Life & Peace INSTITUTE

COMPENDIUM ON

PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM:

INSIGHTS FROM THE HORN

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The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international peacebuilding organisation that works in partnership with civil society in nonviolent conflict transformation. Our approach is based on an understanding that conflict is a natural part of societies, with the potential for both constructive and destructive change, and that peace can only be achieved through the active involvement of the people that are affected by the conflict, and that their voices and their actions matter. LPI promotes inclusive community-based peacebuilding processes, with a focus on youth and women.

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Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AIAI	Al-Itihaad Al-Islamiya
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
BRICS	Building Resilience in Civil Society
CAPs	County Action Plans
CAS	Comprehensive Approach to Security
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CT	counterterrorism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECDB	Extremist Crime Database
EIJM	Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement
EPDRF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GoU	Government of Uganda
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
HoA	Horn of Africa
HARP	Horn of Africa Regional Programme
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPOA	Independent Policing Oversight Authority
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
ISSP	IGAD Security Sector Program
KNCHR	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LPI	Life & Peace Institute
M & E	Monitoring and evaluation
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MSF	Muslim Scholars Forum
NCTC	National Counter-Terrorism Centre
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
NIF	National Islamic Front
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NSCVE	National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism
NTC	National Technical Committee
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
POTA	Prevention of Torture Act
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
RVI	Rift Valley Institute
SDFG	Sudan Democracy First Group
SIP	Strategic Implementation Plan),
SNA	Somali National Army
SNCCT	Sudan National Commission for Counter- Terrorism
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SST	State Sponsor of Terrorism
TNI	Transnational Institute
UN	United Nations
UNOCT	United Nation Office of Counter-Terrorism
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	UN Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	Violent Extremism
VEO	Violent Extremist Organisation

Foreword

Driven by inquality, deprivation and marginalisation, violent extremism are among the major challenges to peace and security in the continent and particularly in the Horn of Africa. Over the past years, the global community has called for attention on the prevention side of combatting violent extremism (VE) and shedding light on the complex drivers of VE. Likewise, civil society organisations have also been advocating for the de-securitisation of P/CVE strategies, imploring on the need to adopt a more holistic, human security approaches. For the past four years, as part of its efforts to produce knowledge and learning that can contribute to improved policies and actions on strategic regional issues, the Life and Peace Institute's Horn of African Regional Programme (LPI-HARP) has been undertaking a multi-year research-to-policy-and-practice dialogue initiative assessing the effectiveness of responses to VE in the Horn of Africa, by critically appraising the emerging field of practice of P/CVE from a broader peacebuilding perspective.

This Compendium hopes to stimulate discourse and promote a continuous analysis and reflection of the policy and practice of P/CVE and peacebuilding that will furnish to the needs of experts, academicians, donors along with interested stakeholders and professionals in both the peacebuilding and the P/CVE spheres. Further, I commend this Compendium as a significant initiative that engages in critical dialogues, brings light to bear on the national and regional approaches to P/CVE that are advancing CVE policies and practices to promote security cooperation in the region and generate knowledge on practice in P/CVE programming.

I hope that this timely and relevant Compendium will inspire further learnings, analysis and documentation on emergent policies and practices in the field of P/CVE in the Horn of Africa context and encourage the critical conversations to be taken up by policymakers, peacebuilding and P/CVE practitioners, scholars, civil society community donors and the wider public. Further, it is our collective hope that the Compendium will provide the Member States reflection and knowledge on the successes and lessons learnt on the potential effectiveness of emergent P/CVE programmes and which contribute to the creation of peaceful societies and greater social cohesion.
We are grateful to our partners, colleagues, and donors for being part of our journey and complementing our peacebuilding and nonviolent conflict transformation efforts.

Yemisrach Kebede

Head of Addis Ababa Regional Office and HARP Programme Manger

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Introduction to the LPI Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Compendium

The Emergence of the Sector

Since the events of September 11th 2001, knowledge and experience in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism has become increasingly developed; a consequence and reflection of both the expansion of actors and approaches involved, as well as the almost twenty years of investment.

In September 2014, the UN Security Council (UNSC) referred to 'countering violent extremism' (CVE) for the first time in Resolution 2178. In February 2015, the United States convened a three-day White House Summit on P/CVE that discussed countering the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Violent Extremism. In 2016, the UN Secretary-General presented his action plan on preventing violent extremism to the General Assembly. Recurrent attacks in Somalia, Kenya and other countries in the Horn of Africa affected by violent extremism have also given rise to various efforts to counter and prevent them in this region. The international efforts at policy framing and addressing the issue have been complemented at the regional level with Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member states seeking to develop appropriate preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) interventions and strategies. IGAD's Regional Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, validated in 2017, is expected to provide a road map to guide the region in addressing the problems of violent extremism more collaboratively and cooperatively across member states. Kenya is more advanced in the policy process that most of the IGAD member states as it has launched a National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism, as well as County Action, Plans at the local authority levels. Somalia has also developed a National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, while Uganda has nearly completed the process. Sudan is building on its existing CT legislation while Ethiopia is in the formative stage.

The specific factors that both drive extremism and reduce its prevalence vary significantly from context to context, including structural issues such as inequality, political marginalisation, governance issues and food insecurity, however, it is worth noting that the Horn of Africa has broad religious diversity and is a historical boundary between Islam and Christianity. The risk of violent extremism in the region often focuses on Somalia and the violent actions of al-Shabaab. But violent extremism in the region cuts across countries, and political ideologies and support for and recruitment into extremist groupings appears to be expanding across the Horn, although the focus of attention is on Islamic forms of violent extremism. As a consequence, tensions both between certain violent extremist groups and broader society as well as within Islamic communities have become more visible in recent years. Violent extremism in the Horn should not be viewed in isolation from broader developments in Africa, the Middle East and globally with structural drivers for violent extremism existing in all the member states of the IGAD. While the violence is often localised, the threat posed by violent extremism is transnational, regional, and global in its scope.

Over the last few years, there has been a shift within the global discourse, from dominant counter-terrorism (CT) approach to recognising the importance of developing proactive, inclusive and durable approaches to P/CVE that reflect the different conditions in each context. However, in practice governments still tend to blend CT and P/CVE terminology and thinking with a strong security-orientation driving their behaviours. Nevertheless, government agencies have looked to consider the role of civil society groups and religious institutions in P/CVE as these organisations are rooted in specific contexts often with deep community ties. The extreme sensitivity of the issue increases the challenges faced by CSOs as they risk being instrumentalised by governments with their work becoming politicised. As a result, there are varying levels of support for the P/CVE agenda and how each actor positions themselves in relation to PCEV often speaks to their values and principles. A pragmatic dimension to the debate, is that of funding and as donor priorities shift and blur between peacebuilding and conflict management, and efforts to address structural dimensions as well as P/CVE, some organisations may end up articulating their work in terms of P/CVE to access such funds. These P/CVE projects and programmes are being implemented at various levels by international, national and local organisations.

While the depth of people's understanding of issues and challenges surrounding P/CVE has evolved, there have been questions raised and concerns voiced about the effectiveness, mixed results, and impacts from programmes attempting to prevent or counter violent extremism. In particular, it is also emerging that military tactics and techniques employed by governments and regional mechanisms to combat violent extremism have not been as successful as were anticipated, in cases also exacerbated the tensions. Challenges abound in designing P/CVE programmes that can be evaluated to measure their impact but this has resulted in limited evidence of 'what works, where and when'.

The Horn of Africa Regional Programme

The Life & Peace Institute's (LPI) Horn of Africa Regional Programme (HARP) aims to contribute to, and advocate for, participatory and evidence-based responses to the region's human security challenges. Through HARP, throughout 2017-2020, LPI has engaged with and attempted to contribute to influencing improved policies and actions on strategic regional issues affecting human security. One of three major themes addressed under the programme umbrella, countering violent extremism was identified and chosen as a theme to explore because of its relevance and significance to the prevalence and underlying risks of violent extremism in The Horn. It was also considered that engaging with P/CVE, given its current global salience and the high volume of resources, could provide the impetus and enabling environment for effective peacebuilding, and addressing the wider security concerns of communities. The level of interest in violent extremism and efforts to counter and prevent it is reflected in the number of studies on the subject available in the global literature. In this regard, of the total global 253 studies across 15 delineated regions noted by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in 2018,[1] 27 are focused on East Africa (placing it 3rd in the overall ranking), only being surpassed by research papers focusing on Western Europe and North America. Nevertheless, as noted above, the field is uncertain as to the effectiveness of programmes addressing the phenomenon and also some responses to it at both the national and regional level have been problematic further exacerbating the problem. To this end, HARP, in collaboration with other stakeholders, and building on the work of others,[2] has focused on researching and mapping existing initiatives on a regional and national level against violent

1 Eric Rosand, Emily Winterbotham, Michael Jones, Franziska Praxl- Tabuchi, "A Roadmap to Progress: The State of Global P/CVE Agenda," The Prevention Project and Royal United Services Institute, September 2018

2 For instance, RUSI, Saferworld, The Berghof Foundation, AfP, Peace Direct and others.

extremism, and assessing successes, challenges and lessons learnt in the effectiveness of the emergent CVE/PVE programs and policies. The expectation is to reflect back findings to the burgeoning P/CVE practice and donor community to ensure that current P/CVE work is evidence-based, conflict-sensitive, harmonised with wider peacebuilding efforts in the Horn. The work inevitably has covered and focused on some countries within the Horn of Africa more than others. This is for several reasons. Firstly, the exploration is still a work in progress. Secondly, there has been a combination of factors that have influenced choices and sequencing of the work, including access to stakeholders, space to conduct research and the characteristics of the relationship between civil society and in general in some of the countries in the region, as well as practical considerations such as the presence of an LPI office.

The Future State of Play for Global P/CVE Policy

The field of P/CVE has expanded and deepened across the global arena, with more than 35 countries have now developed national P/CVE frameworks.[3] Funding for P/CVE has also increased in recent years although the picture and analysis of funding trends and patterns are still emerging particularly with important contributors such as the USA.[4] Funding patterns are also not always clear as different countries employ funds from different sources within their budgets. For instance, the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) countering terrorism and violent extremism programmes utilise both Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA.[5] ODA scoring within countering terrorism and violent extremism programmes are limited to ODA-eligible activities in DAC-listed countries. Multilateral organisations have increasingly embraced the concept of P/CVE with the UN developing institutions such as the Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) to take forward its Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The World Bank and other development institutions are also now utilising development tools and resources to help address structural and other drivers of extremist violence.

The future of P/CVE though is unclear, despite the large investment by IGAD Member States in the Horn of Africa in developing policies, institutions and a variety of programmes. Other global trends may indicate challenges to continuing practical support for P/CVE. For instance, more broadly the rise in popularism, increasing alignment of national or domestic interests and agendas to international development spending, shrinking civil society space, and increasing securitisation of approaches. For example, the EU appears to be increasing its focus and investment in the development of security forces and security-oriented approaches to address conflict and threats such as violent extremism. The impacts of the COVID -19 pandemic on ODA trends in this area are also as yet unclear, however, trends in overall ODA funding suggest a decrease overall; for instance, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) recent debates on reducing levels of international development funding from 0.7% GDP to 0.5%, Ongoing reductions from Australia's DFAT over the past six years, reductions in EU allocations (it is likely that with the UK's departure from the EU this may also decrease further in the next few years). Also, it is as yet unclear in what direction the USA will move with the transition to a new administration under President Biden given there were slight reductions in USA ODA under President Trump's administration.

3 Erica Rosand article in September 2020; 'The Future of Countering Violent extremism', accessed at https://strongcitiesnetwork.org/en/the-future-of-cve/

4 See for instance Eric Rosand and Stevan Weine's blog at the Brookings Institute; 'On CVE, The Trump Administration Could Have Been Worse; But it is Still Not Good Enough', accessed at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/07/on-cve-the-trump-administration-could-have-been-worse/

5 See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/official-development-assistance-oda-fco-departmental-programme-spend-objectives-2018-to-2019/countering-terrorism-and-violent-extremism-objectives-2018-to-2019

This Compendium

This short volume or compendium is intended to serve as a collection of articles, and policy briefs that summarise the findings and considerations so far that have emerged from a set of research activities and reports that HARP and its network has conducted over the last three years. These efforts have focused so far on Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda and Sudan to date, and it is hoped and expected that the writings contained here will inform and stimulate debate and encourage continuing scrutiny, analysis and consideration of the policy and praxis of P/CVE and peacebuilding that will cater to the needs of practitioners, academicians, donors as well as interested actors, experts and professionals in both the peacebuilding and the P/CVE sectors.

Despite wide support from donors and governments, the field of P/CVE remains broad and relatively undefined, covering a wide range of interventions that blur the lines between what is considered development, peacebuilding as well as strategic counter-terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism. The terminology is confusing, with both policymakers and practitioners often using the terms CT and P/CVE interchangeably yet they refer to two different approaches. Terms are politicised, sensitive and may be co-opted by various actors (for instance security agencies, donors, government departments and civil society) to support their agendas. They are also often understood differently by different stakeholders and in different spaces. This confusion is compounded by the sensitivity of the projects and the varying (across the Horn of Africa) but general lack of trust between governments and civil society.

It is within this sensitive milieu that LPI and its collaborators conducted their research and exploration of the issues trying to navigate the fears and sensitivities of different actors that could affect their participation and willingness to share their knowledge, experiences and understandings openly. Part of the logic behind sharing the briefs and reports enclosed in the form of a compendium that provides insights and perspectives in these smaller units, or 'bite-sized snapshots', rather than simply the full reports, has also been to mediate voices and opinions safely and ensure that harm is not inadvertently visited on identified individuals or communities.

This compendium has two chapters organised in eight sections serving to provide a range of flavours to issues within the countries covered. The first chapter on country briefs covers four sections focusing on Uganda, Somalia and Kenya. The briefs reflect findings from research undertaken in 2018-2020 by LPI's Horn of Africa Regional Programme (HARP) focusing on the status of violent extremism, stakeholder perspectives and responses to it. The research involved a consideration of the literature, key informant interviews and focus discussion groups with different stakeholders. It has been conducted in Uganda, Somalia and Kenya. Its purpose is to broaden and enrich our understanding of the issues surrounding violent extremism, by considering and reflecting on experiences and potential learning across these different contexts. The first section focusing on Uganda looks the views on the discourse to VE in Uganda from government, academia and civil society. Further, the second section explores views on the question of Muslim marginalisation and vulnerability to radicalisation in Uganda. The third section describes and discusses the P/CVE landscape in Somalia, drawing key findings and discussions from a study LPI commissioned between 2019 and 2020. The last country brief describes and discusses the P/CVE landscape in Kenya and particularly civil society efforts.

The second chapter focuses on regional, and its empirical base is the findings gleaned from the first two sets of research activities of HARP's P/CVE thematic area – i.e. interrogating the discourse of VE and mapping the responses to VE. The countries covered are Kenya, Uganda and Sudan, with a tangential reference to the ongoing P/CVE mapping in Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti. The chapter

is organised into four sections. Section one discusses the genesis and trajectory of the contested term 'violent extremism' and the response to it (i.e. P/CVE), pointing out how the US model, based on a narrow and reductionist understanding of VE, has become hegemonic – at least in the HoA context, where it dominates the P/CVE agenda. Section two reflects on the VE and P/CVE landscape of the Horn. The discourse of terrorism and counterterrorism operations in the HoA predates VE and P/CVE programming: the region hosted al-Qaeda in the early 1990s, which targeted Western interests, including bombing the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. With the rise of AS in Somalia since 2006 and its regional outreach, the HoA has come to be targeted as one of the major areas for CT operations and P/CVE interventions.

Similarly with AS, other organisations such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Uganda are designated as violent extremist organisation (VEO) by the international community, including the US, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The United Nations Development Programme Compendium on P/CVE 45 (UNDP) has identified four countries in the region as 'epicentre' (Somalia), 'spill-over' (Kenya) and 'at risk' (Uganda and Sudan). Section three presents and examines critical voices from the field who reflect on the VE/P/CVE landscape in the HoA region in general and in the three countries (Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan) in particular. It discusses the current dominant understanding of VE, which is focused on an Islamic form of VE, and a call for broader understanding so that P/CVE programming can be more effective; the discursive practices of Muslims in the region that critique the attribution of violence to Islam; how Muslims in the region, instead of being in denial, explain the Islamic form of VE and situate it within wider political and geopolitical contexts; how most of the current responses to VE – largely those of governments – are constitutive of VE; and that governments' championing of P/CVE is situated within broader strategic rent-seeking behaviour as it relates to global CT assistance. Section four summarises the discourse of VE and P/CVE in the HoA.

THE DISCOURSE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RESPONSES TO IT IN THE UGANDAN CONTEXT

The Discourse of Violent Extremism and Responses to it in the Ugandan Context

The Threat and Experience of Violent Extremism in Uganda

The Government of Uganda (GoU) considers Violent Extremism (VE) a major peace and security issue (GoU, 2019), while UNDP rates the threat as moderate, recognising Uganda as an 'at-risk country'.[1] Academic studies also suggest Uganda is moderately vulnerable compared to others in the region (Romaniuk & Durner, 2018, p. 159).

Uganda has experienced various forms of VE (or terrorism - the term used more generally), including the LRA civilian attacks, kidnappings, torture and killings in northern Uganda (1980s–2006) with some 66,000 children abducted in this period, according to a World Bank report (Fares et al., 2006, p. 182). There has also been sectarian violence in the Muslim community (1990s), the ADF insurgency in the Rwenzori region in western Uganda (1997–2000), and the al-Shabaab bombing in Kampala (2010) - the single, biggest incident in Uganda to date, with 74 people killed and 71 injured by suicide bombers at restaurants screening the football World Cup. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility, saying it was in retaliation for Ugandan support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (Al Jazeera, 2010). There is also increasing involvement in collective actions and radical behaviours among youth and others wishing to address challenges affecting their lives.[2] Other violence in Uganda is characterised by a lack of clarity on those responsible. For instance, Al Jazeera reported between 2014 and 2016, unknown assailants killed a dozen leading Muslim clerics: 'The government and police say that ADF insurgents, among others, are responsible. Others blame the killings on an ideological struggle within the Muslim community or fights over property and money' (Al Jazeera, 2016). Many observers, though, implicate the government, saying it is using the killings as an excuse to silence dissenting voices. The majority of those killed belonged to the Tablighi Jamaat and received Islamic education in Saudi Arabia during Idi Amin's presidency (1971–79).

In May 2016, Ugandan police announced the arrest of two Kenyan women on terrorism charges. More concerning was that this arrest was related to a similar one in Kenya in connection with a plot, allegedly linked to Islamic State, to undertake anthrax attacks (Romaniuk & Durner, 2018, p. 159).[3] A further wave of murders and kidnappings rocked Uganda in 2017–18 and in 2017, the bodies of 20 kidnapped women were found on the outskirts of Kampala, while in 2018, National Resistance Movement (NRM) lawmaker Ibrahim Abiriga was shot dead near his home (Africanews, 2018). Police recorded 70 kidnappings across the country in 2018 with the government blaming the murders on ADF (Wambi, 2018).

Framing the VE Discourse in Uganda

At the outset of developing the CVE strategy, the question was posed; 'What is the problem that we need to respond to in the Ugandan context? Violence? Religion-inspired violence? Terrorism?' The intention being to avoid overemphasis on religious dimensions, getting lost in the global discourse of extremism, only focusing on non-state forms of VE or missing important political and economic facets related to the process of radicalisation. As one member of the National Technical Committee (NTC) noted: "Formulating the question this way, we can then say an extremist in Uganda is one who violates central tenets, the national objectives enshrined in the constitution relating to democracy and national unity. … [unfortunately] Government is using the term to frame opposition as terrorism. But opposition is not deviating from national principles. Rather, it

1 The UNDP identifies three categories of countries in Africa in reference to VE: 'epicentre', 'spill-over' and 'at-risk'. Epicentre countries are defined as being at the epicentre of the growth of VE: VE groups are present and enacting regular attacks on innocent populations. Spill- over countries suffer from the effects of the presence and operations of VE groups in a neighbouring country. At-risk countries exhibit some of the same socio-economic and governance-related factors as epicentre and spill-over countries but have no VE groups actively present. According to the UNDP (n.d., p. 4), Uganda falls under 'at-risk' along with Central African Republic, Tanzania, and Sudan

2 Key Informant interviews with government representatives and CSOs.

3 Anthrax is a serious infection that can be used as a weapon of mass destruction (see 'Weapons of mass destruction', n.d.).

is using a different path to power. Ugandans do not disagree on national objectives and consider deviation through violent means is wrong."[4]

The values of the National Ethical Values Policy, launched in 2013 to support the 1995 Ugandan constitution are: respect for humanity and environment; honesty – uphold and defend the truth at all times; justice and fairness in dealing with others; hard work for self- reliance; integrity – moral uprightness and sound character; creativity and innovativeness; social responsibility; social harmony; national unity; and national consciousness and patriotism.

