust and building community partnerships through community policing and engagement strategies aimed at effectively addressing community needs and concerns.

*Building Networks.* Through such engagement strategies, the framework seeks to build and establish networks, defined as relationships with key partners that can build coalitions, provide resources, and expand the reach of community-based programs. At the time of publishing, the city was in the early stages of creating sustainable networks and identified overarching categories of potential partners such as the Department of Mental Health in the public sector and media companies in the private sector. The framework claims that the city, in the months before publishing, “had begun to move in the direction of expanding these networks of partners.”

*Community-Led Initiatives.* Lastly, the framework seeks to utilize and deliver community-led initiatives, which may be entirely separate from CVE itself but still relevant. Examples of this include academic programs such as Bayan Clermont, social service organizations such as the Niswa Association, and faith-based partnerships such as the New Ground. While these are examples of initiatives that exist and operate separate

from CVE, there are also CVE-specific examples such as the Safe Spaces Initiative run by the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC). Next steps in the area are stated to include the need to establish more direct links between the networks established mentioned above, and these community driven initiatives in effort to identify and provide needed resources to support them. “Overall, community-driven local programs aim to address challenges around identity formation, integration, intergroup relations, political discourse, and social services.”

While prevention programs focus on fostering community resiliency, stakeholders involved with the LA Framework have been working to build a comprehensive, community-led intervention program that would provide individuals already deemed to be on a path towards violent extremism with so-called “off-ramps.” These “off-ramps” are meant to provide rehabilitative care in the form of social services, mental health, faith-based and other services for at-risk individuals in effort to steer them off the path towards violent extremism. The framework proclaims that no formal intervention program currently exists, but that “interventions do occur by parents, educators, members of clergy, and others when individuals who need help are identified.” The framework goes on to explain that there are several outstanding issues that need to be addressed before making a formal program; these issues are as follows:

- A reliable analysis and assessment of legal liabilities for interveners;
- A more robust inventory of available resources;
- Strategies to ensure that concerns about civil rights, civil liberties, and data privacy protection are adequately addressed;
- Credible research-based baselines for indicators of violent extremism; and

- A mechanism for providing collaborative input into the intervention process that avoids securitizing the process, while recognizing potential risks to the community and ensuring appropriate mitigation responses are utilized.

The framework describes interdiction efforts, such as investigation, arrest, and potential prosecution, as an important component that is “critical to stopping individuals who are intent on committing violence, investigating crimes associated with extremist violence, creating an environment where the public feels safe to go about their daily lives, and serving as a deterrent to those who may aspire to commit acts of violence.” The framework notes, however, that efforts are being made within law enforcement to ensure, whenever appropriate, that alternatives to interdiction are maximized.

Challenges. The complexity of the framework and its components is duly recognized at its end, including the following challenges in going forward.

1. Identifying and increasing access to additional resources, grants, and other funding sources to facilitate and support capacity-building and community-driven initiatives.
2. Expanding prevention efforts networks within and across neighboring counties to ensure continuity and to facilitate a “regional” and “whole of nation” approach.
3. Expanding and enhancing engagement efforts with women and youth so that stronger partnerships and leadership can be developed within those groups.
4. Expanding networks to better link with local education, mental health, emergency management, and health and social services organizations.
5. Addressing the complex legal and liability issues that arise in the context of developing intervention models.
6. Developing capacity for enhanced outreach and social media influence, both at a government and community-based level.
7. Developing better methodologies for effectively measuring the impact of CVE outreach, engagement methods, and initiatives.

8. Addressing community reluctance to engage with government partners, including a pervasive grassroots antipathy to the concept of “CVE,” entrenched negative perception of law enforcement, and a view that law enforcement methods securitize relationships, stigmatize communities, violate privacy rights and civil liberties, and constitute a form of spying.
9. Engaging with the community to clarify and discuss the methods, independent oversight procedures, and goals of law enforcement in its fight against violent extremism.
10. Given limited resources, engaging in continuous efforts to counter the narrative of extremists, while balancing the need to address day-to-day crime.
11. Enhancing civic engagement that reaches more grassroots community members and not just community leaders.