Their violation allows a potential interpretation that VE includes acts committed by government officials or their institutions. At face value this is positive, although the head of the NTC noted in the CVE Strategy validation workshop in 2019: "The problem is not with the military or the police. It is, rather, individuals in these institutions who commit violent extremist acts.... Blaming government institutions in general for the violation of rights committed by an individual official or member of the military is not warranted."[5]

However, a research participant implementing CVE-relevant projects, noted that: "... this inadvertently provides immunity for government institutions such as the military and security, which grossly violate these objectives through torture, for instance. How can we say it is specific individuals, not government institutions, that should be held accountable? If accountability is construed this way, we will not get into genuine state–society reform. If many individuals are getting it wrong, perhaps it is also because the way the institutions operate is fundamentally flawed."[6]

Other stakeholders consider government commitment to a more inclusive VE frame of reference, suspect. A prominent Ugandan Muslim activist in the CVE space expresses the concern: "The notion of the national objectives as the framework within which we define VE is a good idea, but defining the boundaries of national interest and at what point we say somebody is violating them is problematic. We have a national ethical guideline. Am I a violent extremist if I do not observe the national ethical guideline? Interpretation is tricky."[7]

The concern is this may provide government an excuse to repress civil society in the so-called national interest. Externals have also noted this danger. The US State Department acknowledges GoU contributions in countering terrorism in the HoA but notes; 'at times it [has] labelled conventional criminal acts as terrorism and levelled terrorism charges against journalists, public officials and others it deemed were acting against its interests, potentially diverting attention and resources from core counter terrorism (CT) goals' (US Department of State, 2018). Academic works also observe the government's instrumental CVE agenda, warning of the danger of shifting development assistance to the security sector by overstating the security threat posed by VE. Romaniuk and Durner (2018, p. 170) for instance, argued: "...Uganda's embrace of counterterrorism has been characterised by strategic rent-seeking, to garner security assistance from abroad, alongside a preference for militarised responses."

Violent Extremism and Religion in Uganda

The broad framing, in theory reduces the possibility of unfairly demonising religions, but Muslim CVE practitioners suggest a dissonance in understanding of the drivers of VE with government and Western donors emphasising an ideological dimension, which may feed into Islamophobia. They observe that donors dictate the CVE agenda in Uganda and focus on Islam, while in fact, political and domestic violence are more pressing problems. They consider the role of ideology minimal even were there a focus on religious violence, rather, poverty has created fertile ground for VE. Their view is the Ugandan Muslim community is marginalised, and so vulnerable to extremist messages. Most recruited youth do not know about Islamic ideology and are, instead attracted by material incentives with rebels or terrorists promising economic deliverance.

A representative of the Ugandan Catholic Church also made a contextual argument for broadening the focus, noting that VE not only besets Muslim areas as it applies equally, if not more, in Karamoja [north-eastern Uganda]. "I have worked in Karamoja for years and learnt their sense of marginalisation and alienation. I recall a Karamojan saying, 'I hope the radicals will come here', as if lamenting violent extremist organisations (VEOs) were not operating in Karamoja. It is the same in Kasese.[8] We need to listen to aggrieved people ... They are in the process of being radicalised. Listening can heal social wounds."[9] Other critical voices link VE with broader geopolitics and Western governments' foreign policy towards the Global South and Muslims in particular.

The Complexity of Who is a Violent Extremist - Non-State and State Actors

A focus group discussion with CSO staff in Kampala[10] threw further light on the contested nature of VE raising points such as: Who is a violent extremist? It is nonsensical to limit VE to non- state actors.... Who is a terrorist – for instance, the LRA or NRA [National Resistance Army], or both? Who started the violence? Where did the LRA go? The government needs someone to blame, such as ADF, because it needs an enemy.

Others suggested there are also cultural extremists with 'so-called kingdoms' increasingly becoming exclusive, undermining national cohesion. The insinuation being that government has rehabilitated kingdoms for political purposes rather than to deepen political freedom. This is a two-edged sword as, when kingdoms become insubordinate, they run into trouble resulting in conflicts such as that between the Rwenzori kingdom and security forces [1997–2000], or the Buganda riots [2009].

Some Ugandans courageously name the government as a violator of national objectives, citing examples of GoU loss of commitment to the constitution and national objectives, such as: changing requirements for presidential candidates to be under 75 years old and the term limit.[11] The sense of political entitlement implicit in perceptions of Museveni's son being prepared as his 'succession plan' and the de facto privatisation of the state economy illustrated by Museveni's reference to recent discovered oil as 'my oil'.[12]

Respondents also explored the distinction between a terrorist and a rebel: Is ADF an insurgent or terrorist group? Calling them terrorists is an exaggeration to make them look abnormal. Those focusing on ideology do not want to address structural factors. What ADF wants is political power. That is the end game, not terrorism. If we answer the question of who is terrorist and who a rebel, we will get solutions to our problems. Imprisoning Muluku [leader of ADF] is not the solution. Uganda needs a national reconciliation.[13]

This resonates with Mohammed Abu- Nimer's criticism of CVE interventions that focus more on ideology than structural drivers. In his 'Alternative approaches to transforming violent extremism' (2018), he notes (p. 6): "When [CVE] initiatives are presented as a cure and often as an effective response, they sometimes ignore the deep-rooted infrastructural factors driving violent extremism. The question to ask is what their added value is, considering factors such as collapsing educational institutions, corruption,

4 Member of NT, Kampala, 29 September 2018
5 Head of NTC, Munyonyo, 22 August 2019
6 Interview, Kampala, 24 September 2018
7 Interview, Kampala, 13 August 2019

8 Human Rights Watch reported that violence erupted on 26 November 2016 in the town of Kasese, the capital of the Kingdom of Rwenzori when the Uganda National Police raided the government offices of the kingdom (HRW, 2018).
9 Catholic Church representative, National PCVE Strategy Validation Workshop, Munyonyo, 22 August 2019
10 FGD with staff of a CSO, Kampala, 27 September 2018
11 Parliament removed the two-term limit from the 1995 Constitution in 2005
12 This is a reference to Museveni's self-understanding as the sole protector of Uganda's oil finds. He is cited as claiming '[That's] my oil' and warning that he 'won't allow anybody to play around with it' (Mwesigwa, 2016)
13 FGD with MSF staff, Kampala, 26 September, 2018

discriminatory governance and lack of a national vision, lack of policies to ensure the basic collective and individual freedoms, control and censorship of media and territorial occupation systems."

The Institutional and Legal Landscape in Response to VE

In Uganda, responding to terrorism and VE is regarded primarily as an affair of national security. Security agencies therefore play a central role through a state-centric, top-down approach which oversees local interventions. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Ministry of Defence (MID) are responsible for the defence and security of the country and work closely with the presidency. The MIA is the principal CVE agency and among its responsibilities, it oversees the Amnesty Commission, established to reintegrate former rebels, including Allied Democratic Forces- National Army for the Liberation of Uganda(ADF- NALU) and LRA fighters and others, who renounce terrorism into the community.[14] Attempts to establish a national Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in Uganda, such as in Tanzania and Kenya, have not yet been successful. Although a head was appointed in 2014, the body is not yet functional. Instead, there is an ad hoc Joint Anti-Terrorist Task Force that includes military, intelligence and security services with police taking the lead.

Uganda has enacted various laws to deal with threats of violent extremism. In May 2017, the government passed the Anti-Terrorism Amendment Bill, expanding definitions of 'terrorism' and 'acts of terrorism' to better align with international standards. The Uganda Police Force Directorate of Counterterrorism is the lead law enforcement entity charged with investigating, disrupting and responding to terrorist incidents, but resource and training gaps, as well as corruption, have affected its overall capacity (US Department of State, 2018). Legislation has also been enacted to counter financing of terrorism and Uganda is a member of the Eastern and South African Anti Money Laundering Group, a Task Force style regional body. Uganda is also active at regional and international levels, as a member of IGAD, the East African Community, the Partnership for Regional East African Counterterrorism, and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The Government Policy Response and National CVE Strategy[15]

Uganda has been developing a national CVE strategy since 2017 overseen by a National Technical Committee (NTC), housed within MIA. The draft strategy has ten priority areas and was validated by stakeholders in August 2019. It adopts a 'whole of society' approach; involving, participation and support of government, non-government, civil society, private sector, and local communities in responding to a societal problem. While government consulted more broadly, seeking stakeholder views through the validation workshop - a positive step - nevertheless discussions in the process identified a few limitations:

The national frame: Could provide the basis for governance reform and to hold government accountable. However, government practices are often seen by critics as contravening national objectives. Their championing the principles while simultaneously undercutting them undermines the sincerity of the effort.

Limited Civil Society participation in the policy process: Global best practice encourages substantive civil society involvement[16] and while the strategy declares a 'whole of society' approach, the scope and depth of consultation have been limited. So far, only ten public consultations, and only 25 CSOs and human rights organisations out of hundreds, participated in the validation workshop.[17] This perhaps reflects a broader relationship with civil society. As noted by Dyrenforth (2018, p. 33), 'the greatest impediment to implementing effective CVE policy in Uganda is the government's hostile relationship with civil society."

The preponderance of security institutions: The NTC is highly securitised with all its members from security and intelligence, and none from civil society.

Human rights and governance issues are given inadequate attention: Validation workshop participants noted the original draft of the strategy, emphasised human rights and governance issues entailing political reform to address structural drivers of VE. In the final draft however, they are only given lip service.

Conflict-sensitive framing: The language of the strategy should be revised to be more conflict-sensitive. For instance, in identifying VEOs, it indiscriminately mentions the Salafi community. Salafism is a broad spectrum and using such sensitive terms in a national document could alienate an entire community.

The theory of change underpinning the strategy needs to be evidence-based: The National Strategy assumes a direct link between poverty and extremism. However, the literature suggests no broad identifiable patterns in socio- economic backgrounds of violent extremists (Ranstorp, 2016; Allan et al., 2015) and McCullough and Schomerus (2017, p. 4), note the paths to VE are multiple: 'A comprehensive literature review finds the evidence supporting a clear link between poverty and extremism is mixed.'

CVE programming housed within CT institutions encourages securitisation of the CVE space: CVE programming in Uganda, as in Kenya, is housed within CT institutions but the Kenyan experience has shown, this can lead to further securitisation of the CVE space; in effect self-defeating. Coordination between CT and P/CVE programming is one thing, but subordinating CVE to CT is a different matter.

The need for harmonisation between the strategy and related policies: Other policies are being developed that have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of the CVE Strategy which highlights the need for a national framework and body to harmonise them to avoid the danger that efforts will be duplicated.

14 Interview with a representative of the MIA, Kampala, 29 September 2018

15 This section draws on a focus group discussion with MIA staff

16 e.g. see the UN PCVE framework and PVE Plan of Action (UN, 2015)

17 The umbrella organisation HURINET (Human Rights Network - Uganda) alone includes 60 human rights organisations.

Ugandan National PCVE Strategy Priorities

1. Establish a coordination mechanism among relevant institutions at national and local level.
2. Community engagement (enhancing social cohesion, building resilience, shunning of violent extremist activities, and reporting propagators of VE ideologies and activities)
3. Dialogue, conflict prevention and resolution
4. Strengthen good governance, human rights, and the rule of law.
5. Empower youth
6. Empower at-risk communities
7. Promote gender equality and empowerment of women.
8. Empower educational institutions to develop capacity to resist VE.
9. Develop a communications strategy to counter and provide alternative narratives to violent extremist ideology.
10. Empower authorities of prisons, remand homes and rehabilitation centres.

Civil Society Responses to Violent Extremism

The CVE field in Uganda is not large, but CVE practice remains an important part of local communities, despite apparent increasing pressure from the state to constrain civil society space.[18] At present, CVE-related activities appear limited and fragmented, despite many national CSOs actively working on it. State scrutiny is high, funding is low and interestingly, most CSOs implementing CVE projects are Muslim organisations. Key intervention areas are education and justice, aiming to address Muslim marginalisation, while ideological responses aim to counter religious interpretations potentially undermining social cohesion, and tolerance.

Addressing Structural Drivers of marginalisation:

The intent is to redress structural drivers of VE, undermining VEOs trying to hijack legitimate Muslim grievances. CSOs in the education sector focus on reforming traditional Islamic education while enhancing Muslim access to secular education. The former is also part of a counternarrative strategy against extremist messaging and to mitigate conflicts between mosques and among sheikhs. "We need to look at warning signs: how do we know our children are radicalising? We control and manage through our structures, such as mosque registration. An unregistered mosque is difficult to control... who are they accountable to? We also need to monitor the curriculum of madrasas: what is being taught, and by whom? We designed a curriculum to instil values such as tolerance. Some schools are

18 As evidenced by the NGO Act giving strong powers to government and limiting activities and space for NGOs

resisting it, though."[19] More contentious in the discourse of Muslim marginalisation is access to justice. Some Muslim CSOs implement projects in the justice sector. A senior leader of such a CSO noted: "Many Muslims are unduly accused of terrorism, generating the feeling that Islam is under attack. What is needed is due-process-of-law to allay their fear the judiciary is not neutral. We are engaged with the judiciary to help improve state–society (Muslim) relations by advocating for due process of law."[20]

Addressing the ideological Dimensions of VE: Although the general sentiment in Uganda's CSO community is to emphasise the structural drivers of VE, the role of religious ideology is also recognised, albeit in a much more nuanced manner than the government's current framing of it. According to several Muslim CSOs, imams at the grassroots level are often illiterate and unskilled. So, they aim to equip them with interfaith dialogue and peace and conflict resolution skills, and information and communication technology skills. Simultaneously they strive to build peoples' resilience sensitising young people on the Qur'an, engaging with the concept of jihad, so they aren't manipulated, as well as aiming to disassociate Islam from violence.

Conclusion

The Ugandan government has adopted an innovative framing for their CVE strategy based on national principles and a 'whole of society approach'. Nevertheless, the current emphasis tackling VE is on CT and security-based approaches focused principally on Muslim ideology rather than addressing structural drivers of extremism such as poverty, and deep-seated political and social inequities. At its most concerning this approach blurs understanding of who is considered a VEO, but also risks providing opportunities for those in government who wish to interpret issues, events and perspectives in a light that allows them to behave in ways that further their own political agendas and may constrain civil society and political and religious freedoms. Ugandan CSOs on the other hand, tend to favour 'soft' approaches addressing structural drivers of VE including marginalisation, lack of access to justice or opportunities to participate in governance. Ideological issues are addressed, not only to counter ideological and religious messages advocating violence, but also to improve opportunities to develop through better education and improved livelihood skills. Greater space, funding and acknowledgement of civil society's role and approaches to VE are required to ensure success in addressing this complex issue.

19 Interview of respondent from UMSC 22 August 2019

20 Interview with CSO leader Kampala, 23 September 2018

THE QUESTION OF MARGINALISATION AND VULNERABILITY TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN UGANDA

The Question of Marginalisation and Vulnerability to Violent Extremism in Uganda

Violent Extremism in Uganda and the Ideological Lens

Over the years, Uganda has experienced various manifestations of violent extremism which have informed conceptions of violent extremism among the various CVE actors. However, unlike others in the region, the Government of Uganda has ostensibly adopted the rhetoric of a broader framing in the language of violation of the national objectives. By broadening its definition, Uganda could possibly avoid the profiling practices of neighbouring countries, such as Kenya, which can undermine the human security of their Muslim populations. It could also potentially provide Ugandans with a political discourse enabling a new form of government accountability relating to human rights violations and discriminatory practices, although some worry that paradoxically the government might instead invoke Uganda's national principles to justify them.

The national framing of violent extremism has led to the government designating four groups as violent extremist organisations in Uganda (or 'terrorist' organisations – the preferred terminology): The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Tablighi/jihadi-Salafists and al-Shabaab. Government responses to these organisations are fundamentally security-focused and largely situated within the government's broader strategic (arguably rent-seeking) behaviour as it relates to global assistance to counterterrorism. In addition, reflecting a global pattern in Uganda, donors primarily adopt an ideological lens in their understanding of violent extremism. It is certainly the case that ideology has been and is an important aspect of both the LRA's and the ADF's militancy, representing, respectively, Christian, and Islamic extremism. However, both organisations have also evolved in rapidly changing socio-political contexts, and recent academic studies now characterise them more as organisations fighting for survival more as 'borderland insurgencies' than as organisations driven by ideology. Recruitment to these violent organisations is also mediated by the discourse of marginalisation attached to them in northern Uganda and among the country's Muslim population as explored below.

Background to Islam and Christianity in Uganda and the Colonial Legacy

Uganda is a very diverse country, not only in terms of ethnicity but also religion. There are three major religious communities: Protestants (45.1 per cent), followed by Catholics (39 per cent) and Muslims (13.7 per cent). The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni with small Shia and Ahmadi minorities also present. The Iganga District in the east of Uganda has the highest percentage of Muslims, and Muslims also live in central (Buganda) and northern districts (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Although Islam is currently a religious minority, it has a historical primacy over Christianity being first introduced to the Buganda kingdom in 1844, roughly three decades ahead of Christianity, and then at different periods in other parts of pre-colonial Uganda by a merchant class (Vilhanova, 2004). It reached its peak during the reign of Kabaka Mutesa I in pre-colonial Buganda. Indeed, the period between 1862 and 1875 has been called the golden age of Islam in Buganda (Soi, 2016). When Islam was used as an ideology of resistance by his subjects, Mutesa turned to Christianity, inviting Western Protestant and Catholic missionaries into the country.

Muslims, Protestant and Catholic missionaries all competed for influence in the kingdom, which led to the infamous religious wars in the second half of the 19th century (MCJL, 2017).

British colonialism in Uganda gave further political leverage to Christianity, especially Protestants – a political situation that has continued to shape the differential access of religious communities to the post-colonial Ugandan state. Muslim marginalisation can also thus be considered a part of the colonial legacy. The British promoted Protestants at the expense of members of other religions, considering Muslims as 'proverbially difficult to manage' and only tolerating them

'because they were here before us' (Vision Reporter, 2000). By 1900 there was a colonially sanctioned division of labour that basically assigned Muslims to the kitchen and tasks of slaughtering, being drivers, and other service-oriented employment.[21] As noted by Musisi and Kiggundu (2019, p. 86): 'The circumstances surrounding the current marginalisation of Muslims, particularly in formal or secular education in Uganda, are rooted in the country's history of formal education. In the colonial period, being a Muslim organisation was often a prerequisite for establishing a Muslim school, just as being a Christian organisation was a prerequisite for establishing a Christian school.' Furthermore, 'while the spread of Christianity was a purposeful project, the spread of Islam was a by-product of trade. As a result, Christianity as an institution was more organised and enjoyed more financial support from its benefactors outside Africa than Islam did' (ibid.). Muslims instead sent their children to madrasas or Qur'anic schools. As such, Muslims did not access secular education and so were unfavourably incorporated into the post-colonial Ugandan state.

Post-Colonial Attitudes

An inadequate response to this situation by post-colonial governments also explains the continued marginalisation of the Muslim minority. The socio- political situation of Muslims greatly improved when Amin became President in 1971 as the country's first Muslim President. For the first time since Mutesa I's reign, Islam appeared at the centre of Ugandan politics. As Amin came from an ethnic minority, too small to guarantee a strong political base, he turned to the Muslim community for support (Hanlon, 1974), declaring Uganda a Muslim country in 1974 at the Islamic Summit Conference in Pakistan and promoting its membership of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), even though only a small minority of Ugandans were Muslims. Amin is also credited with increasing their self-confidence: "In Kampala, all religious communities except Muslims had their own hill where they built their respective houses of worship. Having a hill is prestigious and a statement of power. Muslims did not have a hill until Amin gave us one on a very strategic hill where [colonial administrator Baron Frederick] Lugard had established his headquarters. We established a small house as a commemoration for Lugard near the mosque."[22] The city of Kampala is spread across seven prominent hills close to Lake Victoria. The hill referred to above is Old Kampala Hill, where the Ugandan colonial administrative headquarters remained until 1905 when it was moved to Entebbe. On this hill, Muslims built, with financial support from Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, one of the largest mosques in Africa, now known as the Uganda National Mosque.

Muslims were, however, blamed for Amin's brutality, and their socio-political standing deteriorated during President Obote's rule 1980-85. In 1989, President Museveni reached out to them to contribute to national reconstruction, condemning discriminatory practices by the state and the dominant Christian population.

Muslims have acknowledged his policy shifts and concessions, but they reproach his administration for not having instituted 'robust affirmative action' to redress the historical marginalisation of the community in public life.

The Structural Drivers Shaping the Vulnerability of Muslims in Uganda to Violent Extremist Messaging

Despite its earlier introduction than Christianity, Islam has remained a minority religion in Uganda, and Uganda's contemporary Muslims employ the discourse of marginalisation to describe their current situation.

Education and Participation in Government: Muslims refer to inequality of access to education, and the allocation of government jobs as the latter is shaped by the faith-based inequality in education. As Musisi and Kiggundu state (2018, p. 86), 'It is an open secret that the literacy and education levels of Muslims in Uganda are far below those of their Christian counterparts.' The UMSC has accused the government of discriminatory hiring practices, stating that Muslims do not receive fair consideration for senior government positions and fill only a small number of low-level positions. It has also reported that Muslims comprise less than 10 per cent of the total staff in most government agencies, which is considerably less than Muslims' percentage of the population (US Department of State, 2017).

As a non-Muslim CSO noted; This unequal access to secular education, is because education was spread and delivered by Christian missionaries and was focused on Christians. Muslims went to the less-resourced madrasas sometimes considering secular and Christian schools as a tool of conversion. Thus, less value was given to secular education by Muslims and they felt their religious identity threatened if they sent their children to Christian schools.

Muslims also feel excluded from power and national politics. According to the Muslim Centre for Justice and Law (MCJL, 2017, p. 7), 'Muslims are found at the periphery of power centres. They are a truly subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their lives than members of other faiths in Uganda, be it in the Legislature, Judiciary or the Executive.' Unquestioningly, the relationship between educational marginalisation and access to jobs is mutually reinforcing with lack of access to government jobs simultaneously both a consequence and cause of educational inequality.

The Justice System: Marginality in the justice system is also linked to perceived discrimination which Muslims say is reflected in extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, denial of bail rights and, above all, profiling by security personnel based on religious identity – as the following extract from an interview indicates: "Muslims are not well integrated into Ugandan society, and many have been imprisoned because they spoke up against government human rights violations. Christian leaders have also spoken up strongly but are not labelled as terrorists. It is still a mystery who murdered Muslim clerics. The majority killed are members of the Tablighi community, regarded by the government as extremists. Because of this perceived connection to radicalism, Tablighis say they face regular harassment from Ugandan security forces, including surveillance, arbitrary detention, and torture … Many Muslims are accused of terrorism, which is why they feel Islam is under attack. There is a strong sentiment that the judiciary discriminates against Muslims. For example, two [Christian] MPs were charged with treason, but they got bail, but Muslims were charged for 12 years without bail."[23]

The murders referred to here are the mysterious 2014–15 killings of 12 Muslim clerics. Following which, at least 14 Muslims, including former Tablighi leader Sheikh Yunus Kamoga, were arrested, and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2017 on terrorism charges (Kasule & Nsambu, 2019). Enraged Tablighi leaders have demanded the government explain the wave of arrests and detentions, asserting that they are based on nothing more than rumours and speculation.

Other stakeholder views on Muslim marginalisation: The interpretation of Muslim marginalisation as a structural driver of violent extremism in Uganda is also shared by Non-Muslim CSOs, as indicated in a focus group discussion with members of a CSOs working on CVE-related projects: 'Some groups have better access to power through the government patronage system. It started as a colonial project [and] resulted in regional inequality. Muslim majority areas such as eastern Uganda are the poorest. Radicalisation in Muslim areas is not about religion but a religious framing of socio-economic marginalisation.'[24]

Not everyone agrees with this discourse of marginalisation though, as reflected in Brian Kisomose's article, in which he wrote: 'Allegations have been put forward by [Muslims] that the President has from time to time appointed Ugandans to various government offices … at the exclusion of Muslims. We all know that Uganda is

21 In-depth discussion with Ahmed Hadji, Head of UMYDF, Kampala, 25 August 2019
22 Interview with Media Development Foundation, Kampala, 17 August 2019
23 Senior Muslim leader, Kampala, 26 September 2018
24 Kampala, 26 September 2018

a secular state in the sense that every Ugandan is free to practice and profess any religion. No law or policy in Uganda provides for the appointment of any person basing on religious background in the public sector... I personally have never witnessed any public service job advertisement that excludes Muslims as eligible applicants ... There is nothing like discrimination of the Muslims, and they are not a Marginalised group because they have always enjoyed all rights entitled to them as they are human beings.'[25]

This perspective does not recognise the systemic nature of bias and discrimination in practice, which Muslims consider needs affirmative action to address: "The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda is very clear on the principle that government should reflect national character. It is in this spirit that affirmative action for women and persons with disabilities and youth were allocated a quota in the National Assembly. It should therefore be the policy of government to address any imbalances if observed. It is neither an attempt to make religion a basis of employment or government appointment but a cry for an equitable allocation of the national cake. It is the same cry by other minorities, especially cultural minorities – it is not unique to Muslims." (MCJL, 2017, p. 13)

This view is not held by Muslims alone. Investigative journalist Ivan Okuda, who investigated the mystery of the murders of Muslim clerics, noted that: 'From my involvement to search for answers to the question, 'Who is killing Uganda's Muslim clerics?' many Muslims we spoke to in and outside of Uganda, while acknowledging internal weaknesses and intrigue, don't have the nicest outlook on how the government of Uganda treats them. They feel victimised. Some young Muslims claimed they were tortured to confess membership to terror groups like the ADF in exchange for freedom. ...When you follow arrests made after high-profile assassinations, without singling out any, it is of mainly Muslims. This does not appear a coincidence in the minds of Muslims as some feel this is part of an unwritten program of demonising a community, there is a steadily growing feeling of 'being othered' and targeted and abused and unwanted and profiled and judged with prejudice.' (Ivan Okuda, quoted in MCJL, 2017, p. 14).

Muslim CSOs active in Uganda's CVE space are concerned that VEOs can easily exploit this Muslim sense of marginalisation: "Uganda has grappled with the problem of violent extremist groups ... since 1986. Notable among them have been Lord's Resistance Army, LRA, Uganda National Rescue Front, UNRF ... West Nile Bank Front, WNBF, and Allied Democratic Forces, ADF. With the exception of the LRA and ADF, the above groups have disbanded after signing amnesty/peace agreements with the government of Uganda, under the Amnesty Act. Except for the LRA, the above groups have been dominated by Muslims. Muslim rebel groups use marginalisation as a tool for recruitment." (MCJL, 2017, p. 7).

Internal Divisions in Uganda's Muslim Community

Uganda's Muslim community is riven by factionalism which has undermined the emergence of a united, coherent Muslim voice in national politics that might assist address inequity. Divisions have been evident from the start as Islam was introduced to Uganda by two sources with different ideological orientations. Coastal traders brought a liberal version to Buganda (Vision Reporter, 2000), and a less liberal form of Islamic observance was introduced in the 1870s by Sudanese teachers from Khartoum (Soi, 2016). The new arrivals criticised aspects of the form being practised, such as mosques built facing westwards. This was compounded in the 1980s by the blending of the more conservative, Saudi-based transnational Islamic movement known as Salafiya with Tablighi. This gives a distinct flavour to the Islamic reform movement in the Ugandan context, as the Tablighi are often considered 'moderate' and 'apolitical' elsewhere in the world. Many Ugandan Muslim youth sent to the Middle East for religious studies, particularly during Amin's rule, sought on their return to take over the country's Islamic leadership and institutions

25 Kisomose, Brian. (2014). 'Muslims are not marginalised'. Daily Monitor, 11 February. Retrieved from https://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Letters/Muslimsare-not-marginalised/806314-2200718-kklmlpz/index.html

through violence. As noted by the head of the Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum (UMYDF), this complicated Muslims' conversation with the Ugandan state and society: "The Tablighi–Salafiya militancy was inspired by the Turabi revolution in Sudan and returnees from Islamic countries such as Pakistan. It is unfortunate that unscrupulous Tablighi youth framed genuine Muslim issues as if they were part of the project of political Islam. It is in this political context that the ADF has emerged."[26]

The Influence of Global and Regional Geopolitics

The attacks of 11 September 2001 by al-Qaeda (hereafter 9/11) and the US- led Global War on Terror (GWOT) are also intimately connected to the issue of Muslim marginalisation in Uganda, as elsewhere. A senior Muslim leader notes how terrorism is equated with violent extremism: "... the threat is identified with Islam. No wonder that nearly 70 per cent of prisoners in Uganda are Muslims. Uganda's counter- terrorism infrastructure and trainings are designed in Washington, DC, and have contributed to their criminalisation. If you are a Muslim, you are either a terrorist or a potential terrorist."[27]

Uganda is one of the most enthusiastic regional 'partners' in the US-conceived GWOT, which has translated into close military and intelligence cooperation, particularly in the fight against al- Shabaab. Since February 2007 over 5000 Ugandan soldiers have been sent to Somalia as part of African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and Uganda remains both the largest contributor of troops and the major African coordinator of the operation. The government has explained the Ugandan intervention in terms of regional responsibility, African solidarity, and domestic interests (Romaniuk & Durner, 2018). Some commentators, however, interpret Uganda's presence in Somalia as having more to do with Uganda–donor relations than with maintaining regional stability. For instance, Jonathan Fisher notes (2012, p. 404): 'Museveni's decision to intervene in Somalia is the most recent example of his regime's multi-pronged 'image management' strategy in which the President has involved Uganda in numerous foreign and domestic activities to ensure that donors perceive his government in a particular way vis- à-vis their interests: as an economic success story, a guarantor of regional stability, or, in relation to Somalia, an ally in the global war on terror. In so doing, Museveni's strategy has been able largely to avoid censure in areas of traditional donor concern such as governance, thereby achieving a considerable degree of agency in a seemingly asymmetric relationship.' Whatever the motive might be, Uganda's military intervention in Somalia was cited as a major reason by al-Shabab for its twin attacks in Kampala in 2010.[28]

26 Interview with senior Muslim leader, Kampala, 16 August 2019

27 Interview, Kampala, 17 August 2019

28 Al Jazeera. (2010). 'Al-Shabab claims Uganda bombings. Aljazeera.com, 13 July. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2010/07/201071121520826984.html.

Conclusion

The conceptualisation of violent extremism as a contravention of the national objectives, in theory allows for a different approach to violent extremism in Uganda, but in practice, there is a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of the interpretation. The possibility for greater accountability of government and a less securitised approach that places less emphasis on ideology, particularly Islamic ideology, and more on addressing the structural drivers of violent extremism is still to emerge. From available knowledge generated by a variety of academic studies and as explained by research participants, marginality is an everyday reality for Muslims reflected in their lack of access to secular education, and therefore later government employment opportunities, as well as perceived discrimination and targeting within the justice system. This situation has been engendered by various long-term systemic factors: historically entrenched internal divisions and the lack of a united Muslim voice; the colonial legacy of bias towards Christians; inadequate government responses to the situation from post-colonial governments; the more recent effects of the so-called 'Global War on Terror'; and the current government's apparent strategic rent-seeking behaviour as it relates to global assistance to counter-terrorism. These different factors shaping the socio- political landscape and result in a self-fulfilling cycle that Muslims feel can only be addressed through affirmative actions designed to better include them in the national polity and enable them to participate in the governance of the nation as equal citizens. Civil society actors believe that responses to violent extremism that emphasise addressing structural drivers could be more effective CVE strategies than the current preoccupation with ideology. In addition, where and when ideological interventions may be necessary, they believe that it is more appropriate to empower and support Muslim CSOs already on the ground with projects such as reforming and standardising traditional Islamic education (reforming the madrasa curriculum) and establishing national institutions of Islamic learning. Such projects are considered very effective in combating external extremist influences, particularly from the Gulf countries and are not likely to confirm or fuel perceptions of discrimination against Muslims.

PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOMALIA: A MAPPING

This specific policy brief discusses the P/CVE landscape in Somalia, drawing key findings and discussions from a study LPI commissioned and the Somali Institute for Development Research and Analysis (SIDRA) conducted between 2019 and 2020.

Introduction

Somalia remains one of the most fragile and insecure states in the Horn of Africa due to ongoing conflict and recurring natural disasters. Decades of civil war, insecurity and political fragmentation have made it one of the poorest nations in the world.[29] Following numerous unsuccessful efforts by the government to restore peace and security, in 2017 the mandate for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was extended to bolster the federal government's fighting capacity against Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups and improve regional security.[30] Al-Shabaab is designated as a terrorist organisation by the USA and a number of other countries, although there is a debate in the literature regarding its primary goals and the extent to which it can be considered a national, regional or global Jihadi group.[31] The Somali conflict can be viewed from three different levels—as part of a wider, global conflict (the war on terrorism, Al-Shabaab's affiliation with Al Quaeda and the involvement of foreign combatants in Somalia, from Afghanistan, Yemen and other conflict arenas), a regional conflict in the Horn of Africa with armies from Somalia's neighbours active in combat, and, third a national political struggle involving violence and reflecting complex clan dynamics and conflicts in different South Central Somali regions. These levels are interconnected and often mutually reinforcing, and despite the efforts of the FGS and AMISOM and indications of a reduction in the level of political violence, Al-Shabaab still pose a significant challenge to peace and state-building in the country.[32]

President Farmaajo has campaigned on ambitious promises of defeating al-Shabaab within two to three years, rebuilding the Somalia National Army (SNA) to replace AMISOM and bringing together the deeply fractured Somali state into a federal structure. While a number of improvements have been seen, particularly with regards to advancing the capacity of the SNA, progress to achieve this ambition has faced challenges. On the other hand, there has been a growing realisation of the need to adopt programming, strategies and responses that focus on P/CVE initiatives that are community-owned and informed by evidence- based research and analysis to yield a more sustainable impact. With the stated aim of advancing its efforts towards preventing and countering violent extremism, the Federal Government of Somalia has developed several P/CVE policies, with support from donors, most notably the National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism adopted in September 2016. This defines violent extremism as "the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically motivated violence to further social, economic, or political objectives." In addition, the Federal Government has initiated institutional coordination and collaboration efforts with Federal Member States with the ambition to address the spread of Al-Shabaab across the nation.

To better understand the P/CVE landscape in Somalia, a study took place from December 2019 to August 2020. The study aimed at mapping the P/CVE landscape, including relevant programmes and activities, understand stakeholder perceptions of P/CVE, explore the driving factors contributing to sustaining Al-Shabaab and the appeal of its political violence, and analyse P/CVE policy processes and their implementation in the country. The study adopted a qualitative research design, employing key informant interviews and a desk review of secondary sources to gather data. Respondents were purposively selected to ensure information was broadly representative and covered opinions from women, youth, minority groups, internally displaced persons (IDPs), local authorities, security experts, community leaders,

29 Somalia does not feature in the 2019 UNDP Human Development Index ranking, but in 2012, the Somalia factsheet from UNDP notes that if comparable data were available it would rank 165 out of 170 countries.

30 AMISOM Website. https://amisom-au. org/wp-content/cache/page enhanced/ amisom-au.org/amisom-mandate/_ index.html_ gzip

31 See - Karin Göldner-Ebenthal 2019. Salafi jihadi armed groups and conflict (de-)escalation: The case of al-Shabaab in Somalia. Case Study Report. Berlin: Berghof Foundation

32 For example, in 2018 ACLED reported 1,339 violent events associated with al Shabab up to November, compared to 1,432 events in January through October 2017. https://acleddata.com/2018/11/17/same-tune-new-key-al- Shabab-adapts-in-the-face-of-increased-military-pressure/

civil society organisations, religious leaders, representatives from federal, state and regional governments, the international community and reformed ex-Al- Shabaab members. The study was carried out in five towns: Kismayo, Baidoa, Mogadishu, Galkayo and Bossaso.

Drivers of Violent Extremism and Common Perceptions towards P/CVE in Somalia

Numerous factors appear to have contributed to the appeal of Al- Shabaab emerging from the Islamic Courts Union, and why some members of the community in Somalia wish to join them. How these factors work together is also complex and not fully understood, with both Push and Pull factors playing a role. This makes it difficult to generalise from them across all areas, situations, or people, however, key factors in many locations identify unemployment and poverty as key drivers. Similarly, weak government and corruption have been cited.[33] As noted by Saferworld in 2017 and 2019, supporting the findings from an earlier survey in 2013 by ORB International in Kismayo, residents reported that they appreciated the law and order and low crime rates that Al-Shabaab has brought, which are concerns of many Somalis.[34] Respondents in this research also identified in particular, anger emanating from real and perceived historical injustices, and the marginalisation, victimisation and killing of civilians in the fight against al-Shabaab. These grievances may be politicised and manipulated by leaders to paint a picture of victimisation of the locals, creating a favourable ground for groups like Al-Shabaab to instrumentalise their victimisation as a justification for extremist violence.[35]

The five cities sampled for the study have varying characteristics that may increase the vulnerability of youth to join Al- Shabaab. Youth in Baidoa and Kismayo were reported to have one of the highest rates of youth involvement, both in the cities and the surrounding rural areas.[36] The two cities were battlegrounds between AMISOM forces and al-partly because of their territorial and geographical significance but also because of the opportunities to control illegal trade, the income from which are then used to finance Al-Shabaab operations.[37]

Bossaso and Galkayo, on the other hand, appear to have experienced lower rates of involvement. This supports the premise that economic factors alone are insufficient to explain recruitment rates, as there are many vulnerable, poor communities and IDPs in these areas. A desire to expel AMISOM and foreign forces from the country is also an additional push factor for some to join al-Shabaab. Young people in Puntland, detained for membership of al-Shabaab, told researchers they joined the group as a result of political and ideological factors rather than socio- economic, safety or security reasons.[38]

33 Hassan, M., 2012. Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The Case of Al-Shabab And Somali Youth, CTC Sentinel, Vol 5. Issue 8, downloaded at Https://Ctc.Usma.Edu/Wp-Content/Uploads/2012/08/Ctcsentinel-Vol5Iss84.Pdf 27 October 2020

34 Accessing the Al-Shabaab Heartland. https://web.archive.org/web/20160625201735/http:/www.opinion.co.uk/article.php?s=accessing-the-al-shabaab-heartland or see Saferworld's article by Larry Attlee in 2017 at https://www.saferworld.org.uk/long-reads/shouldnat-you-be-countering-violent-extremism and J. Crouch (2018) 'Counter-terror and the logic of violence in Somalia's civil war Time for a new approach', Saferworld; see also https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/03/al-shabaab-amisom-extremism-afgoye/

35 Available figures indicate that there have been approximately 4,000 civilian casualties as a result of Al-Shabaab attacks over the last decade, which include the targeting of people suspected of having links with the federal government; the using of civilians as human shields; and the increasing use of IEDs and suicide bombings in places where civilians gather. The most notable attacks include the Zoppe attack that claimed the lives of over 500 civilians and the recent Ex-Control Afgoye police checkpoint attacks that killed more than 80 civilians. See Political Violence Involving Al-Shabaab, https://acleddata.com/2020/01/15/acled-resources-al-shabaab-in-somalia-and-kenya/ & https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/14_October_2017_Mogadishu_bombings.

36 See also Glazzard, A., Jesperson, S., Maguire, T. and Winterbotham, E. (2017). Islamist Violent Extremism: A New Form of Conflict or Business as Usual? Stability: International Journal of Security and Development, 6(1), pp.13-32. DOI: http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.503.

37 Kambere, G. (2012). Financing Al Shabaab: the vital port of Kismayo. Global Ecco, 2(3).

38 Roland Marchal, The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in A Country at War Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujahidin in Somalia. 2011:70.

Al-Shabaab Recruitment Tactics and Strategies

The study found that Al-Shabaab, and other groups such as ISIS, employ a number of tactics to attract recruits. This includes creating a sense of belonging, through the restoration of lost hope, assisting individuals and communities in believing they may achieve their dreams of justice, and reviving feelings of social cohesion. Al-Shabaab regularly changes its recruitment techniques according to the situation and geographical context; and use various mediums, including propaganda videos and social media accounts, to communicate their messages directly to young people in a manner that resonates well with them, referring overtly to their needs and grievances. However, there are now attempts for these messages to be countered through the creation of youth-related opportunities. For example, various entrepreneurship and innovation hubs have been set up and annual thematic symposiums have been organised by youth in Baidoa, Garowe, Hargeisa, Kismayo and Mogadishu intending to inspire, empower and advocate for young people. Politicians also participate in these platforms to show solidarity and narrow the gap between the government and the young people.

The use of religious sentiment and language such as toppling the 'puppet' government (controlled by the Americans or the West) or the 'infidel' government, as well as calling people to defend the country from foreign aggression, have been some of the strong rallying narratives and tactics used by al-Shabaab, with those who find these messages appealing viewing them as a liberator.[39] Some young people also have limited knowledge of the Quranic verses and the Prophet's sayings, or Hadiths, to which Al- Shabaab preachers refer. This means that they do not understand the broader theological context or alternative interpretation of texts. Youth respondents reportedly also join Al-Shabaab for fear of being victimised by them as well as a fear of reprisals for speaking out against them or rejecting them. This occurs even in areas with less Al-Shabaab presence, such as Galkayo, Bossaso, Galmudug State.

P/CVE Programmes, Projects and Activities

There are a variety of different initiatives undertaken to resist Al-Shabaab in Somalia. For instance, in some cases, communities have created militias to keep them out of their territory.