**Boston: A Framework for Prevention and Intervention Strategies.** The

Boston Framework<sup>143</sup>, published in February of 2015, is set up in a way to incorporate violent extremism into already existing violent prevention efforts. United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz states in the framework’s introduction, “throughout my tenure, I have worked with nontraditional partners, like schools, service providers and academia, to find ways to reduce gun and gang violence through non-law enforcement methods. I believe that these innovative strategies are not only effective, but necessary in order to develop a framework to counter violent extremism in the Greater Boston region.” She goes on to explain that the efforts outlined in the framework are meant to complement, not replace, traditional tools of law enforcement. Like the other two frameworks, the Boston Framework is the product of collaboration between various agencies and stakeholders in the Greater Boston region, coordinated by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Massachusetts.

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<sup>143</sup> United States Department of Justice, *A Framework for Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Incorporating Violent Extremism Into Violence Prevention Efforts*, (February 2015), <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/usao-ma/pages/attachments/2015/02/18/framework.pdf>.

The goal of the framework is “to increase the capacity of community and government as a way to protect vulnerable individuals from engagement in and the nation from violent extremism.” Violent extremists are defined as “individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further personal, political or social objectives, sometimes without direction from or influence by a foreign actor,” and countering violent extremism is considered as focusing “on using prevention and intervention approaches as a way to minimize the risk of individuals being inspired by violent extremist ideologies or recruited by violent extremist groups.” As such, to achieve the goal, the frame has been designed to “allow local communities the flexibility to define their problem areas, create achievable goals and objectives, and develop realistic implementation plans,” such that the specific needs of the local community can be met.

The framework clarifies, however, that for the Greater Boston region, CVE efforts do not include a law enforcement suppression component, such as the “Interdiction” component of the LA Framework. Rather, those suppression components are considered to be a part of counterterrorism efforts and are utilized once an individual has begun to prepare for or engage in ideologically motivated violence. Furthermore, such that the framework aims to act as an extension of existing violence prevention and intervention strategies, it is noted that the proposed solutions “are not entirely unique from other prevention related strategies that are currently being implemented (or can be implemented) through broader efforts by public health, mental health, non-profit organizations, private partnerships, government and others. Rather than create a program specifically labeled Countering Violent Extremism, a more effective approach might be to expand the capacity and resources of agencies and organizations to ensure that they are

able to enhance the work that they are already doing as well as leverage existing successful programs to help address violent extremism.” This is due to the fact that endorsing specific CVE programs for a certain community that has not specifically asked for such programs could stigmatize the program and its efforts, which could be counterproductive and lead to further disenfranchised individuals.

Considering these complexities among others when working towards the states’ goal, the framework is formatted in a way that identifies problem areas and follows them with solutions to consider:

1. Some young people may be at greater risk of feeling isolated and alienated, making them more vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists.
2. Providing services to individuals before mobilization toward violent extremism is challenging when there is a lack of understanding regarding violent extremism and limited intervention programs.
3. Social media and other media platforms are being used to recruit individuals to join extremist groups and to encourage individuals to engage in violence.
4. U.S. policy and events around the globe can frustrate, anger and, at times, influence some to think that there is no effective alternative other than to express grievances or solidarity through the use of violence.
5. Distrust between government and non-government hinders collaboration and effective decision-making and problem solving.
6. Lack of knowledge in mainstream society regarding religions, cultures and thought systems which are unfamiliar or are maligned in the media, contributes to poor perceptions that fuel and mutually reinforce fear and estrangement.
7. Individuals convicted of hate crimes and terrorism offenses require specialized support and services before and after release from prison.

**Minneapolis-St. Paul Framework.** The Minneapolis framework<sup>144</sup> largely rests on the fact that the city is home to the largest Somali immigrant population in the United States and aims to build off of the alleged long-standing relationship between the Somali community and local law enforcement. The framework states that several police departments, including the Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office and St. Paul Police Department, regularly host Somali organizations in order to foster and develop an open dialogue such that they can work together to stem the tide of recruitment into extremist groups. The shortest and least detailed framework among the three, it was developed “after months of listening to the community about its needs as well as reviewing available research and talking with experts.” After identifying the root causes of radicalization, the framework describes three components--engagement, prevention, and intervention—it will utilize to address the causes, which, due to its brevity, will be listed in full.