However, this section focuses on the role of government and the approaches they have adopted with the support of the international community and the private sector.

Operationalisation of the Somalia National Strategy and Action Plan for P/CVE

The Comprehensive Approach to Security (CAS), endorsed by President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo in April 2019, lays out targeted interventions to be carried out by the international community and the United Nations (UN) on P/CVE. This includes de-radicalisation programmes, civic education, rehabilitation and reintegration and strategic communication. Somalia's National Strategy and Action Plan, under Strand Four of the CAS, aims to address the drivers of violent extremism, the process of recruitment, as well as enhance community resilience.

The Office of the Prime Minister, through its P/CVE Coordination Unit, is tasked with operationalising the P/CVE strategy, including coordinating the task force (consisting of the Federal Government and the Federal Member States, civil society, women's group, families and youth leaders). To help achieve its goal, the Coordination Unit has so far conducted a series of discussions with various stakeholders. Depending on the relationship between member states and the FSG, some respondents suggested that there may be improved cooperation and coordination among some line ministries and other relevant stakeholders including civil society groups (particularly youth and women), educational

39 Muhsin Hassan. 'Understanding drivers of violent extremism: The case of Al- Shabaab and Somali youth'. CTC Sentinel 5, no. 8 (2012): 18-20. See also Inside an AS training camp, https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=enRVsBDz1oo

institutions, the business community, religious institutions and think tanks.

The development of a P/CVE communication strategy aimed at improving communication across all government institutions including in the Federal Member States is seen as a positive outcome from these engagements. However, the policies are criticised for being too general and insufficiently targeted, while institutions dealing with preventing violent extremism - both government and local partners - lack the technical and institutional capacity to carry out their mandates.

Government-led P/CVE Interventions

Aside from the broader CAS approaches, currently, there are two additional government-led approaches aimed at encouraging members of Al-Shabaab and ISIS to renounce their membership. The first is where high-value members of Al-Shabaab leave the organisation to receive protection from the government and face no consequences for their past behaviour, in exchange for leaving and bringing along their followers.[40] Some of these ex-members have also been given senior positions and integrated into the government security sector. The second approach involves disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and rehabilitation programmes for ex-members of Al-Shabaab who have been assessed by Somali intelligence officials as posing a low-risk of return to violent extremism, proselytising or providing logistical support for al-Shabaab.

At the national level, an operational framework has been drafted, setting out the process for integrating disengaged Al-Shabaab combatants back into society. In this regard, the Serendi Project in Mogadishu, supporting the re-integration of low-risk combatants, is receiving multi-agency funding both locally and internationally and is a first of its kind in Somalia. The rehabilitation process comprises several stages: firstly, the 48-hour Reception phase; secondly a Screening phase where ex-combatants are disaggregated into high and low-risk groups; thirdly the Rehabilitation phase which prepares "low-risk" individuals for reintegration into their community; fourthly the Reinsertion phase in their chosen area; and finally the Reintegration phase where participants are referred to new or existing programmes implemented by various agencies. The ultimate goal of this process is the complete economic, social, and civic reintegration of former combatants into society. Rehabilitation facilities have been established in Mogadishu, Beledweyne, Baidoa and Kismayo. There have also been some efforts to cater for groups such as women combatants. For instance, there is a dedicated rehabilitation facility in Baidoa for disengaged female combatants and their dependents.

Al-Shabaab defectors re-join communities for varying reasons. While some are genuine and risk reprisals from Al-Shabaab fighters, others are thought to be gathering information to report back to Al-Shabaab, potentially harming the community. Such situations are challenging for both communities and government as well, complicating the work of involved agencies. Although the treatment of ex-combatants and returnees that used to be harsh in the past has now shown some improvement according to the research respondents, the study still revealed several issues that need to be addressed. For instance, reception and screening processes are very long, and the DDR aspects are not efficiently implemented. If defectors (and communities as well) are insufficiently prepared for their return or are simply released back into communities, and the process is not undertaken properly, they may be exposed to discrimination and rejection. This may further endanger their lives, forcing them to flee or risk being killed by Al-Shabaab in reprisal. Improvements to the process need to be made to ensure successful reintegration and avoid the risk of re-joining the group, such as the development of a comprehensive and consistent national framework, curriculum, and programme for this process.

40 A more complex case occurred with Mukhtar Robow, a senior leader within Al-Shabaab who defected and was initially given special status, but he then declared an interest in pursuing a political career in 2018 as a candidate for the Presidency of South West State. However, he was blocked from participating by the federal government and detained.

P/CVE Related Socio-Economic Transformation Initiatives

The Federal Government of Somalia has also engaged in numerous socio- economic transformation initiatives calling on the private sector join them. This public and private sector interaction appear to have increased trust between the business community and policymakers and various community- led empowerment initiatives being implemented aim to address the deep economic grievances Al-Shabaab/ ISIS have capitalised on as part of their recruitment tactics.

Families and local communities also reportedly play a role in creating self- employment opportunities for their children to keep them from joining, by purchasing motorcycles, 'tuktuks', and taxis and sometimes providing funding for sustainable small businesses. Remittances from the Somali diaspora and also businesses established by returnees also attempt to contribute to reducing the likelihood of Somali youth joining Al-Shabaab by creating employment opportunities.

Challenges to the Effectiveness of P/CVE Interventions

The military approach to defeating Al- Shabaab has clearly not been successful, despite international efforts from the Federal Government, AMISOM and the USA (which has reportedly increased its drone attacks significantly (see Table below). There have been territorial gains in some areas but Al-Shabaab appears to be remarkably resilient overall and able to maintain itself. Data from The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and the Uppsala conflict data program also do not suggest any clear relationship between airstrikes and the number or impact of Al-Shabaab attacks.[41]

In this light, it is difficult to envisage a complete military defeat of Al-Shabaab in the near future, especially if AMISOM continues to scale down its presence and eventually withdraw, and in the absence of a united and strong Somalia Federal State. Al- Shabaab appears able to shift the areas where it exerts its influence (for instance moving into Northern areas in Puntland outside its more traditional areas of strength) while taking advantage of local grievances and tensions in relationships between the Federal Government and Federal Member States and clan dynamics.[42]

Table: US Airstrikes (including drone strikes) reported by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism[15]

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	0	1	2	1	3	11	14	35	45	63

The P/CVE programmes and projects being undertaken by the Federal Government and its partners so far, have also fallen short in achieving their purpose, according to respondent views. Firstly, they have been unable to fundamentally address the identified deep, structural root causes and drivers of violent extremism. In particular, there is insufficient focus on addressing the failures of the justice system and weak governance. This would appear to be a particularly critical shortcoming given that provision of justice by al-Shabaab is reportedly a feature of their appeal to some communities. The

41 https://ucdp.uu.se/country/520 and ACLED Data: https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard

42 see IPSS's report, Somalia Conflict Insight, (2019). Vol. 1. http://ipss-addis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Somalia-Conflict-Insight.pdf. Williams,D,P. (2018). Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A History and Analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007-2017.

lack of economic opportunities for youth and the high prevalence of poverty are also important. While there are numerous efforts in this direction, nevertheless, according to the respondents of this study, the use of temporary and inconsistent youth employment projects as a means of curbing violent extremism is also in question, as their economic impact is perceived as dismal. This then does not undermine the appeal of permanent incentives from al-Shabaab.

At the implementation level, the minimal involvement of the Federal Member States and other segments of the affected community – such as women and youth-led organisations and other civil society groups – in the planning of P/CVE policies, poses a question to the potential local relevance and effectiveness of policies. The question of their relevance is further exacerbated by a lack of coordination at all levels, resulting in overlapping activities creating duplication and sometimes a concentration of services in a sector or project area.

Furthermore, although organisations – both local and international – implement P/CVE activities, most of them are limited in their scope to urban environments due to budget constraints, or they operate in limited geographic areas for the same financial reasons or due to insecurity. Thus, they have difficulties reaching some of the grassroots communities that are most vulnerable to Al-Shabaab influence.

Programmes and projects also often experience gaps in funding, limiting their effectiveness and affecting their sustainability. An example of this is seen in the usually small-scale nature of DDR interventions and programmes which are very reliant on the availability of donor funds.[43] Many of the P/CVE programmes were also reported not to have strong monitoring and evaluation systems, making it hard to identify their impacts at the individual project or programme level, let alone at the higher systemic level. These challenges are exacerbated by the macro issues regarding pervasive poverty, social inequality, natural calamities, and political fragility.

While it is clear from experience in the last ten years that the military effort is very unlikely to yield definitive success over Al-Shabaab or ISIS, there appear to be a number of ways that non-security P/CVE measures could be improved in terms of their effectiveness and specificity. Nevertheless, the realisation that this is the case, also suggests that consideration should be given to other possible long- term avenues to resolve the lack of progress in bringing peace and security to Somalia. Increasingly there have been suggestions from observers that negotiations with Al-Shabaab should be explored.[44] In the past, this course of action would have been considered anathema as Al-Shabaab is designated a terrorist organisation. However, with a precedent set in Afghanistan where peace negotiations have been taking place with the Taliban, it would seem that this is an avenue that should at least be explored further. Despite open calls from senior government figures suggesting negotiations, including the current President 'Farmaajo' who addressed Al-Shabaab soon after his election in 2017,[45] it is not necessarily clear whether Al-Shabaab would be open to them now, although in the past they have suggested there may be a possibility under certain conditions (such as when AMISOM leave the country and if Al-Shabaab members are given an amnesty).[46]

43 Demobilisation, Disarmament and Re- integration interventions and programs are small scale with limited funds, with a centre already closed in Kismayo and a focus exclusively on ex-combatants and al-Shabaab defectors and less on the armed clan militias or irregular groups.

44 For instance listen to the ICG podcast discussion of this issue (https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/horn-somali-politics-heat-again) or as Professor D. Williams suggests in an article in the Conversation https://theconversation.com/why-us-diplomatic-muscle-could-achieve-more-in-somalia-than-drone-strikes-146589 in September 2020, Or earlier – Jason Hartwig's article in the War on the Rocks in 2019 https://warontherocks.com/2019/05/how-to-end-the-civil-war-in-somalia-negotiate-with-al-shabaab/. Other similar articles can be found in VOA and Al Jazeera publications.

45 Karin Göldner-Ebenthal 2019. Salafi jihadi armed groups and conflict (de-)escalation: The case of al-Shabaab in Somalia. Case Study Report. Berlin: Berghof Foundation

46 See for instance A. Botha and M.Abdile (2019) Al-Shabaab Attitudes Towards Negotiations, chapter in M.Keating and M.Waldman (2019) War and Peace in Somalia: National Grievances, Local Conflict and Al-Shabaab, Oxford Scholarship on line.

Conclusion

Since 2011, the Somali government and its partners have invested considerable energy in trying to defeat Al-Shabaab militarily and have retaken control of some territories previously controlled by al-Shabaab. Yet, despite these efforts, Al-Shabaab has also demonstrated considerable resilience and been able to continue to operate and even launch attacks in other areas outside of their traditional areas of strength. Alongside these security-centred approaches, the government has also introduced a range of softer initiatives both at the policy level as well as practical P/CVE programmes to try and undermine the appeal of groups like Al-Shabaab. However, there are numerous challenges and shortcomings in the implementation of these efforts. To improve their effectiveness, the Federal Government's P/CVE programming needs to be better informed by evidence-based research and analysis in their design, considering root causes and push factors. More robust monitoring and evaluation of these interventions will provide insights into what works and what does not. In addition, while these improvements are underway, stakeholders should accept the reality that at the moment, Al-Shabaab is unlikely to be fully defeated in the near future, and thus there is an urgent need to explore and discuss the implications and possibilities of engaging in negotiations with them. Such a discussion will at least allow consideration of alternative pathways out of the current, apparently endless, military stalemate, even if those pathways are not taken or are discarded.

PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM PROGRAMMING IN KENYA

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Programming in Kenya

This policy brief discusses the emerging lessons from various P/CVE programmes and projects in Kenya, drawing key findings and discussions from a study Dr Mutuma Ruteere and Dominic R. Pkalya conducted for LPI from September 2019 to September 2020.

Introduction

East Africa has been at the forefront of developing approaches to P/CVE for many years, both because there has been a perception that it has a high incidence of violent extremism, as well as being an arena where much research and a variety of P/CVE programming has been undertaken. Of the 253 studies across fifteen delineated regions noted by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in 2018, 27 are focused on East Africa, placing it third in a regional ranking. With 12 research papers specifically focusing on Kenya placing it sixth out of 14.[47]

In responding to the peace and security challenges posed by violent extremism, Kenya was one of the first countries regionally to develop a National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE), launched in September 2016 and currently being reviewed.[48] The National Strategy is intended to be implemented at the local level in Kenya's 47 counties through the development of County Action Plans (CAPs). All the counties have now completed rapid CAPs.

The Drivers of Violent Extremism

P/CVE programmes in Kenya seek to address the drivers of violent extremism. In most cases, both the push and pull factors thought to be involved in explaining why people join groups labelled as violent extremist.[49] Pull factors speak to the personal reasons that an individual seeks to derive from membership in violent extremist groups, either material, social or spiritual. Pull factors may also include more personal dimensions such as gained social status, or the appeal of a charismatic leader or ideology. The 'push' factors are those macro-level conditions that may contribute to the appeal of violent extremism; for instance, poverty, historical political, social, and economic inequalities. USAID's Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism and the United Nations' "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism" do not sufficiently consider the multifaceted nature of violent extremism drivers but do point to "enabling conditions" for it.[50]

Push factors in Kenya arguably include a sense of marginalisation, particularly by communities in predominantly Muslim dominated northern and coastal regions. These regions have historically suffered economic marginalisation going back to colonial times, are poorly served by social services, and have had limited political influence at the national level. The northern region has also suffered from years of exposure to violence going back to the separatist conflict of the 1960s. It has also faced the brunt of intra and inter-clan conflicts, including the spill over of the conflict in neighbouring Somalia.[51] The coastal region has also suffered from limited investment with low socio-economic indicators, and its tourism industry dominated mainly by non-coastal and international investors. However, grievances such as youth unemployment and geographic or community socio-economic marginalisation are national issues, sometimes more prominent, in areas not necessarily Muslim dominated; creating conceptual challenges for P/CVE. While these structural issues may contribute to the enabling environment, it is not entirely clear how all the factors link together and drive someone to join a violent extremist group. For example, a frequently asked question is, why communities in Turkana, do not appear to join extremist groups as they face similar economic conditions to youth in North Eastern Kenya.

Similarly, cases of economic marginalisation in Samburu could be worse than in Kwale at the

47 Eric Rosand, Emily Winterbotham, Michael Jones, and Franziska Praxl- Tabuchi, A Roadmap to Progress: The State of Global P/CVE Agenda (The Prevention Project and Royal United Services Institute, September 2018), http://www.organizingagainstve. org/ wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ GCCS_ROADMAP_FNL.pdf.

48 The strategy is currently reported to be in the process of being updated by the NCTC.

49 The analytical framework of "push and pull factors" has been widely popularised by the USAID. See, USAID: The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles into Practice, September 2011

50 USAID, Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism (Washington, DC: USAID, February 2009); and the United Nations, "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism," 24 December, 2015, www.un.org/en/ga /search/view.doc. asp?symbol=A/70/674

51 See, Chome, N. (2016) Violent Extremism and Clan Dynamics in Kenya, United States Institute of Peace (USIP): Washington DC

coast. Still, it appears that vulnerable youth in Samburu do not join extremist groups like al-Shabaab because of real or imagined perceptions of marginalisation. According to a respondent from Garissa, the presence of polarising institutions and religious leaders in Muslim dominated geographies, such as Garissa, that support violent extremist groups or ideologies, may have provided an additional element enabling violent extremism to take root.

Some respondents noted that violent extremism has often not been sufficiently understood within the historical and political context of the country. This history and context have, to a large extent, been driven by a narrative of political and economic marginalisation of Muslim populated geographies in the country. These are the same geographies that have been disproportionately affected by violent extremist actions. As a result, many programmatic interventions approach violent extremism more as a technical issue rather than considering the other underlying historical and contemporary marginalisation narrative in addressing it. Such understanding may result in concentrating on a narrow approach such as employing moderating religious messages to counter violent extremist narratives, rather than a broader integrated approach that considers all of the factors simultaneously.

The Relationship Between the State and Civil Society Actors

In addressing this situation, the partnership between state and non-state actors' in Kenya's P/CVE landscape has had an uneven history. In the early 2000s, as government counter-terrorism legislation was being debated, the relationship between them was highly conflictual. Significantly, the state viewed violent extremism as purely a security problem and saw a minimal role for non-state actors. The development of the NSCVE in 2016, though, provided a policy framework for cooperation between them. The emergence of the National Counterterrorism Centre (NCTC) as a government agency mandated by law, to lead P/CVE and later P/CVE efforts in the country, including appreciating and mobilising the role of non-state actors, providing civil society, and communities, with a clear government institutional link and contact for P/CVE work. As part of this mandate, the NCTC has established a "National Level Organisations" Partnership and Coordination Forum that brings together organisations working in the P/CVE space in Kenya. Most of these organisations are international and national NGOs (including societies, trusts and companies) that implement P/CVE initiatives directly themselves or subgrant local or county-based organisations to undertake activities. Respondents noted that state-non-state actors' partnerships have particularly worked well at the county levels where civil society groups working on P/CVE have closely worked with county and national government representatives to develop the CAPs on P/CVE.

The partnership with NCTC does, however, have challenges since the NCTC also seeks to be a regulating agency for groups working on P/CVE. This role was established by the 2019 amendments to the Prevention of Torture Act (POTA) that gave it powers to authorise and regulate all programmes on violent extremism in Kenya.[52] Some civil society groups have objected to these powers and have challenged the amendments in court and also scaled back their engagements with the NCTC.[53] As much as NCTC officials, and the Director, who also doubles up as a Special CVE Envoy, promote enhancing coordination, assuring non-state actors in various foras that they will not stifle the P/CVE space, this has not convinced the said non-state actors, who have grudgingly accepted the partnership to avoid strained relations with the state.

According to civil society respondents, an aspect that appears to divide government and civil society is language, as the term "extremism" is rarely used by government officials. Instead, they tend to refer to "terrorism". As one key informant notes, "The language that government officers understand is Counter-Terrorism (CT); these other things we call P/CVE or PVE are perceived by them as civil society things"[54]. As a result, non-state actors have to use the terms interchangeably when interacting with government agencies to understand each other. The NSCVE 2016 calls for a shift from CT to P/CVE, but this strategy is yet to be embraced across the board, especially by those in the security sector, which some civil society actors say remain "CT-centric". The NSCVE does not yet include P/CVE in its glossary of terms, but at the time of the research, as the NCTC was refreshing the NSCVE, the amended strategy might provide such a definition.[55]

Civil society actors tend to agree though, with the NSCVE 2016 definition of P/CVE, as "employment of non-coercive means to delegitimise violent extremist ideologies and thus reduce the number of terrorist group supporters and recruits."[56] This is the "soft" approach to the challenges posed by groups such as al-Shabaab, where civil society organisations tend to see their contribution and potential role. For some civil society members, P/CVE work is about reaching the larger community, specifically those "at-risk", before they are potentially recruited. As one of those interviewed noted, "P/CVE is about everything we do before individuals cross the line into violent extremism."[57] This involves considerable interaction with local government, as another expert notes, "the County Action Plans include everything as prevention".[58] P/CVE also includes the reintegration of ex-members of violent extremist organisations and returnees into the community.[59]

52 Statute Laws (Amendments) Act (2019)

53 Capital News. (2019) "25 Coast Civil Groups Demand Review of Anti- Terrorism Law 'Curtailing' Rights Organisations", Capital FM, 9 July. Accessed on 30 June 2020 at https:// www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2019/07/25- coast-civil-groups-demand-review-of- anti-terrorism-law-curtailing-rights- organizations/

54 Interview with civil society leader, 2020

55 The revised National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism is still in draft form and restricted in its circulation. The authors of this study were able to access the draft

56 Government of Kenya, National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (Popular Version), Government Printer, 2016, Nairobi

57 Interview with civil society leader, 2020

58 Interview with civil society leader, 2020

59 Whether this type of programming is considered under the CVE banner or PCVE is a moot point! Perhaps prevention of recidivism

60 Social Impact Inc. (2019) Strengthening Community Resilience against Extremism (SCORE): Mid-Term Performance Evaluation, United States Agency for International Development (USAID): Washington DC, p 9. As well as van Zyl, I. and Mahdi, M. (2019) Preventing Violent Extremism in East Africa: Lessons from Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, East Africa Report 26, Institute of Security Studies (ISS): Pretoria, p 12 van Zyl, I. and Mahdi, M. (2019)

Programmatic Approaches to P/CVE

The P/CVE landscape in Kenya is dotted with a large number and variety of programmes that are undertaken by government, and mainly international non-government organisations in partnership with Kenyan civil society organisations seeking to address the issue of violent extremism as defined by NCTC. Their focus is diverse, and in most cases, they attempt to address the drivers of violent extremism, sometimes based on vulnerability assessments. Many P/CVE approaches borrow from traditional peacebuilding and conflict management practice. They may include dialogues (intra and inter-faith, intra and inter-community), trauma healing, community policing and community engagement on conflict issues.[60] This raises whether P/CVE can be considered a distinct field in its own right, or as an element within the broader peacebuilding and conflict transformation sector. One challenge of including it within the latter's ambit is that despite similarities (e.g. being multi-factorial and complex), P/CVE approaches and resultant labelling may result in unintentionally exacerbating divisions rather than building peace, and can be seen as lacking partiality, adopting state assumptions and narratives.

One sector of programmes addresses more specific push factors, for example, by providing opportunities for youth to discuss and address grievances over the conduct of law enforcement officials or through better training and improvement of police-citizen's relations. These programmes also seek to address concerns over perceived stigmatisation and discrimination of Muslims, in particular. In contrast, the appeal of extremist

ideologies promoted by preachers who espouse violent extremist narratives is addressed through promoting religious tolerance, intra and inter-faith dialogue, and "moderate" counternarratives. Also, promoting social cohesion, tolerance, cooperation, and encouraging participation in P/CVE activities were strategies found through the study.[61] A further segment of programmes seeks to counter economic incentives drawing recruits into violent extremism by providing young people or 'at-risk youth' with skills, grants or loans for alternative livelihood sources or accessing economic opportunities. Awareness-raising, capacity building and training, policy advocacy (mainly engaging with government entities on a range of issues particular to engagement around the CAPs, and formal education and mentorship, are also within the spectrum of known P/CVE strategies in Kenya. In addition, programmes addressing returnees and their reintegration into the community are also undertaken under the banner of P/CVE.

The presence of this large spectrum of initiatives can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it can be considered a recognition of the multifactorial nature of drivers of violent extremism, which may range from serious societal issues like poverty and lack of employment opportunities and more specific grievances affecting communities and sections of society and personal factors that may cause individuals to consider violent extremism. On the other hand, for some P/CVE actors, this diversity and imprecision speak to funding and donor priorities rather than proper analysis and diagnosis of the issue.
Secondly, while P/CVE interventions draw from development, conflict, and peacebuilding sectors, in terms of their approaches, and Steven Heydemann has noted that they struggle to establish a clear and compelling definition as a field, being instead a broad catch-all category. This reflects problematic assumptions about the conditions that promote violent extremism and a lack of clear boundaries between P/CVE and fields such as development, poverty alleviation, governance and democratisation, migration and education.[62] This supports the findings from Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Peter Romaniuk and Rafia Barakat's study across the globe, which notes P/CVE programmes "being undertaken in a range of areas, ... in such policy domains as education, development, social services, and conflict mitigation."[63]

In the view of James Khalil and Martine Zeuthen though, two features are critical to distinguish P/CVE programmes. One is that programmes, "should be designed to counter the key drivers of VE [violent extremism] in the specific locations in which they occur,". The second is that programming "should aim to target individuals specifically identified as 'at risk' of being drawn to violence as far as this is feasible in any given location."[64] For example, in some locations, specific drivers may include the behaviour of security forces exacerbating the perception that they or their community are being targeted because of their religion or other identity profiles. In other locations, a more critical driver might be the political disenfranchisement of a community from national politics or the perception that they unfairly lack economic opportunities compared to others.

Theories of Change

Not surprisingly given the variety of P/CVE programmes, there is also a diversity of theories of change (TOCs) in use, that inform them. For example, programmes focusing on counternarratives, are predicated on the theory that extremist narratives can be challenged through "moderate" narratives. Concerning capacity building work, TOCs underlying this type of intervention, suggest that if participants engaged in capacity building activities gain a better understanding and skills, it will result in behaviour change. Interventions targeting economic training of 'at-risk' individuals, equip them with livelihood skills with the assumption this will encourage resistance to recruitment towards extremism. The theory being that lack of livelihood opportunities exacerbates their vulnerability to recruitment and such interventions could provide a substantial diversion away from this path. In their assessment of programmes in Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda, Isel van Zyl and Mariam Mahdi, found that the most commonly mentioned TOC is that by raising awareness on violent extremism – on the fluid, ever-changing strategies of extremist groups as well as the drivers of recruitment – community members and government actors will be better equipped to participate and aid in the implementation of P/CVE programmes.[65]

However, while TOCs tighten up theoretical thinking and articulate assumptions underpinning programming approaches, there are two critical gaps with respect to their use; firstly, the data and analysis of their validity, and secondly, evidence of their effectiveness in guiding programme design and social change are not well studied. It is also unclear how TOCs address the multi-factorial nature of these push and pull factors acting together rather than as individual threads. There is insufficient understanding as yet, of which factors may be more important than others, or how these factors work together for different people and in different contexts considering the history and political narratives of the people living there. Many P/CVE interventions were also found not to be based or linked to a robust research agenda, which makes it almost impossible to evaluate their value or the effectiveness of the theoretical assumptions on which they are premised.

Lessons on P/CVE Effectiveness

The majority of P/CVE programmes in Kenya have been evaluated using traditional approaches, and as a result, implementers and donors can speak, to a certain extent, to the context- specificity, effectiveness, results and possibly a little on their impact. There is also now a growing, if still modest, number of academic and policy studies on P/CVE that have contributed to the understanding of prevention. However, the dissemination of findings from such evaluations and research has been limited mainly to donors and implementing agencies undertaking the initiatives, and sometimes relevant government agencies such as NCTC. This lack of sharing is partly a reflection of the nature of the aid architecture and partly due to the sensitivity of the subject matter. This is understandable but problematic, as it means it is hard for programming to improve comprehensively across the sector, if learning is limited to individual, organisational trajectories.

The competitive nature of current open procurement processes to access funds, means there is little economic (as opposed to moral) incentive for organisations to share this hard-earned information if it may nullify their potential comparative advantage against "competitors" in the following tender. This also suggests that lessons accrued and shared more broadly are likely to be general and may have limited applicability or potential to inform scaling up of activities, while potentially valuable context or community sector-specific lessons may not emerge into the public domain as they may be sensitive or potentially identify communities or locations with detrimental consequences. For instance, it may risk labelling or profiling communities, making them targets for either security sector agencies or extremist organisations, further exacerbating the situation. For instance, in the Kenyan context, the term 'violent extremism' is usually seen as referring to 'Islamist extremism,' so labelling projects as P/CVE may do more harm than good if projects are primarily implemented in Muslim communities.

Tackling evaluations in the traditional manner, looking at individual projects or programmes, also prevents a more holistic picture of potential impact from emerging. It would be instrumental to seeing how the sum of all the various programmes contributes to addressing prevention, which would also allow questions and possible answers to be explored around the balance of different

61 Preventing Violent Extremism in East Africa: Lessons from Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, East Africa Report 26, Institute of Security Studies (ISS): Pretoria, p 12

62 Heydemann, S. (2014) State of the Art: Countering Violent Extremism as a Field of Practice. Insights, United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Issue 1, Spring, 1- 4, p. 1

63 Chowdhury, N., Romaniuk, P. and Barakat, R. (2013) Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism Programming Practice and Progress, Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (CGCC): New York, p.3

64 Khalil, J. and Zeuthen, M. (2016) Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation, Whitehall Report 2-16, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI): London, p.3

65 van Zyl, I. and Mahdi,M. (2019) Preventing Violent Extremism in East Africa: Lessons from Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, East Africa Report 26, Institute of Security Studies (ISS): Pretoria

types of approach and their relative degrees of proportionality to the risks and prevalence of drivers present in different parts of Kenya.

There is also a dearth of evidence as to how such findings from the evaluations have informed policy and programming. This suggests a gap in our understanding of P/CVE that needs to be addressed through carefully designed and targeted studies that go beyond one programme or project. In addition, a continuing investment in bringing practitioners and academics together to reflect on the initiatives implemented for purposes of generating lessons learned and good practices that can be scaled up or replicated, would also be an important complementary exercise that could yield valuable experiences.

The study and feedback from respondents emerged some critical considerations for future programming.

Community-led Approaches: In 2016, the Rift Valley Institute (RVI) organised a forum on violent extremism, and community resilience in Kenya where it was noted there is a need to enhance young people's ability to critically understand and question interpretations of religion, history and politics. Allied to this, there is a need to open up dialogues and spaces where young people can develop these critical skills.[66] In 2018 a joint P/CVE learning workshop involving government, academia, donors and CSOs, held in Naivasha and coordinated by LPI's regional programme and RVI, noted that the overly narrow focus of Islam as the fundamental driver of violent extremism in the region is not only ineffective but often counterproductive. An Insight Forum on P/CVE organised by the Tony Blair Institute and Alliance for Peacebuilding in Nairobi in 2019[67] highlighted intra and inter-religious action in countering extremist narratives, empowering local voices and community-led approaches, engaging youth as some of the known and proven P/CVE strategies.[68] These three forums highlighted the over-emphasis on the central role of religion in polarising narratives, something that many P/CVE programmes have considered in their counternarratives and community outreaches.

A Plurality of Strategies: Studies have established that there is no single driver or root cause of violent extremism that leads to terrorism.[69] Extremism is driven by a cocktail of what USAID has popularised as "push", "pull" and "enabling" factors which are context-specific, individualised and which may mutually reinforce each other.[70] It then follows that no single strategy suffices but rather, both donors and civil society groups underscore the need and value of a plurality of strategies. But more work needs to be done on understanding the optimum proportionality of approaches or the relative emphasis of this plurality and how it may vary depending on the location.

Community Transparency: Respondents and the literature, noted the importance of outreach programmes informing local communities of P/CVE activities in a transparent manner. While transparency is generally considered to be good practice in the development and peacebuilding sectors it is imperative in P/CVE initiatives to ensure that communities can distinguish them from "hard" CT measures';[71] it helps draw a distinction between the 'hard' security-based CT from community-based P/CVE approaches. In addition, and according to a study by RUSI, building the capacity of security and law enforcement authorities to engage with civil society in P/CVE and preventive communications were seen as essential to address the problem of violent extremism in the region.[72]

66 See Mahiri, E. (2016) "Violent Extremism and Community Resilience", Rift Valley Forum, Rift Valley Institute (RVI). Accessed on 29 June 2020 at https://riftvalley.net/index.php/publication/violent-extremism-and-community-resilience

67 One of the objectives of the insight forum was to explore shared challenges and recommendations for effective working with religious actors and groups across the P/CVE, peacebuilding and conflict resolution sectors; hence the potential bias towards vouching for religion in P/CVE

68 TBI and AP. (2019) Insights Forum Summary Report: Working with Religious Actors to Build Peaceful and Stable Societies, Tony Blair Institute (TBI) for Global Change and the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AP): Nairobi, November, p 3

69 For example, Mukuna E. Truphena, 2019, Youth-inclusive mechanisms for preventing and countering violent extremism in the IGAD region: A Case Study of Kenya, Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), Addis Ababa

70 USAID. (2011) The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency, United States Agency for Development (USAID): Washington DC

71 RUSI. (2017) STRIVE Lessons Learned: Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), April, p 7

Improved Coordination: In Kenya, a donor working group promotes partnership and coordination amongst them in their support to the Government of Kenya and civil society. It feeds into the NCTC agenda through regular meetings, facilitating exchange visits with visiting P/CVE experts, foreign government officials and other technical assistance, sometimes channelled through civil society organisations. A matrix of P/CVE initiatives in Kenya has also been developed indicating the project, donor, implementing organisation, national partners, counties of coverage and NSCVE 2016 pillars of focus, the intent being to ensure P/CVE initiatives are not concentrated in few geographies or only support certain aspects of NSCVE. However, this targeting has not necessarily helped P/CVE implementers reach the most vulnerable populations in the society. As one informant noted, "we are still recycling participants by inviting the same faces to P/CVE meetings and workshops. We are not doing enough to reach out to those who do not attend meetings or workshops."[73] P/CVE practitioners and policymakers need to think outside the box and design programmes that can attract hard to reach groups like gang members, family members of those accused or those convicted of terrorism and returnees. Ironically in this regard, the coordination matrix also raises questions regarding, not only the effectiveness of interventions per se, but how one might know if they are being implemented at the appropriate level of 'saturation' to be effective.

At the operational level, there are also promising county-level partnerships involving state and non-state actors, particularly in the development of CAPs, but there is also competition between government institutions at this level. For example, the County Governor and County Commissioner have overlapping mandates, particularly in the area of security provision, which may create complications. In principle security falls under the mandate of the County Commissioner representing the national government at the county level, and yet P/CVE projects are overseen by county governments and have an implicit security dimension. Together all these aspects suggest that an investment in research to create a strengthened evidence-base would be useful both for implementers as well as to inform the policy framework at all levels and could lead to an improved basis for coordination.[74]

72 RUSI. (2017) STRIVE Lessons Learned: Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), April, p 3

73 Interview with key informant, 2020

74 This was also highlighted in the DANIDA. (2019) Mid Term Review of Kenya Country Programme, Royal Danish Embassy in Nairobi (ANNEX Development Engagement: ACT – Act, Change, Transform): Nairobi, p 2

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that Kenya has a relatively deep experience in P/CVE compared to other countries in the region. It has a strong policy framework where government and non-state actors can engage in theory, coordinate and work collaboratively under one institutional umbrella to address both 'hard' security and 'soft' P/CVE approaches to address violent extremism, that complement each other. This foundation should enable it to further contribute to an understanding of P/CVE and the development of improved effective strategies. The multi-factorial nature of violent extremism and responding plurality of P/CVE strategies adopted by implementers in Kenya, needs to be explored more deeply though, to glean insights and lessons that can be used to improve the effectiveness of P/CVE approaches across the sector rather than at the individual project level. To achieve this, a more significant investment is required in the development of a shared, agreed, and robust evidence base on what works to better inform the strategic use of such a portfolio or plurality of strategies. This would enable practitioners to develop programmes addressing the specific balance of varying push and pull factors and drivers of violent extremism at play in each local context. It might also help cast light on the way that these factors work together and relate to an area's history and political context. In this light, the current blurring of different approaches; P/CVE, development, peacebuilding and poverty alleviation also needs a degree of untangling from each other to enable potentially improved focusing of funding. For instance, development programmes and peacebuilding programmes could emphasise addressing broader structural drivers or enabling factors of violent extremism, while P/CVE funds could target individuals and communities that are particularly 'at risk' in a local context. Such an approach may assist in ensuring the best balance and proportionality in addressing local push and pull factors, given their relative significance in enabling violent extremism. Alternatively, there has yet to be a serious discussion by practitioners on whether or not a range of different types of programming might benefit from adopting a P/CVE lens for aspects of their programmes or consideration of the extent to which P/CVE could be mainstreamed into them, given the complexities of the push and pull factors operating together in these locations.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM CRITICAL VOICES FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION

Countering Violent Extremism Critical Voices from the Horn of Africa Region

Introduction

The Horn is a region characterised by religious diversity and is one of the historical boundaries between Islam and Christianity. Discussion on the risk of VE in the Horn frequently focuses on Somalia and the actions of al-Shabaab (hereafter AS). But VE in the region cuts across countries and religions. It is undeniable that support for and recruitment into extremist groupings is expanding across the Horn. As a result, tensions both within Muslim communities and between certain extremist groups and broader society have become more visible in the region in recent years. While the violence is often localised, the threat posed by VE is transnational, regional and global in its scope, and VE in the Horn cannot be viewed in isolation from broader developments in Africa, the Middle East and globally.

It is also clear that the structural drivers for VE exist in all the member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). There is growing concern at the regional level about VE. In response, governments and IGAD are undertaking a host of initiatives. In August 2015, a two-day experts' meeting in Djibouti took the first steps towards the establishment of a Centre of Excellence to Counter Violent Extremism for the IGAD region. In addition, the IGAD Security Sector Program (ISSP) launched a new Transnational Security Threats Initiative to promote security cooperation between IGAD member states. In 2016, IGAD developed a regional strategy to prevent and counter VE, with which the individual national strategies of member states are expected to be aligned.

The responses to VE at both national and regional levels have been problematic and have exacerbated the problem. Policy responses need to be evidence based, articulate strategies and methods that are context-specific, and be formulated and implemented with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including government, civil society, communities, and religious leaders and institutions. P/CVE – and preventing violent extremism, or PVE – is the emerging programmatic and policy approach. In theory, P/CVE transcends the weaknesses of counterterrorism (CT) approaches by incorporating tactics that are pre-emptive and that engage with the structural drivers of VE (Veenkamp & Zeiger, 2014). P/CVE is also an approach that involves not only government but also civil society, religious leaders and communities. However, P/CVE as currently interpreted and implemented needs to be further interrogated in terms of its premises and problematic language and methods.

P/CVE as a discourse and field of practice is beset by multiple ambiguities and questionable assumptions. Many of the foundational premises of P/CVE practice are not self-evident and are open to question. Concepts and phenomena such as radicalisation, extremism and social inclusion are cases in point. The models that P/CVE practitioners use mostly either produce ambiguous results or lead to problematic outcomes akin to standard CT responses, such as stigmatisation of individuals and communities and/or creating suspicion of socio-developmental agencies as being complicit in CT actions. The evidentiary and analytical basis of CVE/PVE initiatives is often insubstantial, and initiatives are often duplicated with negligible attention to context (Schmid, 2011).

In 2017–20 HARP, in collaboration with other stakeholders, has focused on assessing the effectiveness of emergent CVE/PVE programs and policies in order to reflect back its findings to the burgeoning CVE/PVE practice and donor community, with the aim of ensuring that current CVE/PVE work is evidence-based, conflict-sensitive, and harmonised with wider peacebuilding efforts in the Horn. To that end, HARP has sought to map existing initiatives against VE at regional and national levels, and assess successes, challenges and lessons learnt. LPI's tradition and practice of reflexivity, and its choice to base its interventions on evidence and foreground community perspectives in its work, support this endeavour. HARP does not implement P/CVE projects. Instead, it has a learning agenda with the objective of shedding light on the complex drivers of VE, and generating knowledge on what works and does not work in P/CVE programming. To that end, HARP has embarked on four interrelated sets of

research activities: interrogating the discourse of VE in specific national contexts and at the regional level; mapping various types of responses to VE; analysing national and regional P/CVE (preventing and countering violent extremism) strategies; and in-depth case studies of selected P/CVE projects.

This report is regional, and its empirical base is the findings gleaned from the first two sets of research activities of HARP's P/CVE thematic area – i.e. interrogating the discourse of VE, and mapping the responses to VE. The countries covered are Kenya, Uganda and Sudan, with a tangential reference to the ongoing P/CVE mapping in Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti. A week of fieldwork was conducted in each of the three main countries. Research methods included critical review of the literature (both published and grey literature) and qualitative methods, particularly conversational interviews. Some focus group discussions were held. Research participants included government representatives in areas relevant to CVE/PVE, 20 civil society organisations (CSOs) that implement P/CVE projects, academics, students, activists and people who work in the media.

One important source of data this report has extensively drawn on is the January 2018 P/CVE learning event that HARP organised in partnership with the Rift Valley Institute at Naivasha in Kenya. The two-day event, entitled 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly on Countering Violent Extremism Programming', brought together 65 participants from the civil society, academic, research, government and donor communities. The objective of the event was to review and question the P/CVE interventions implemented so far in the Horn of Africa (HoA). The event also aimed at sharing lessons learnt from the field in order to broaden the knowledge on P/CVE practice. HARP sought to learn from the lived experiences of different actors' engagement with VE (CSOs, governments, donors, researchers) and the responses to it, as no one can have a monopoly over P/CVE given the complex nature of VE. To this end, the participants went into working groups to self-reflect on the issues from practical and first-hand experience of working in this contested field, and contribute to growth in this area.

The report highlights critical voices as they relate to the dominant discourse of VE – which has a narrow understanding of drivers and focuses on only one form of VE, i.e. the Islamic form. P/CVE programming that is based on such a narrow framing of a complex problem is criticised as not only ineffective but also counterproductive.

VE and P/CVE: The Genesis and Trajectory of a Contested Term

There is no consensus on what violent extremism is and how best to prevent or counter it. The term 'violent extremism' has become a catch-all for a number of phenomena, and there is considerable variation in how terminology is used. Radicalism, terrorism, and violent extremism are often used interchangeably, even though they describe different processes. The term violent extremism conflates belief and use of force. Critics also see the use of 'extremist' as always politically motivated: it can be used to denounce those that threaten the political status quo. Its use to describe primarily Islamist groups has obscured the fact that extremist beliefs and support for violence are found across different cultures, religions, and political situations. (Schomerus et al., 2017, p. 2).