Root causes:

- Disaffected youth,
- A deepening disconnect between youth and religious leaders,
- Internal identity crisis,
- Community isolation,
- Lack of opportunity—including high unemployment, lack of activities for youth, and few mentors.

The framework envisions more engagement between law enforcement and the community to continue to build trust and develop relationships. There are several Somali officers in local law enforcement. They are highly successful and well thought of in the

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<sup>144</sup> United States Department of Justice, *Building Community Resilience Minneapolis-St. Paul Pilot Program*, (February 2015), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/file/642121/download>.

community. The framework includes support for additional Somali law enforcement officers, including increasing the number of entry-level positions, such as Community Liaison Officers and Parking Enforcement Officers, with the goal of guiding and mentoring candidates into full-time officer positions. In addition to continuing to build up law enforcement engagement, trust and relationships need to be enhanced with other partners and local stakeholders. This includes city, county and state government agencies and corporations working to increase their engagement and connection to Somali Minnesotans. Another component of this framework brings in federal agency partners such as the Transportation Security Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to help educate community members on airport screening processes and provide direct assistance to community members that have expressed airport related concerns.

Similar to other prevention strategies, the framework includes an increase in youth programming such as after-school activities and mentor programs, higher education scholarships and job opportunities. There will also be a social media campaign providing positive messaging to the Somali community. As true in other at-risk populations, providing more opportunities and positive messages for youth increases public safety. Somali Minnesotan youth are an underserved community. The federal government has a successful history working with local communities and providing funding, research and other support for youth programming and mentoring. The Pilot Program Framework envisions expanding these programs to include Somali Minnesota youth. The Pilot Program has already brought together several partner organizations to develop culturally competent programming.

There will be two intervention models developed, one working within the school systems and one working within the community. Both will be community-led. The school model will expand a current model, which connects youth workers from the community, bridging the gap between youth, their parents and the school system. These workers will spend time in the lunchroom and in non-classroom settings, building relationships and trust at school. They will provide connections and continuity during school and after for both parents and the students. The second intervention model is based on community volunteers, with mothers, community organizations, religious leaders and mental health professionals working directly with families before law enforcement is ever involved.

## **Conclusions**

Though the CVE programs in the UK and Saudi Arabia are each profoundly shaped by cultural, political, and legal elements unique to its country, the challenges faced by the *Prevent* strategy and the religious nature of the PRAC strategy bear useful insights for the further implementation of the CVE programs in the U.S. Firstly, the challenge faced by the *Prevent* strategy regarding the securitization of CVE programs is an important lesson to heed. As described by Khalida Khan, a British-Muslim activist and founder of the An-Nisa Society, an organization focused on the welfare of British-Muslim families, “we believe that it will be more productive for the government to build trust, and address the needs of the Muslim community in the interest of social justice, rather than through the lens of anti-terrorism;”<sup>145</sup> because “without the prerequisite of trust and long established engagement, local authorities, police and others are likely to

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<sup>145</sup> Khalida Khan, “Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) & PREVENT: A response from the Muslim Community,” An-Nisa Society, 2009, 51.

find suspicion and distrust [from Muslim communities] if their first encounter is about preventing violent extremism.”<sup>146</sup> Such distrust and suspicious will and has proven to be counterproductive in regards to the goals of *Prevent*, and will likely be as well for U.S. CVE policies. However, ways in which to effectively avoid securitization of CVE policies while still addressing and achieving the goals of CVE have yet to be established.

Second, in regards to the effectiveness of the RICU in *Prevent* concerning its work in producing and disseminating counter-narratives, it was noted that, while the endeavor was well-placed, it failed to make an impact as much of the work done was not thoroughly circulated. As a result, it was stated that further research was needed on how to create powerful and specific narratives that will reach and impact the intended audiences. This, too, is an important lesson for the U.S. to heed, as there are various Islamic organizations actively working against militant Islamist ideology and terrorism that could benefit from being more widely circulated.

While the U.S. does not have the ability to claim religious legitimacy in its CVE programs as Saudi Arabia does, the way in which Saudi Arabia uses its religious authority to implement its PRAC strategy points to the importance of Muslim communities and Islamic organizations in the U.S. To start, the use of school writing programs and extra-curricular activities in the prevention area of PRAC is worth exploring, as it provides young individuals with formal, yet interactive organizations and activities through which they can meld their Islamic and national backgrounds as mentioned in Chapter One. Furthermore, the use of intensive religious debates in the rehabilitation area of the strategy indicates the importance of an open, safe space through

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 25.

which individuals can discuss relevant ideas and theology under the instruction of religious clerics.<sup>147</sup> These debates allow individuals to discuss militant Islamist ideology as well as become exposed to other interpretations of Islam in order to hopefully decide against militancy.

The pilot programs of the U.S. noticeably address these lessons in one way or another, by nominally stating the goal of engaging with communities and working with existing efforts, including non-CVE related ones, and religious organizations; however, in implementing these programs, it is important to keep in mind the reason for the policies, which in this case is to empower American communities to prevent violent extremism

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<sup>147</sup> Ronald R Krebs, “Rethinking the Battle of Ideas: How the United States Can Help Muslim Moderates.” Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2008.

## CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY

### RECOMMENDATIONS

All things considered, several clear guidelines emerge for the continuation of CVE policy in the U.S in regards to addressing militant Islamist ideology. The importance of Muslim communities has been repeatedly stated throughout the academic and policy worlds; however, in light of the lessons learned in Chapter One, it can be seen why they are significant.<sup>148</sup> Those who are potentially at risk of radicalization are, as the Minneapolis framework suggests, searching for their identity, for their place, in U.S. society. They are working to successfully merge all aspects of their background—their ethnicity, religion, nationality, family etc.—into one cohesive identity. Given the current state of turmoil surrounding the religion of Islam and its followers, such an endeavor has become increasingly more difficult over the years as different parts of their background seem to clash. Essentially, they are working to establish what it means to be a Muslim American, or whether the merging of those two identities is possible.<sup>149</sup> The experiences they have during this process will likely shape their conclusion, which, in a roundabout way, has the potential to determine whether or not they turn towards Islamist or militant Islamist ideologies. As demonstrated in the first chapter, militant Islamist ideology is

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<sup>148</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, “The Role of Non-Violent Islamists in Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization: The European Debate,” 101, in “Countering Violence Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies,” 7, edited by Laurie Fenstermacher and Todd Leventhal. Air Force Research Laboratory, 2011.

<sup>149</sup> Ronald R. Krebs, “Cruel To Be Kind: Why Washington should not reach out to Muslim Moderates.” *Slate*. January 2008.  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/foreigners/2008/01/cruel\\_to\\_be\\_kind.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2008/01/cruel_to_be_kind.html)

readily available to fulfill an individual's need for identity. This points to the absolute importance of the incorporation of the Muslim community, an importance that has been recognized in all three U.S. Pilot Programs as well as in the UK's Prevent Program.

Earlier, it was mentioned that by looking at what militant Islamist ideology provides its adherents, policy makers can work to develop alternative, non-violent means by which similar notions can be achieved. Militant Islamist ideology provides individuals with a sense of purpose, a cause to believe in, and solutions to their problems. As Dawson described, these are the benefits individuals believe they are obtaining from militant Islamist ideology. This simply means that these individuals need to be able to find those values to an equal or greater degree here in the United States. As the Minneapolis-St. Paul Framework lists, there is a lack of opportunity for those in danger of becoming radicalized. Of course, there are plenty of existing social programs throughout each state that are meant to develop and provide these benefits; however, the degree to which they are being utilized by immigrant and Muslim communities is worth studying and improving upon. Thus, the endeavor to provide such programs as listed in the Pilot Programs is a step in the right direction; however, as mentioned by the Boston Framework and demonstrated by the U.K. *Prevent* program, providing these programs solely for the sake of individuals not becoming radicalized, or 'securitizing' them, makes the effort disingenuous and could possibly further isolate and alienate the Muslim community.<sup>150</sup> Thus, this thesis agrees with the approach of the Boston Framework, in which it is working to build off of already existing initiatives without necessarily

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<sup>150</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Countering Violent Extremism in the United States* (CRS Report No. R42553) (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 10.

associating them with CVE. In this case, it is mostly outreach efforts that need to be aggressively pursued in order to reach and gain participation of the Muslim community in already existing social programs meant to foster community involvement.