As rightly depicted in the quotation above, there is still no shared understanding of what violent extremism is or how best to prevent or counter it. Thus, the 2015 UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism acknowledges that 'violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief' (UN, 2015a, p. 1).

However, in the various usages a broader and more formal definition is used that generally refers both to the creation of ideologically motivated or justified violence, and to support for such acts. For

instance, in its regional P/CVE strategy, IGAD understands VE primarily through an ideological lens: 'As an ideology, violent extremism rejects the principles and values that underwrite a peaceful society, instead espousing violence, terror and coercion as a pathway to change and to realising specific beliefs and vision of society' (IGAD, 2016, p. 2). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a major global actor in the field of P/CVE, defines VE as 'advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives' (USAID, 2011, p. 2). The Australian National Counter-Terrorism Committee similarly treats the concept as 'the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and communal violence' (Barker, 2015, p. 1). For Norway, VE constitutes 'activities of persons and groups that are willing to use violence in order to achieve political, ideological or religious goals' (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, n.d.).

In these and many other definitions, VE is understood in its generic form without a link to a specific belief or ideology. This is the view of the UN, as former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarked at the General Assembly on 22 April 2015: 'Violent extremism is not a North-South or East-West issue. It is not confined to a particular region or religion. It transcends borders and exists across the world. Religion does not cause violence; people do' (UN, 2015b). However, VE practice indicates a more restrictive conception of the phenomenon by singularly focusing on the Islamic form. In doing so, the emphasis in much P/CVE programming is more on the Islamic ideology that generates VE than on the structural drivers of VE, not to mention the non-recognition of other forms of VE.

Defining the response to VE (P/CVE) is as problematic as what constitutes VE. The idea underpinning P/CVE is that 'violent extremists should not be fought exclusively with intelligence, police, and military means; that suppression of terrorism must encompass both hard and soft measures. Thus, the structural causes of violent extremism must also be tackled, including intolerance, government failure, and political, economic, and social marginalisation' (Frazer & Nünlist, 2015, p. 1). This is in line with official UN thinking, as the statement by Ban Ki-moon indicates: 'Missiles may kill terrorists. But I am convinced that good governance is what will kill terrorism' (UN, 2015b). However, like VE, the praxis of P/CVE has almost exclusively focused on countering Islamic VEOs. This singular focus is situated within the attacks of 11 September 2001 by al-Qaeda (hereafter 9/11), and the so-called Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) initiated by the US Government and the so-called Coalition of the Willing that it headed. As the Brennan Center for Justice argued, this restrictive conception of P/CVE has nevertheless become a travelling model informing the discourse of VE and P/CVE programming on a global scale: 'The first post-9/11 models of radicalisation … identified belief systems – particularly conservative interpretations of Islam, often described as "jihadi" or "Salafi" ideology – as the key drivers of terrorism. Although these crude religious markers have been fully discredited by empirical research and have now been rejected by some of the very agencies that once put them forward, they remain influential in the terrorism discourse' (Patel & Koushik, 2017, p. 13).

Europe has pioneered P/CVE programming. As early as December 2001, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at its ministerial council meeting demanded that global terrorism be countered not only with military and intelligence means, but also by tackling its root causes. Although a relative latecomer, the US Government has gone furthest in practising P/CVE as a toolkit not only to combat domestic terrorism but also in setting it as a global agenda. In the wake of 9/11, CT has become a defining feature of US foreign policy and military action, with the use of force, or 'kinetic' measures, becoming the preferred means. It was a gradual shift: without diminishing the role of military tools in CT, the US Government expanded its focus to include strategies for addressing the root causes of terrorism, and the realisation that CT requires addressing the underlying conditions that promote VE. P/CVE was slowly introduced as the softer version of CT (Heydemann, 2014).

In 2011, the US Government developed a national strategy and a strategic implementation plan (SIP) for countering VE, and in 2015, the concept of P/CVE was globally recognised after a three-day P/CVE summit took place at the White House, chaired by President Barack Obama and attended by ministers from nearly 70 countries. This was followed by a high-level meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly with the participation of 100 governments and 120 representatives of the civil society and business sectors. On 12 February 2016, the General Assembly adopted a resolution that 'welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General, and takes note of his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism' (UNOCT, n.d.).

The US Government has focused on one form of VE: Islamist. This trend crystallised under the Trump administration, which has even toyed with the idea of renaming the P/CVE endeavour to reflect a primary focus on Islam, suggesting the terms 'Countering Islamic Extremism' and 'Countering Radical Islamic Terrorism' (Mandaville & Nozell, 2017, p. 4). According to the Brennan Center's Faiza Patel (2018), 'the ascension of the openly Islamophobic Trump administration has only deepened concerns about how P/CVE programs could be used to target vulnerable communities'. This one-sided focus on the Islamic form of VE has de-prioritised other forms, such as those linked to right-wing white supremacist movements or ethnic fundamentalisms. In its recent report, the United States' Department of Homeland Security indicated that "white supremacist violent extremists (WES) who have been exceptionally lethal in their abhorrent, targeted attacks in recent years" have increasingly become domestic threats and will likely "remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland.[75] Hence, considering the multidimensional nature of terrorism, narrowly focusing CVE on a single ideology or religion can undermine efforts to empower and incentivise community members who need to become more actively involved in efforts to prevent radicalisation and recruitment to violence in their communities.

The USA's singular focus on the Islamic form of VE has European equivalents: the Dutch Government, for instance, uses the term 'violent jihadism' interchangeably with 'violent extremism', which effectively limits the phenomenon of extremism to one group or religion (Counter Extremism Project, 2019). The UK Government's counterextremism strategy, issued in 2015 and called Prevent, emphasised ideological factors such as religion.

The narrow definition and use of the term VE to describe primarily Islamist groups has obscured the fact that extremist beliefs and support for violence are found across different cultures, religions and political situations. After all, the link between VE and religious beliefs is not straightforward. It has often been stated that many of those radicalising have only a faint grasp of the holy texts of the religion they are purportedly defending. As noted by Mandaville and Nozell (2017), the link between religious ideology and VE is far more complex, with the former often serving the role of a framer: 'As a narrative that helps organise and give meaning to disparate sources of disaffection and grievance, religion may help violent extremist movements to frame world events and political developments in ways that resonate with an individual's personal life experience' (p. 4).

Besides, the overemphasis on Islamic VE is not empirically supported. For instance, there is clear evidence that attacks committed by violent right-wing extremist groups have killed more people in the USA than those committed by radical Islamist groups or individuals. According to the US Extremist Crime Database (ECDB), American fatalities resulting from attacks by far-right violent extremists have exceeded those caused by radical Islamist violent extremists in 10 of the 15 years from 2001 to 2016, and were equal in three of the years. The total number of fatalities is about the same for far-right violent extremists and radical Islamist violent extremists over the approximately 15-year period (106 and 119, respectively). However, 41 per cent of the deaths attributable to radical Islamist violent extremists

75 See Homeland Threat Assessment Report. (October 2020). Retrieved from: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020_10_06_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf

occurred in a single event: an attack at an Orlando, Florida nightclub in 2016.[76] Other estimates mention that after the El Paso attack in Texas in August 2019, 'Right-wing terrorism is once again responsible for more deaths on US soil (107) than jihadi terrorism (104) since 9/11. So why is the government's focus still on Islamic radicalism?' (Byman, 2019). As conflict-resolution expert Mohammed Abu-Nimer has noted, this narrow focus is situated within a political context:

CVE/PVE campaigns are largely rooted in a response to Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, Daesh and the many other smaller regional groups which claim Islam as their basis and manipulate Islamic identity and its components to justify exclusion, violence and destruction against others (both Muslims and non-Muslims). Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the victims are Muslims in Muslim countries, the threat of these groups, particularly to European and American societies and interests, is seen as the primary motivation behind policy and priority change.' (Abu-Nimer, 2018, p. 11)

Abu-Nimer further notes: 'it is rare to identify or give wide media coverage and recognition to a programme that addresses violent extremism motivated by the Jewish settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories, white supremacist groups in the US, Sri Lankan and Myanmar Buddhism, or Indian Hinduism in Gujarat or Kashmir' (ibid.).

However, there are emerging alternative – and perhaps more effective – P/CVE approaches to the singular US focus on the Islamic form of VE. Canada and Australia are pioneers of this new approach.

Shifting away from former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's narrower approach, which focused mainly on Canadian Muslims, current PM Justin Trudeau's administration has adopted a 'whole of society' approach that looks at all forms of radicalisation to violence:

Canada faces the threat of violence by a small number of individuals who have become radicalised for political, religious or other ideological reasons. The Government of Canada is concerned with all forms of violent extremism, not associating this phenomenon with any particular religious, political, national, ethnic, or cultural group … individuals espousing and engaging in violence can be inspired by any extremist group promoting such behaviour. For example, some individuals within the far-right movement have espoused, glorified, promoted, and even engaged in violence. As well, historically, some far-left extremists have taken part in violent acts such as pipeline bombings. The Government of Canada is also alerted to the dangers of lesser-known forms of violent extremism. (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 1)

Framing and terminology matter when it comes to building trust with civil society and other local actors who are on the front lines of most efforts to prevent VE from taking root in communities. In developing its new national centre to combat VE, Canada has eschewed the term P/CVE and related jargon that can alienate Muslim communities, instead gravitating to language that is more likely to appeal to relevant communities, e.g. 'community engagement' and 'violence prevention'.

Like Canada, Australia has adopted a broader understanding of VE that informs its P/CVE programming. Shortly after taking office in 2015, former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull sought to reach out to and publicly change the discourse with Australian Muslim communities 'in an effort to rehabilitate relationships and recognise these communities as partners in P/CVE' (Department of Home Affairs, n.d.):

The objective of the countering violent extremism program is to combat the threat posed by home-grown terrorism and to discourage Australians from travelling overseas to participate in conflicts. Australian governments and communities work together to build resistance to all forms of violent extremism, whether politically, religiously or

76 Of the 85 VE incidents that have resulted in death since 12 September 2001, far-right violent extremist groups were responsible for 62 (73 per cent) while radical Islamist violent extremists were responsible for 23 (27 per cent) (see GAO, 2017).

racially motivated. Every day, federal, state and territory government agencies are engaging with communities and forming vital partnerships. (Ibid.)

In Australia, terms such as 'social cohesion' and 'resilience building' – not 'P/CVE' – are used to frame local grants programs that support community-led efforts to reduce the risk of VE. The government's 'Living Safe Together' program gives the states the responsibility of tailoring and delivering intervention activities and processes. It is state governments and local community organisations that are at the front line of P/CVE, with New South Wales and Victoria, in particular, working actively to engage community organisations to develop programs and deliver messages that try to disengage participants from VE (Living Safe Together, n.d.).

Initially, European Union (EU) member states were concerned with Islamist radicalisation, but within a decade, and most notably because of Anders Breivik's coordinated attacks in Norway in 2011, EU member states' perspectives on the threat posed by radicalisation has widened to include the more traditional threats of right- and left-wing extremists, and nationalist separatists (van Hemert et al., 2014).

Despite this commendable progress made in P/CVE programming that has a broader grasp of VE, it is the US model of P/CVE – based as it is on a narrow understanding of VE – that has become hegemonic. It currently passes as a global travelling P/CVE model at least in the context of the HoA region, through international development organisations such as USAID.

The Landscape of VE and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa region occupies a prominent place in the contemporary discourse on terrorism and VE, predating the P/CVE discourse in Europe and North America. The VE centre of gravity was first Uganda, then Sudan, Somalia and Kenya.

Uganda has witnessed various types of VE attacks. The discourse of VE in that country dates back to the mid-1980s, when a gruesome war led by Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) terrorised the north from 1986 to 2005. An estimated 66,000 children were abducted and conscripted into Kony's army, and two million people were displaced at the height of the crisis (Fares et al., 2006, p. 182). Ousted from Uganda in 2005, LRA has continued its campaign of violence in the under-governed border regions of the neighbouring Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. Various violent extremist attacks in Uganda have also been associated with the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). From 1998 to 2000, ADF waged a series of attacks on Ugandan targets, including one in 1998 on a technical college where 80 students were burned alive (Sserwanga et al., 1998). An offensive by the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) pacified the uprising and pushed ADF remnants into eastern DRC, although the Ugandan Government has attributed to ADF the killing of 12 Muslim clerics since 2012, and a 2013 attack on border towns that caused 60,000 Congolese to flee into Uganda (Muhumuza, 2013). ADF was led by Jamil Mukulu until his arrest in 2015, and the Government of Uganda, partly because of ADF's Islamist rhetoric, has established a link between ADF and al-Qaeda (Weeratne, 2017).

By the 1990s the VE centre of gravity had shifted to Sudan, where in 1989 an Islamist government took over state power through a military coup led by Omar al-Bashir but orchestrated by the National Islamic Front (NIF). Headed by ideologue Hassan al-Turabi, NIF initiated an Islamist project not just

in Sudan but with regional and international ambitions. Hosted by NIF, Osama bin Laden lived and maintained a base of operations in Sudan for several years from 1991 (Shinn, 2003). The connection between NIF and al-Qaeda angered the US Government, which in 1993 listed Sudan as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) and imposed sanctions that lasted till 2018.[77]

The Somalia-based al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI) was another transnational Islamic movement implicated in various acts of terrorism in the region throughout the early 1990s, including in Ethiopia. Although probably not controlled by al-Qaeda, growing evidence indicates that AIAI received training and support from al-Qaeda, and also had links with the NIF regime in Sudan ('Mapping Militant Organisations', 2019). AIAI conducted many attacks in Ethiopia, including in the capital, Addis Ababa. In 1996, Ethiopian cross-border raids against AIAI strongholds at Luuq and Buulo Haawa in Somalia severely weakened the organisation, and by 2005 it had essentially ceased to exist. However, several key AIAI personnel assumed control of senior positions in the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia, which by late 2006 controlled much of the country. This development contributed significantly to Ethiopia's decision in December 2006 to invade Somalia and destroy the Islamic Court structure there. Some of the AIAI leadership were instrumental in setting up the Islamic Court and the AS movement (Loewenstein, 2010).

There is a lack of clarity in the understanding of VE in the HoA context, as elsewhere. The UNDP study Journey to Extremism in Africa (2017) is currently the most authoritative work on the subject. However, as argued by James Khalil, it is not clear from the report how one distinguishes violent extremists from 'freedom fighters' or 'rebel groups'. Nor does the report make a distinction between violent and nonviolent forms of extremisms unless they are implicitly made the same (Khalil, 2019).

Notwithstanding the lack of clarity on the term 'violent extremism', various international organisations have identified the threat of VE in Africa. UNDP, for instance, has classified 13 African countries as facing different degrees of threat from VE, categorising them as 'epicentre', 'spill-over' or 'at-risk'. Out of these, four are in the HoA region: Somalia (epicentre country), Kenya (spill-over country), and Sudan and Uganda (at-risk countries): 'Epicentre countries are defined as being at the epicentre of the growth of VE; VE groups are present and enacting regular attacks on innocent populations. Spill-over countries suffer from the effects of the presence and operations of VE groups in a neighbouring country. At-risk countries exhibit some of the same socio-economic and governance-related factors as epicentre and spill-over countries but have no VE groups actively present (UNDP, 2016, p. 6).

Major designated VEOs that currently operate in the HoA region include NIF and its affiliates in Sudan; al-Qaeda; the Somalia-based AS; Al Hijra (Kenya's AS affiliate); Islamic State (mainly operating in Somalia/Puntland);[78] the Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM);[79] and Uganda's ADF and LRA. The Ethiopian Government has gone furthest in designating three political organisations as 'terrorist organisations': the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Ginbot 7 Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy. However, none of these organisations has been designated by the West or by neighbouring countries as a terrorist organisation. Besides, in 2018 Ethiopian prime minister Abiy Ahmed's new administration took these organisations off the list and redefined them as legitimate opposition parties.

Of all the designated VEOs in the HoA, AS has posed the greatest threat to the peace and security of the

77 The US Department of State designates as SSTs countries it alleges 'have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism'. The list began on 29 December 1979, with Libya, Iraq, South Yemen and Syria. Cuba was added on 1 March 1982, Iran on 19 January 1984, North Korea in 1988, and Sudan on 12 August 1993. See US Department of State, n.d.

78 IS is primarily active in the eastern Galaga mountains, which mostly lie in the Bari region of Puntland. See, for instance, ICG, 2016.

79 EIJM was founded in 1980 in opposition to Eritrea's ruling party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, which suppressed Islamist organising in the country. In 2003, the group changed its name to Eritrean Islamic Reform Movement. See, for instance, PVC, 2015.

region. Initially focused on Somalia, AS is now a widespread regional problem with a proliferation of extremist groups and shifting demographics. Kenya has become a regular target of AS attacks, which include the 2013 Westgate Shopping Mall attack, the 2014 attacks in Lamu and Tana River counties, the 2015 Garissa University College attack, and more than 200 smaller-scale attacks that have occurred between 2011 and 2015 (ICG, 2017). An AS attack on a hotel complex in Nairobi on 15 January 2019 left at least 14 people dead and others severely injured (Cannon & Plaut, 2019). In January 2020 AS attacked a military base jointly used by the Kenyan and US militaries and killed three ('US soldier, contractors killed', 2020).

Since the arrival of its peacekeeping forces in Somalia in 2007, Uganda has been vulnerable to AS attacks. AS conducted suicide bombings among crowds watching the 2010 World Cup finals in the capital city of Kampala; the bombings killed 74 people. AS was also planning a bombing that was foiled in 2014 (Weiss, 2019). Uganda's continued engagement in Somali peacekeeping missions has provided a motive for these attacks, and may continue to encourage AS recruiters to focus on Uganda's small and often marginalised Muslim community.

Although largely peaceful, Djibouti is not immune to AS attacks, though they are generally on a smaller scale. The 2014 attack on the La Chaumière restaurant is the biggest to date, killing one Turkish national and injuring more than 20 local people and foreign nationals; AS claimed responsibility for the attack as a punishment for the participation of Djiboutian troops in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and for the Western military presence in the country (Gartenstein-Ross & Appel, 2014).

Despite its larger military interventions in Somalia, both unilaterally (as was the case in 2006) and as a major troop contributor to AMISOM, Ethiopia has so far managed to avoid attacks by AS. Under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF; in power since 1991), the country is considered a strong security state. Why and how Ethiopia has managed to avoid AS attacks has intrigued many observers. An effective intelligence system, a combat-hardened army and a relatively lower corruption rate are considered to be factors that have enabled the country to insulate itself from violent extremist attacks (Tronjornsson, 2017).

VE and the Response to It: Critical Voices from the Horn of Africa

With dozens of designated VEOs active in the region and extensive attacks by these organisations, the HoA region has become the focus of global CT operations spearheaded by the US Government. According to a source that claims to document all air and drone strikes, by the end of 2019 the tally for both types of strikes was 63 (Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2019).[80] AMISOM in Somalia and governments in the region, such as the Kenyan Government, have also stepped up CT operations. Despite the growing military interventions, CT efforts have proven ineffective (Crouch, 2018). Military interventions have been made against AS over the past decade by the Somali National Army (SNA) and AMISOM, backed by US air strikes, but AS has shown resilience and even regained territory. The interventions have not resulted in a decisive change in the dynamics of the conflict in Somalia, nor progress towards its conclusion, and the human cost continues to grow (ibid.).

Thus, international organisations and governments in the region have increasingly turned to P/CVE strategies, with Kenya being the epicentre country. The informal donors' group has identified more

80 The degree of accuracy here is not entirely clear – one assumes that more strikes are conducted that are not publicised.

than 70 P/CVE-specific and P/CVE-relevant projects in Kenya alone.[81] There are also P/CVE projects in Uganda and Sudan implemented by governments, international development organisations and CSOs. The following sections discuss how VE and the response to it is critiqued by various stakeholders – mainly CSOs that implement P/CVE projects, and ordinary Muslims from the region.

A Call for Broader Understanding of VE

The field of P/CVE has struggled to establish a clear and compelling definition of itself. As noted by Schomerus et al. (2017), 'Defining extremism or violent extremism is not simply a linguistic exercise. Interests and agendas shape definitions; in turn, they also influence actions taken because of a definition' (p. 33). Echoing the Western conception of VE, P/CVE thinking and practice in the Horn have a singular focus on VE committed in the name of Islam. This has inserted a new line of vulnerability in the region's Muslim minorities.

Singling out Islamic VE, though it has become explicit with the Trump administration, has earlier roots, including during the administration of President Barack Obama. Whether or not P/CVE is taken to mean countering radical Islam, the domestic programs 'initiated under this rubric by the Obama administration – while couched in neutral terms – have, in practice, focused almost exclusively on American Muslim communities. This is despite the fact that empirical data shows that violence from far right movements results in at least as many fatalities in the US as attacks inspired by Al Qaeda or the Islamic State' (Patel, 2017, p. 1). According to the Brennan Center, 'Although under the Obama administration P/CVE was deliberately framed without reference to a particular ideology, one would be hard-pressed to find a P/CVE program directed at non-Muslims … Given this focus, it is hardly surprising that many American Muslims perceive the programs as stigmatizing … So unpopular is P/CVE among Muslims that the very term is considered toxic' (ibid., pp. 18–20).