Law enforcement, of course, plays a crucial role in CVE and the larger counter-terrorism strategy. In an even broader sense, they also play a crucial role in making communities feel safe and defending and representing the values and laws of the United States.<sup>151</sup> All of these roles can and will likely have an impact on a Muslim's pursuit to establish their identity as a Muslim American, whether positive or negative. As all of the CVE programs demonstrated, there are separate stages of CVE depending on the degree to which an individual has become radicalized. Each stage merits a different response and participation of law enforcement. Considering the role of identity, the preemptive stage of CVE is of particular importance. This is the stage where law enforcement can, arguably, have the most impact. The more the Muslim community sees that law enforcement is on 'their side,' through interacting with them and providing services and protection, the more they are likely to feel a part of and identify with the American community.<sup>152</sup> An unfortunate though somewhat understandable byproduct of the War of Terror has been an increase in 'Islamophobia' and Islamophobic attacks against Muslims and Islamic symbols. While an unfortunate situation, such events provide opportunities for law

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<sup>151</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Countering Violent Extremism in the United States*; 9, 12.

<sup>152</sup> Hedieh Mirahamadi, "Partnering With Muslim Communities to Counter Radicalization," 97, In "Countering Violence Extremism Scientific Methods & Strategies," 7, edited by Laurie Fenstermacher and Todd Leventhal. Air Force Research Laboratory, 2011.

enforcement to protect the Muslim community, thereby conveying the message that Muslims are protected by the United States.<sup>153</sup>

Thus, this thesis recommends the following in regards to how to effectively address militant Islamist ideology in the implementation of US CVE policy:

- Strongly consider ways in which to make CVE efforts, particularly in outreach and prevention, distinct from counter-terrorism efforts in order to avoid securitizing CVE and further isolating the Muslim community.
- Demonstrate consistent fairness and justice in prosecuting hate crimes in general, and particularly against the Muslim community in order to convey the message that U.S. law enforcement is unbiased and there to protect them. Consider publicizing such instances in order to circulate the image of U.S. law enforcement protecting Muslim communities.
- Continue to research and pursue methods to amplify and partner with the voices of existing Islamic organizations actively working against violent extremism.
- Continue to meet with Muslim communities and discuss ways in which to improve CVE policies and share with them information that might help in local, private CVE programs/efforts, such as ways in which militant Islamist recruiters are reaching out to individuals.
- Consider publicizing conjoined efforts and meetings between U.S. government and law enforcement with Muslim communities in order to convey the image of working with instead of working against Muslim communities.
- Allow the space for and seek to facilitate the development of Islamic programs and institutions that work to support Muslim families and individuals with social services. However, be wary of and continue researching the possible effects of directly funding such programs and activities.
- Continue to pursue research projects on how to effectively implement and measure CVE programs.

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<sup>153</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Countering Violent Extremism in the United States*, 8.

While these suggestions are not directly concerned with the development of individual and cultural identities, they will likely help facilitate an environment in which Muslim communities can comfortably ally with the U.S. government in CVE efforts while developing and providing services that can help individuals develop a Muslim-American identity.

In the various fields associated with CVE and terrorism, there are few things that scholars agree on. Indeed, definitions for long-standing terms such as terrorism, ideology, and identity are by no means established. However, one thing everyone can agree on is the complex nature of CVE and its associated concepts. There are seemingly endless contributing factors, each worth considering and exploring for their value in the pursuit of ending terrorism. This thesis, however, looked at CVE through the lens of identity in order to convey its importance and utility in understanding how to best move forward in the emerging U.S. CVE policy.

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## APPENDIX

Due to the mutual rise in Islamist terrorism and the analysis thereof, a variety of terms have been and continue to be used to describe the act and perpetrators of Islamist terrorism. Generally speaking, these terms are often some variation or combination of the words Islam, jihad, fundamentalist, militant, extremist, and radical. Although choice in term usage may seem trivial, it can have broader, unintended implications if done carelessly. As Khaled al-Fadl explains, “labels do not just describe; they also judge.”<sup>154</sup> Using one term over another could mistakenly include people and concepts that could otherwise be useful in fighting the ideas and people the U.S. is trying to defeat. As such, this thesis has deliberately used the terms ‘militant Islamist’ and ‘Islamist terrorism’ in order to convey the distinction between formal Islam and the devised ideology and its modified definitions.

Reasoning behind this deliberate choice largely rests on reasoning provided by Dr. Khaled Abou el-Fadl, Islamic jurist and Professor of Law at UCLA, in which he uses a process of exclusion to choose an appropriate label in his book *The Great Theft*. Abou el-Fadl disqualifies ‘fundamentalist’ due to the fact that ‘all Islamic groups and organizations claim to adhere to the fundamentals of Islam.’<sup>155</sup> He clarifies that using the term to describe Christian groups that insist on the literal meaning of the scripture “appears to be quite reasonable;” however, in the Islamic context it is not, because the appropriate Arabic word, *usuli*, means “one who relies on the fundamentals or basics.” Therefore, the expression ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ conveys the impression that only

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<sup>154</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2009), 15.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

fundamentalists follow the basics of the faith, the Qur'an and the hadith. As such, "many liberal, progressive, or moderate Muslims would describe themselves as *usulis*, or fundamentalists, without thinking that this carries a negative connotation."<sup>156</sup>

Abou el-Fadl also deems terms such as radical and extremist as unsuitable because groups like the Taliban and al-Qaida are not always radical or extremist regarding all issues, but rather absolutist. It is for this reason that Abou el-Fadl chooses to use the term 'puritan' throughout his book to describe such groups; "the earmark of their thinking is its absolutist and unequivocal quality."<sup>157</sup> However, this thesis has forgone the use of 'puritan' due its connotation in the West to the Protestant reform movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, another, equally appropriate term was needed.

'Militant' is precluded on three accounts. If the term is used to mean willingness to use force, Abou el-Fadl argues that Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all accept that the use of force is justifiable under certain circumstances. Second, if by 'militant' one means the use of offensive or aggressive force, he claims that nearly everyone claims to use force only in self-defense. Third, if excessive force is meant by the use of 'militant,' Abou el-Fadl deems it unhelpful as it also applies to many factions and nations. 'Islamist' is also excluded because generally, it refers to Muslims that believe Islamic theology and law should serve as an authoritative frame of reference in any social or political condition, but "it does not necessarily mean believing in a theocratic state or imposing draconian laws upon an innocent group of people."<sup>158</sup> Despite this, this thesis opts for the combination of 'militant' and 'Islamist,' in that it sufficiently fills the gaps identified by

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<sup>156</sup> Khaled Abou el-Fadl, *The Great Theft*, 18.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

Abou el-Fadl and appropriately maintains the distinction but also relation between Islam and militant Islamist ideology. The word ‘militant’ is used to describe the use of excessive force and as a modifier of ‘Islamist,’ thereby eliminating any vagueness that could be used to describe other militant forces. Similarly, ‘Islamist’ is used to specify the group of Muslims who advocate for political Islam, but the use of the modifier ‘militant’ further specifies the group of Islamists that are willing to use excessive force to achieve their goals.

Mary Habeck provided similar reasoning in her book *Knowing the Enemy*, although she ultimately chose the use of the term ‘jihadi’. In her argument against the use of the terms ‘fundamentalism’ and ‘Islamism’, she states:

Some analysts have suggested that the attackers should be identified with ‘fundamentalism’ or ‘Islamism,’ the reforming Islam that calls for a revival of the religion and a “return” of Islam to political power. But Islamism likewise represents neither a unified nor uniform phenomenon. The term describes, rather, a complex of often antagonistic groups with differing beliefs, goals, and methodologies for attaining their ends. Some of these groups (such as Turkey’s Justice and Development Party [the AK]) are committed to democratic processes and to the international system. To identify parties like the AK with the terrorists of 9/11 threatens to confuse rather than clarify the situation.<sup>159</sup>

Thus, similar to Abou el-Fadl, she disqualifies the use of Islamism due to its vagueness. Her choice of the labels ‘jihadi’ and ‘jihadist’ is made in order to identify their “commitment to the violent overthrow of the existing international system and its replacement by an all-encompassing Islamic state.” This definition accurately captures what is meant in this thesis by the term ‘militant Islamist.’ While this thesis agrees with Habeck’s definition, it does not agree with her choice of terms due to it promoting conflation of the Islamic and Islamist definitions of jihad.

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<sup>159</sup> Mary Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy*, Chapter 1.