The most comprehensive critique of the Islamic label on P/CVE in the HoA region is the 2018 Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) book Countering Violent Extremism in Kenya: Between the Rule of Law and the Quest for Security, edited by Alamin Mazrui, Kimani Njogu and Paul Goldsmith. MUHURI is an activist organisation advocating for Kenya's Muslim communities based on a human rights approach. In their call for a broader understanding of VE, Mazrui and his co-editors include VE committed by state actors, at least in the Kenyan context:

> *Demystifying states, then, broadens our analysis to ask ourselves whether or not states that kill, murder, starve, steal, and raid national resources with catastrophic consequences, are not terrorist states. Are struggles to overthrow by violent or non-violent means such states an act of terrorism? …History records colonial and post-colonial state terrorism against the Kenyan people. There was no accountability and this state terrorism fostered impunity and immunity. (Mazrui et al., 2018, pp. 9–10)*

One of the issues that was discussed at length at the Naivasha P/CVE learning event was the lack of clarity in understanding the term 'violent extremism'. Concurrent with the problem of the lack of a clear definition on a global scale, it was found that VE is not easy to define. This is in part due to varying views on what VE means to different people and organisations. One of the participants at Naivasha, Professor Peter Kagwanja, an affiliate of the Africa Policy Institute and the University of Nairobi, noted that 'we

81 This is an informal group of donors that coordinate their actions in Kenya. Donors' coordination groups are usually bilateral. The EU is often included, but not the World Bank or other multilaterals. Sometimes the group is subdivided or arranged according to sector, e.g. health, governance, etc. It collates the data of the organisations it is working with in that sector, such as NGOs or contractors, and how much funding it is providing to them.

live in a multicultural world where the use of violence for the purpose of achieving political goals can be traced as far back as humans have existed. These pre-existing conflicts have only been given essence in the post–Cold War era.' Professor Kagwanja further highlighted the problem of conceptualisation in P/CVE programming. The avoidance of a VE definition only makes the task more challenging, as was the case during the designing of the IGAD Regional Strategy on P/CVE (IGAD, 2019), where different organisations had different approaches.

The notion 'One person's terrorist is another person's nationalist' illustrates the dilemma of what something is called versus what a person or group is doing. This is even true for the so-called designated VEOs in the region, such as AS, the quintessential widely recognised VEO in the HoA region. In fact, for some Somalis, AS is a 'freedom fighter' at best and a power contender at worst, and the violence it has perpetrated is redefined as either legitimate or reactive. A 2018 report by the international conflict prevention organisation Saferworld (Crouch, 2018) calls for a stronger conflict analysis in Somalia that takes on board the underlying political, social and economic factors fuelling the conflict, instead of putting the VEO label on it. Furthermore, the report emphasises the need for a better understanding of the factors, relationships and behaviours driving AS's actions. It analyses additional impacts of the CT approach and argues that this approach serves to undermine the potential of resolving Somalia's protracted conflict. Finally, it considers whether a new paradigm focused on achieving peace could offer a better means of tackling violent political contestation in Somalia. Other observers highlight the geopolitical dimension of AS's militancy rather than its ideological roots, suggesting that the Ethiopian occupation was responsible for 'transforming the group from a small, relatively unimportant part of a more moderate Islamic movement into the most powerful and radical armed faction in the country' (Wise, 2011), and that the Ethiopian Government says the AS intervention was supported by the US and the African Union (Felter et al., 2020).

In his keynote speech at Naivasha, Professor Kagwanja noted the African warrior tradition that is sometimes used to justify violent actions, and said the dynamics of religion cannot be excluded in a discussion where the major faiths in the world (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism) are seen to be clashing within themselves. Other forms of extremism, inspired not necessarily by faiths but by certain beliefs, are also on the rise, e.g. Mungiki in Kenya.[82] There is a tendency to move straight to programming without defining P/CVE; consequently, it is not clear whether P/CVE is working.

As noted in Section 4.1, the academics and researchers' discussion group at Naivasha called for a definition of VE, saying it is urgently required and will also better define P/CVE. There are conceptual and political perspectives of violence – in particular, the distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate violence, what is deemed extremist, and the political implications of the current use of the term VE. While acknowledging the sensitive nature of characterising violence by ideologically motivated groups, it was felt it might be more productive to coin a term that specifically refers to Islamist forms of violence, which could improve understanding and programming. Reflecting on the political embeddedness of the term 'violent extremism', a participant from the CSO discussion group surmised: 'VE varies within regions and in perceptions. Are we trying to come up with a certain consensus of words on what VE means in the Horn of Africa? If this is the case, then the definition is quite specific to certain values and countries in the region, which would mean we would make it what we want it to be as opposed to what it really is.'

The issue of what constitutes VE and the line between extremism and violence was examined by the CSO discussion group at Naivasha. In tackling the definitional issue, the participants associated VE with

82 Mungiki is a predominantly Kikuyu movement inspired by the ideological and political legacy of the Mau Mau, who fought against British colonial powers. Mungiki's cause is essentially the transfer of power from the old to the young generation, particularly in response to Daniel arap Moi's presidency (1978–2002). In the post-Moi era, the group has exhibited more criminal elements. See Kagwanja, 2005.

violence (political, religious), blood, terror, bombs, deaths and a fight for justice. There is no uniform understanding of VE in communities, whose members define it depending on the information available to them, whether through radio, TV or other people. Definitions of VE vary depending on the context. The CSO group pondered at what point the line is crossed that a violent action is defined as VE? The example of Turkana, Kenya, was cited: in this area, many people die due to violence-related incidents as a result of insecurity. Why isn't this violence classified as VE?

The P/CVE research that HARP carried out in Uganda in 2018–19 documented a persuasive call for a broader understanding of VE. The Ugandan consultants involved in the development of the UNDP-supported national P/CVE strategy are actively engaged in what they call 'the search for a Ugandan frame for VE and P/CVE' – one that speaks to Ugandan realities. The following extract from an interview with a Ugandan academic who is also a member of the National PVE Technical Committee sheds light on this search for a national frame:

At the outset, we posed the question: 'What is the problem that we need to respond to in the Ugandan context?' Violence? Religion-inspired violence? Terrorism? We also discussed how to define extremism – if we did not get the point of departure right, we would get lost in a global discourse of extremism. We then posed the question: 'What is it that Uganda has agreed upon as a country?' Formulating the question this way, we can then say an extremist in Uganda is one who violates the central tenets and national objectives enshrined in the constitution that relate to democracy and national unity. You do not simply profile religious actors but everybody who violates the foundational principles of the Ugandan nation. We did not want to start with a global discourse. We need to have a consensus on what the deviations are and the response to it. When you selectively apply for certain groups, then you would run into trouble.

[Ugandan president Yoweri] Museveni said opposition is terrorism. Government is using the term to frame opposition as terrorism. But opposition is not deviating from the national objectives. Rather, they are using a different path to get to power. Ugandans never disagreed on the national objectives, and agree and consider that deviation through violent means is wrong. We are proposing what a Ugandan understanding of VE is, and the response starts there. The indicators on what needs to be preserved become clear to measure.

We need to localise the discourse of VE. You cannot start using the discourse because it is happening in Sudan or Somalia. We can then deal with the issue of religion-based VE. For instance, there is no standard curriculum in the madrasas. Extremist ideology could easily creep in and that is why we need a regulatory framework. The Muslim Centre is doing just that. Who is a sheikh in Uganda needs to be regulated to make sure that the teachings do not violate the national principles.

It is the same in the political sector. Political space is constrained in Uganda. Only the NRM [National Resistance Movement] government is posing itself as alternative. We need to change the electoral law as this undermines the national principles. Otherwise, the political rules of the game could become a breeding ground for all forms of VE.

A similar problem is observed in the justice sector. Over 80 Muslim clerics are currently in prison, and not even one of them is so far convicted. This feeds into Muslim grievances. Many ADF leaders are also not given the chance to speak to anyone. Why is that? Does the problem [ADF as a terrorist/VE organisation] really exist? You cannot say somebody is extremist if you do not provide evidence. The government just zooms into the religious space and misses the political and economic space, which are related to the process of radicalisation.

We need to broaden our understanding of VE. But P/CVE is just focusing on non-state forms of VE, notwithstanding that most of the drivers are related to governmental practices. VE in the Ugandan context should be aligned with the national objectives enshrined in the constitution. The making of the constitutional order was very consultative. It is Uganda's new national contract around which resilience can be built. (Dr Ashad Sentengo, member of National Technical Committee, National PVE Strategy, Kampala, 29 September 2018)

A focus group discussion with a group of CSOs in Kampala throws further light on the contested nature of VE, at least in the Ugandan context:

Who is a violent extremist? It is nonsensical to limit VE to non-state actors. In fact, the government is the biggest violent extremist. Who is a terrorist, for instance – LRA or NRA [National Resistance Army], or both? Who started the violence? Where did LRA go? The government needs someone to blame, such as ADF, because it needs an enemy.
There are also cultural extremists. So-called kingdoms are becoming exclusive that undermine national cohesion. What contemporary Ugandans need is not a kingdom of their own but, rather, political freedom – a new generation for whom kingship is irrelevant. However, the government has rehabilitated kingdoms to use them for political purposes. When the kingdoms become insubordinate, they run into trouble with the government, as was the case in the deadly conflict between the Rwenzururu kingdom and government security forces, or the Buganda riots. Ugandan society used to be very tolerant. Mobility has brought various tribes together. No exclusionary posture. Kampala is Buganda land and Kabaka [the Uganda capital and seat of government] used to lease land to anyone who pays for it. Now there is closure and purity discourse. Even Museveni is considered a Tutsi, thus a foreigner (Nyankulu).
The major problem in Uganda is differential access to the national cake. Some groups have better access through the government patronage system. It started as a colonial project, resulting in regional inequality. Muslim majority areas are the poorest. Radicalisation in Muslim areas is not about religion but a religious framing of economic marginalisation. (Focus group discussion with CSO staff implementing P/CVE-related projects, Kampala, 27 September 2018)

Sudan is another interesting case from the Horn that throws light on the contested nature of VE that implicates the state, as indicated by the following excerpt from an in-depth interview with an academic from the University of Khartoum:

Sudan is a unique case for P/CVE. It is still considered a State Sponsor of Terrorism. Sudan was put on the terror list in 1993 and subjected to US sanctions from 1995 to 2017. VE needs an incubator, and our political system at least for many years was like that. The Second Sudanese Civil War was based on the idea of jihad, religious war, and had a high political and social cost leading to the independence of South Sudan.
A key pillar of extremism in Sudan is the state itself. It all started with the national identity crisis – how the Sudanese nation was imagined in an Arabo-Islamic way at the expense of the country's diversity both ethnically and religiously. In so doing, the governing elites have become more Catholic than the Pope – claiming to be more Arabic and Islamic than Arabia, including Egypt.
The Bashir regime has got into the P/CVE business to produce evidence for its intelligence cooperation with the US. It needs to catch some violent extremists and their organisations – probably not all of them for a continued relevance – to negotiate the sanction regime, which includes economic sanctions and the lifting of Sudan as an SST. The sanction is not just about religious violence but also in response to Bashir's genocidal practices in Darfur and the ongoing civil war in Kordofan and the Blue Nile region. Reducing the issue to religious ideology serves his purpose: to ward off criticism of his authoritarian rule. (Dr Munzoul Assal, University of Khartoum, 1 October 2018)

Discussion with Darfuri students at the University of Khartoum further interrogated the credibility of P/CVE in the Sudan context. There, VE is deeply embedded in the state system, and ideological conflicts have racial underpinnings:

Most Muslim students from the Indigenous population of Darfur acknowledge that Islam has had success in homogenising parts of Sudan, including our region, but the contradictory political approaches of the successive central governments revive ethnic lines. Islam has really united us, but Arabs[83] changed it for their political egoism to deny our majority as African Muslims, Christians and animists in Sudan.
We have just discovered that we were deceived in the beginning to drop our ethnic affiliations to create ummah [the Islamic community as a whole], but we know now that different regimes, under the control of Muslim Arabs

83 The reference here is to Sudanese Arabs: those politicians and the ruling elite in regimes that have come from one of the four main Arab tribes in Sudan.

in Khartoum, made it as a means of creating political majority, but not Islam. It is true that Arabs are Muslims, and we are Muslims. However, in words the Arabs speak of being one with us in religion, but in practice they marginalise us and build their long agenda of an Islamic Arab nation versus an African nation within Sudan.
Exploitation of Islam in politics has largely failed in Darfur and has been replaced by racial constructions between the Janjaweed [a Sudanese Arab militia organisation] drawing mainly from the Abbala and Baggara tribes] and the Indigenous population, with a genocidal dimension. Islam was once a unifying factor in fighting against the rebels of the SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army] in the south, Nuba Mountains and Ingessana hills,[84] but now that political situation has changed. The Government of Sudan has begun to favour racial alternatives to eradicate the rebellion in Darfur. Race is introduced by inculcating into the minds of Muslims with ethnic Arab origins in the region of Darfur that the Indigenous ethnic African rebels are not good Muslims. As a reaction to this inculcation, solidarity and cohesion among Muslim Arabs in western Sudan has been ensured under the Janjaweed, who seek out non-Arabs in Darfur and kill them.
Our experience with the Janjaweed Muslim Arabs shows us that their understanding of Islam and depth of faith varies. They are only confident in Arab traditions, which they wrongly attach to Islam. For us, this is the reason that they resist other African Muslims' perspectives on Islam. Islam as a religion urges universal Muslims to establish equality in institutions, but they see this religious obligation of equality as a threat to their economic and political monopoly. (Focus group discussion at University of Khartoum, 29 September 2018)

The Darfuri students also pointed out the violent extremist structures on university campuses, called jihadi units, that are used by the regime to supress dissent:

Jihadi units were originally established to recruit jihadists to fight South Sudanese, but now they are used to suppress dissent on the campuses, particularly by students from Darfur who have been active in resisting the regime. Jihadi students get lots of support and resources from the government. Recruitment starts in high school: such students are 'captured' before they come to the university. There was a demonstration by the students in 2016 to close the jihadi units but it was rejected by the university admin. There are incentive structures. The focus of the jihadi students is on Darfur rebels, who they accuse as secular kufr [unbelievers] who destroy the country and its values. It is about framing the Darfur conflict as jihad even though Darfuri are Muslims. People use the term jihad also against secular Muslims. NCP [the National Congress Party] and the jihadi units are viewed as the only guardians of Islam in the country.
The term jihad is also used in the war in the Nuba Mountains and in the Blue Nile region where the majority are non-Muslims. South Kordofan, where oil has been discovered, is considered as new South Sudan and many jihadi students are sent there. The conflict in Darfur is about resources, exacerbated by climate change. Many Darfuris have even sedentarised because of the livelihood problems. The Arabs (Janjaweed) are more nomadic and have been encroaching into Darfuri lands. Darfur is thoroughly Islamised, and they were the advance guard of the southern jihads. They were deceived. It was not about Islam but about power and resources.
Who defines whom as a proper Muslim? Who has the religious authority to define one Muslim as proper and another as kufr? Who said Arabic Islam is more authentic? Arab Muslims are very few. Even Nubians are non-Arab Muslims. The idea of jihad is attractive because it is an important mobilising tool, and for the mobilised it is about the religious incentives (the jihad temptations). Tribalism and hatred are encouraged by the government as part of its divide-and-rule strategy. (Focus group discussion at University of Khartoum, 29 September 2018)

It is widely reported in the media that jihadi units are driving Sudan campus unrest ('Jihad units', 2016). Scores of these units were set up years ago in universities across Sudan to recruit students to fight in the country's brutal north–south civil war. Activists, rights groups and opposition leaders now want these paramilitary units to be dismantled, accusing them of fuelling violence on campuses. Several student leaders have said the units are recruiting students to crush dissent. The units support Bashir's NCP

84 Actually this may be true more broadly around fighting in South Sudan and even in the Nuba Mountains where Baggara and Misseriya were fighting against the SPLA. However, it should also be noted that in the Nuba Mountains there are many Muslims who have been fighting in the SPLA (now SPLA-North) against the previous regime. The SPLA there is very proud that all ethnic groups and religions, including animists, are together in this.

and have stored weapons and detained opposition students on campuses. Hundreds of students have regularly protested against various government policies, including the handling of conflicts in areas such as Darfur, and have demanded the release of fellow demonstrators arrested during previous rallies. In recent years, clashes between students and security forces have rocked several universities, including in Khartoum and Omdurman. Two students have been killed and scores injured during demonstrations, with the violence forcing the suspension of some classes. While activists blame jihadi units and security forces for the death of the two protesters, officials blame supporters of rebel movements who were fighting Bashir's government.

Research participants mentioned that the jihadi units were set up after Bashir came to power in the 1989 coup that ushered in an Islamist regime in Sudan. Several students from the units were killed fighting in the civil war. The war ended but the jihadi units brought the battlefields to universities. A research participant from the CSO sector based in Khartoum expanded on the hypocrisy of a state steeped in VE that at the same time champions P/CVE:

NCP is not one homogeneous political party, and it contains many hard-line Islamists. As such, NCP is hypocritical championing P/CVE. This is about regime survival and going to the highest bidder – from Turkey to the Gulf, from China to the West. Bashir still needs the support of Islamists in the 2020 election, which he is bidding for. That is why we do not consider him genuine in his commitment to P/CVE.
If Bashir does not get Western support as he anticipates, he will go to Islamists. He is supported by the Janjaweed to supress dissent, who also do religious policing in Khartoum. They are the so-called RSF or Rapid Support Forces – Sudanese paramilitary forces operated by the Sudanese Government. For technical and administrative purposes, the RSF are administered by the National Intelligence and Security Service [NISS], although during military operations they are commanded by the Sudanese Armed Forces. The current commander of the RSF is Major General Abbas Abdelaziz.
The RSF have their roots in the Janjaweed militias used by the Sudanese Government in its attempts to fight the anti-government insurgency during the War in Darfur. They were officially formed under the command of NISS after a restructuring and reactivation of Janjaweed militias in order to combat rebel groups in the Darfur region and South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, following joint attacks by Sudanese Revolutionary Front rebels in North and South Kordofan in April 2013. They are now brought to Khartoum to protect the regime. They also do religious policing. They put a lemon down someone's trousers. If it falls down the leg, the trousers are loose enough. If it does not, then the trousers are too tight and this is considered a violation of the Islamic dress code. But there is also tension between the Janjaweed, security and the military, and Bashir is playing one off against the other in a classic divide-and-control manner. As such, there is a power struggle among them. Bashir referred to the call for multiculturalism in Sudan after the independence of South Sudan Jag Masa – which in colloquial Sudanese Arabic means 'child's play', something not worth paying attention to. A party and regime built around the notion of ethnic stratification is also calling for national unity. You cannot be more hypocritical! Bashir is even no good to the Arabs. East Sudan is the most Arab you can get in Sudan and yet they are discriminated against. They are like Saudi Bedouins but are considered as primitive people. It is about a very narrow elite from the Khartoum area disguising its predatory practices as champions of Arabo-Islamic nationalism. It is even no more Khartoum but River Nile State, Bashir and the Ja'alins. (Interview with Shadin Alfadil, Communication and Advocacy Officer at Nidaa, the Sudanese Development Call Organsation, Khartoum, 3 October 2018)

The Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG), a Kampala-based think tank that is actively engaged with the issues of VE and P/CVE in Sudan and in the region at large, has also called for a broader understanding of VE in its Towards a Sudanese Humanitarian Vision on Violent Extremism:

The definition of the term 'violent extremism' as deliberate violence against civilians and non-combatants to achieve ideological, religious, political or economic goals, whether committed by persons outside the state or associated with it, is both more accurate and of practical benefit. On the one hand, it restricts manipulation of the term for unrelated purposes, and on the other, it is more appropriate to mobilise public opinion against brutal violence, because there are no grievances, no religion, no morals, no values, no arguments which justify the targeting of unarmed and innocent people. (Warrag, 2018, p. 5)

The voices from the region highlighted in this section critique P/CVE's restriction of VE as it is perpetrated by non-state actors and make a compelling case for broadening the horizon of VE to include state actors as well. The critical voices from Sudan and Uganda underscore the hypocrisy of governments that champion P/CVE while they are intimately implicated in the VE situation. The search for a national frame in the conception of VE in Uganda is very instructive. From the various narratives brought from the field, we learn that Muslim communities in the region actively contest the narrow understanding of VE that has a singular focus on its Islamic variant. The call for a broader understanding of VE indicates the need to include forms of VE other than the kind that is religion-based, the need to put VE trends in other sources of ideology than Islam, and, above all, scrutinising governmental practices that are generative of VE.

De-linking Islam from Violence

Many research participants mentioned that the Islamic label on VE not only causes human insecurity but also undermines possible cooperation by Muslim communities. In the Kenyan context, the issue of how far the Islamic label is warranted in the discourse of VE and P/CVE practice played out in the discussion at the Naivasha learning event. Some participants expressed concern about the use of Islamic terms in defining VE because they are already negatively affected by being Muslim. The biases that come with this religious affiliation – e.g. 'Every Muslim is a terrorist' – are very difficult to bear personally and professionally. Different stakeholders, especially Muslims, were encouraged to come out strongly and educate people on the differences between Islam and terrorism.

While responding to the increasing attribution of violence to Islam that most thinking of VE and P/CVE implies, Muslims around the world are engaged in a discursive practice – what feminist author and activist bell hooks calls 'talking back': 'an attempt to speak as an equal to an authority figure [which is not] simply a matter of using one's voice, but to make oneself heard in a way that confronts and disturbs others and that challenges politics of domination' (hooks, 1989, pp. 5–8). Muslims in the region – or at least those whose voices are included in this report – are engaged in 'talking back' and are urgently seeking to de-link Islam from violence.

This issue is extensively covered in the book edited by Mazrui and his colleagues (2018): 'The recent representations of terrorism … have resulted in an image of Islam as a religion that essentially fosters radicalisation and extremism in the political arena'. But as Goldsmith (2018) argues, in the case of the Kenya Coast, 'the religious sensibilities of coastal Muslims have until recently acted as a brake on violent response in the presence of material inequalities, especially in respect to land ownership, that has catalysed violent conflicts elsewhere in Kenya. [However] one can cite many examples throughout the world in which the underlying ethos of Islam has served to stifle rather than provoke violent responses to conditions of marginalisation and dispossession. In fact, except for countries like the Sudan, Africa as a whole has served as a positive example of inter-faith harmony' (p. 31).

Uganda provides another example of how the donors' P/CVE agenda is preoccupied with 'ideology' – a euphemism for the link between Islam and violence. A focus group discussion with staff of the Muslim Scholars Forum (MSF) revealed the dissonance between Muslim P/CVE practitioners and Western donors in their understanding of VE and the response to it:

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revealed the dissonance between Muslim P/CVE practitioners and Western donors in their understanding of VE and the response to it:

Donors dictate the P/CVE agenda – they want us to focus on Islam. Otherwise, political violence is a more pressing issue in Uganda. For instance, six opposition MPs were beaten by state agents.[85] The focus on religious violence is imposed on us. Other than political violence, domestic violence is also a major social problem. Even if we focus on religious violence, the role of ideology is very minimal. There are push and pull factors that are framed in religious terms. In a forum organised by the American embassy in Kampala we debated what to focus on – they pushed the ideological issue and we proposed a policy debate.

Poverty in Uganda has created fertile ground for VE and terrorists. The Ugandan Muslim community is marginalised. They are vulnerable to extremist messages. Anyone can take advantage of them. Context matters. Most youth who get recruited do not know about Islamic ideology and are, rather, attracted by material incentives. There is a common saying in Uganda, 'My livelihood is in your pocket', which means do something – send me out of time. If he does not get means to survive where will he go to? A hungry man does anything. Poverty is a contributing factor for VE. Westerners deny it. Rebels or terrorists promise economic deliverance. That is how desperate youth get attracted to VEOs. Under which condition poverty leads to VE is the question. The context helps us understand the link.

In Uganda there is a clear link between poverty and VE. The majority of ADF recruits are recent converts for whom religious ideology is not a priority. They have little or no knowledge about religious ideology. In the Ugandan context, the distinction between a terrorist and a rebel is blurred. Is ADF an insurgent group or a terrorist group? Calling them terrorists is an exaggeration to make them look abnormal. There is a lot of politics in the difference between those who focus on ideology (Americans) and those of us who focus on structural drivers. Those who focus on ideology do not want to redress structural factors. What ADF wants is political power. That is the end game, not terrorism. If we get the answer to the question of who a terrorist is and who is a rebel, we will get a solution to our problems. Imprisoning Muluku [the leader of ADF] with chains is not the solution. What Uganda rather needs is national reconciliation. He deserves magnanimity. As for the ADF, it has been enabled by an illicit economy in which some UN personnel in the Congo are also implicated.[86] We told the Americans about all these illicit economies and yet they emphasise the ideological element in ADF, i.e. the emphasis on Islamic ideology. In Uganda the debate is where to put the emphasis, i.e. poverty versus ideology. The ideological lens is pushed by the Western governments, which is another way of talking about violent Islam. The Ugandan Government also has ideological and security lenses. We are against profiling and stereotyping, but this does not help. (Interview, Kampala, 28 September 2018)

These views resonate with Abu-Nimer's criticism of P/CVE interventions that focus more on ideology than structural drivers:

When these [P/CVE] initiatives are presented as a cure and often as an effective response, they sometimes ignore the deep-rooted infrastructural factors driving violent extremism. The question to ask is what the added value is of these programmes, considering factors such as collapsing educational institutions, corruption, discriminatory governance and lack of a national vision, lack of policies to ensure the basic collective and individual freedoms, control and censorship of media and territorial occupation systems. Are national and international agencies willing or seriously interested in confronting these issues? Can international agencies deal with these issues, which directly and indirectly impact youth in these contexts?. (Abu-Nimer, 2018, pp. 6–7)

While critiquing the Islamic label on P/CVE, Muslims in the region are not merely in defensive or denial mode. In fact, there are voices that acknowledge the existence of the Islamic form of VE. In so doing, however, they caution not to attribute violence to Islam. According to their perspective, a more nuanced and differentiated approach is needed, as the following excerpt from the Naivasha learning event indicates:

There is a case to be made for addressing the Islamic connection to VE even if this might make some uncomfortable. Call it al-Qaeda–inspired VE, if we are afraid to attach Islam to it. There is a conflict within Islam and there are factions. There are those who are peaceful and accept the world order as it is. There are also the radical ones who refuse to accept it, led by al-Qaeda. Muslims must be at the forefront of fighting VE. The reality is that there must be very honest conversations about the radical factions. When killings happened in Ukunda on the Kenyan Coast, it first seemed like there was war between the youth and police. However, the local communities knew all along what was truly going on and who was being recruited. When the killings became too much, the frustration of the community was felt. An old man exclaimed, 'These Ansari Sunnah [Salafi, also known as the protectors of the tradition of Prophet Muhammad] will bring us problems!'

The adherents of Ansari, founded by Sheikh Abdulaziz Rimo, basically reject modern government. They drop out of school, separate themselves from family and friends, and burn their national identity cards and school certificates. How did the Ansari get to the area? It has emerged that Aboud Rogo used to visit the area where the Ansari are found … Rogo was in Ukunda since 1998. This issue was ignored for almost 20 years. There is a vacuum in leadership in the Muslim community in Kenya. Contributions and solutions to this phenomenon must also come from within. (A participant at the Naivasha learning event.)

Other participants at Naivasha expressed a similar view of avoiding – implicitly or explicitly – the attribution of violence to Islam, while at the same time recognising fringe elements within the Muslim community in Kenya who espouse violence:

We should call a spade a spade, and not a big spoon. This means some things should not be avoided in the definition of VE. However, surveys have shown that there is sensitivity around adding Islam to the definition of VE as this will lead to even more negativity towards Muslim communities. The harsh truth is that there is a dichotomy in the Islamic world. On one hand is a progressive, peaceful and accommodative section that is the larger part. We should not offend them. On the other hand, there is a disruptive segment that has divided society into two: the House of Peace and the House of War, where the latter wage war on those who do not belong with them. P/CVE programming should target this category of Muslims.

Mapping of deaths in certain areas also gives clues on where the issues are. The Kenyan Coast has enough information to make the work more specific to know who is extreme and who is at risk. How far is the reach of the extremists? Who are their supporters? How do they interact? It is true that the bias against Muslims is a reality, especially when travelling to North America. However, Muslims should not permit this. They should take charge of the narrative and own it to diffuse any power from confirming such claims. There are ways to do this, as outlined in the manual on counter/alternative narratives developed by the Horn International Institute for Strategic Studies. It is also important to regularly return to the field to see if perceptions are changing. (A participant at the Naivasha learning event.)

SDFG critiques the inherent link between Islam and violence drawn by some Westerners in its Towards a Sudanese Humanitarian Vision on Violent Extremism:

Some circles in the West, especially the right, have criticised the term 'violent extremism' because of its excessive generality in the description of Islamic terrorism, which they argue bases its violence on Islamic jurisprudence and fatwas, and cannot be countered without addressing these principles. They therefore prefer the term 'Islamic terrorism' or 'violent Islamic extremism'. If these circles are to be praised for calling the phenomenon by its name and focusing their attention [on] the risk of Islamic fascism, in contrast to leftist and liberal circles, who belittle the danger of the phenomenon by claiming commitment to cultural pluralism and tolerance even of the intolerants, they are to be criticised in other ways. Many circles of the conservative right tend to associate

85 This is a reference to an incident on 13 August 2018, when Ugandan police and military arrested and beat six opposition members of parliament (see HRW, 2018).

86 It is common knowledge that militia groups in eastern DRC have access to various minerals, including gold in particular and coltan, as well as some logging in Ituri. This is often how they are able to buy weapons, etc. ADF are thought to survive on gold and logging (see, for instance, Titeca & Vlassenroot, 2012). There have also been scandals where UN peacekeeping troops (notably, Pakistanis) have been caught out as involved in the brokering or collection and selling of gold. It is alleged that this very shady informal economy involves powerful stakeholders in both DRC and Uganda (see, for instance, Escobales, 2008).

terrorism with Islam as a religion, basing their argument, as do the terrorists themselves, on religious texts cut off from their contexts. Without this context, they present Islam as a single set of ideas. This ignores the historical and contemporary reality of Muslims – who have disagreed and still disagree about the interpretation of the texts – and the broad section of the population who adopt interpretations of their religion which make them disgusted with the practices of terrorist violence. To label all Muslims terrorists is not only inaccurate, but also practically wrong as it would isolate millions of Muslims from the fight against terrorism, and even push them to line up with Islamic terrorists. (Warrag, 2018, pp. 4–5)

SDFG further noted that:

These circles also ignore the role of economic, social, political and psychological factors in interpreting the phenomenon of terrorism, and attribute it to a single cause – Islam as an ideology. This is not consistent with the fact that most Muslims do not practice terrorism, nor does it explain why the ideology itself sometimes comes [to] the forefront, while at other times, it is obscured. This suggests that while ideology is important, terrorism is driven by other factors as well. A complex phenomenon such as terrorist violence can only have multiple and interactive causes, related to history, ideology, jurisprudence, economics, politics, and psychological factors, which require [a] comprehensive approach and treatment. (Ibid., p. 5)

While critiquing the attribution of violence to Islam by some circles in the West, SDFG is simultaneously engaged in exposing those in Islamic circles who deny the plurality of Islam:

Although Muslims agree on certain principles, which allow us to talk about Islam as a single entity, Muslims have disagreed throughout history on many aspects of their religion, especially those related to how they should conduct their lives. They have disagreed about the basic texts and their implications, the authoritative texts and the similarities in their totality and their details, both the generalities and the specifics … Despite the claims of some religious leaders, therefore, it is incorrect to claim that there is one ultimate or authoritative interpretation of Islam. One of the most important reasons for the decline of the Muslim world is the suppression of pluralism in Islam and the attempt by various groups to impose their interpretation of religious texts as the sole legitimate interpretation. (Ibid., pp. 5–6)

As the above excerpts indicate, Muslims' talking-back discursive practices do not merely focus on countering stereotypical representations of a violent Islam with equally essentialist representations of Islam as 'a religion of peace'. Rather, instead of being in denial mode, they recognise the Islamic variant of VE but call for a more nuanced understanding of violence as it relates to Islam.

Participants at the Naivasha P/CVE learning event further noted that a definition of VE is urgently required, which will also better define P/CVE. There are conceptual and political perspectives of violence, particularly in the distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate violence, what is deemed as extremist, and the political implications of the current use of the term VE. While acknowledging the sensitive nature of characterising violence by ideologically motivated groups, it was felt that it might be more productive to coin a term that specifically refers to Islamist forms of violence, in order to improve understanding and programming.

SDFG has made a similar case against denial and the postulation that Islam is inherently peaceful: *'The escapist position is not a solution … the notion that terrorism has nothing to do with Islam – a conclusion thrown around without any intellectual and doctrinal engagement – denies the reality that the texts of Islam are used to legitimise terrorism. In this context we must address the aspects of Islam that are used to legitimise terrorism without confrontation with Islam as a whole. What we really seek is religious renewal, and this battle is inevitable'* (Warrag, 2018, p. 7).

Explaining Islamic VE

There is no doubt that VE narratives, especially those promoting violence in the name of Islam spread by groups such as Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, Taliban and Daesh, have gained strength and visibility in the last two decades … However, it is an overstatement to solely explain the motivation for endorsing or adopting VE in Muslim societies as a result of theological factors … there are many other factors besides religious identity and theological reasoning contributing to the phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is possible to trace historical factors that led to the creation of such groups in predominantly Muslim countries. (Abu-Nimer, 2018, p. 2)

Muslim voices from the region very much echo Abu-Nimer's incisive criticism of the assumed link between Islam and violence, and join in similar efforts to offer a more convincing explanation, combining history and geopolitics, for the current rise of the Islamic form of VE.

To date, the most persuasive explanation from Muslims in the region for the rise of the Islamic form of VE comes from Mazrui et al., who recognise and engage with Islamic VE but caution that this should not be construed in a way that produces 'evidence' for the inherently violent nature of Islam. They say that, globally, Islamic VE needs to be understood as a response to the historical subjugation and overwhelming military power reinforcing control of the oil-producing areas of the Islamic world. After the 9/11 tragedy in the USA, President George W. Bush declared the attacks an 'act of war'. By defining the criminal offensive as a war, the Bush administration sought to provide a legitimating language for its intention to exercise extraordinary powers both domestically and internationally. Framing the al-Qaeda–engineered attacks as an act of war, in other words, became a perfect cover in the state's quest for greater global hegemony:

The regime of Western hegemony is the primary driver of the global campaign of Muslim-related terrorism. Let us remember that throughout the Cold War period the West tried to woo the Muslim world because it was perceived to be staunchly anti-communist. We even know that the origins of Usama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network [are] in part bound up with US support for the mujahideen fighters against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The increase in Western efforts to demonise Islam is a response to the religion's rediscovered role as a powerful inspirational force against the Western domination that has restructured the modern world as a system of global apartheid. No trans-cultural institution in the developing world has consistently resisted Western imperialism more than Islamic civilisation. The post–Cold War hostility of the American state towards much of the Muslim world is rooted, in part, in the politics of oil and its unconditional support of Israel and dictators in Muslim-majority nations. The US continues to undermine the more independent-leaning Muslim nations, and the duplicity in its foreign policy posture has contributed to the suffering of Muslims internationally. This will continue to feed Muslims' anger against America – and by extension, against its allies in the West and elsewhere, including Kenya and the wider HoA region. (Mazrui et al., 2018, p. 158)

East African Muslims have reacted to this set of global issues with the same degree of outrage as Muslims elsewhere in the world, and these circumstances help explain the continued Muslim resistance against Western and American hegemony, including the incidence of terrorist violence (ibid., p. 18). Evidence based on research conducted by the STRIVE P/CVE[87] program in the HoA (Alternative Voices Project) highlighted significant intergenerational grievances, with youth often referring to religious leaders as 'corrupt' and 'self-serving'. Young Kenyans are becoming increasingly engaged in foreign policy and current affairs – areas in which imams often lack knowledge and fail to provide relevant advice (European Commission, 2017, p. 21).

According to Mazrui et al., a second major issue that has provoked Muslim outrage and frustration globally is the question of Israel and Palestine. Not all Palestinians are Muslims, but because the

87 STRIVE Horn of Africa (HoA) represents the first P/CVE-specific programme by the European Commission outside the EU with the overall objective to prevent terrorism and to counter violent extremism while continuing to respect human rights and international law.

majority of Palestinians are Muslims and because Jerusalem is the location of one of the holiest Islamic sites, the question of Palestinian self-determination arouses strong Muslim indignation throughout the world: 'Israeli militarism, occupation of Arab lands, and repression are the main causes of not only anti-Israeli terrorism but also anti-American terrorism. There will be no world without terrorism for as long as the Palestinian–Israeli dispute is unresolved' (Mazrui et al., 2018, p. 19).

This Western–Israeli hegemony is fought against in various Muslim locales, including in the HoA region. In Kenya, successive governments and leaders have often openly embraced Israel, ignoring the agony and trauma of the Palestinian experience. This helps to account for why one of the first acts of terrorism on Kenyan soil was the attack on the Israeli-owned Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi in 1980, which killed nearly 20 people and injured over 80. It intensified cooperation between the Kenyan police and Israeli intelligence (Mossad), leading to another Israel-targeted terrorist assault on 28 November 2002: the bombing of the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, also owned by Israeli nationals, and the unsuccessful attempt to down an Israeli charter plane with surface-to-air missiles. The attack on the hotel left 13 dead and over 80 injured. Similarly, the first anti-American terrorist attack on Kenyan soil occurred in 1998. The work of operatives associated with al-Qaeda, it took place two years after bin Laden had declared his war on the USA.

Many Muslims in Kenya have been suspicious of the nation's postcolonial governments because they have been excessively obedient to the USA and overly keen to forge closer ties with Israel. Kenya has generally been a strong ally of the USA. It should come as no surprise, then, that Kenya became a target of Muslim-related terrorist attacks against American and Israeli interests in the country. Kenyans did not become targets of Muslim-based terrorism until Kenya began serving as a proxy for American intervention in Somalia. More significantly, perhaps, Kenya participated in the invasion of Somalia in October 2011 with the explicit goal of attacking AS under the banner of Operation Linda Nchi. The Kenyan offensive (with high civilian casualties) marked a critical juncture in the conflict between Kenya and AS. Mazrui et al. (2018) argue that Kenya's choosing to become an active player in the anti-terrorism game worked to make more Kenyans a target in what started as anti-American terrorist attacks (p. 20).

Available evidence from Uganda suggests that Islamic VE is linked to contestation of the Western global hegemonic project, as testimony by Ahmed Luyima, a Ugandan national who participated in the 2010 Kampala bombing, indicates: 'My rage was with Americans whom I deemed responsible for the suffering of Muslims. They planted the Transitional Federal Government [in Somalia] to stop the formation of an Islamic state and that explains why one of the targets I chose was the Ethiopian Restaurant. It had whites' (Romaniuk & Durner, 2018, p. 164).

Western governments' foreign policy towards Muslim countries and the hypocrisy with which they have built their global hegemony are criticised by Muslims in the region, including P/CVE practitioners, as indicated by the following extract from an interview with a Ugandan Muslim activist:

I was lucky to have got the American Embassy scholarship when I was working at the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council. Americans target Ugandan Muslims and give scholarships. We Muslim scholars who are associated with the West occupy a very uncomfortable position. On the one hand, we are considered by fellow Muslims a sellout. On the other hand, we feel unhappy about Western governments' foreign policy and what they do in Muslim countries, such as in Palestine.

If Americans want a peaceful world, they should stop producing guns. If there is the will, there is the way. I was very much surprised when our American trainer managed to trace my village through Google Maps. We were asked where we came from and they traced our respective villages in real time and space! I could see people in my village moving in and out. They can trace arms trafficking if they so want. They can easily trace where the 'terrorists' in Syria are getting their arms from, if they so wish.

Western governments are conflict entrepreneurs, and they thrive on conflicts in developing countries. As such they are hypocrites. They always blame ideology, especially Islam, while the real issue is extending their hegemony all over the world. In Uganda, P/CVE means Muslims. We do not use this term. People ask why such a program is for Muslims. They ask, 'Where do you get the funds from?' (Interview conducted at Muslim Centre for Justice and Law, Kampala, September 2018)

While commenting on donors' preoccupation with the ideological dimension of VE that focuses on Islamic extremism, a representative of ACT! – a CSO that is currently implementing three P/CVE projects in Kenya – noted that:

We originally thought of focusing on violence in Coastal Kenya related to the MRC [Mombasa Republican Council]. Coastal Kenya has a history of extremism, which is expressed in the form of political and military mobilisation under the name of MRC. MRC violence has a historical background. The Sultan of Zanzibar was promised by colonial Britain that he could take over the coast upon independence. That is the root of the idea of 'Coast is not Kenya'. However, the US Government wanted us to focus on Islamic extremism, not MRC. Now the focus is on AS [Ansari Sunnah], which targets Mombasa because of tourists. (Nairobi, 28 April 2018)

Islamic VE in the HoA region, as elsewhere, is embedded within local contexts. Mazrui et al. note that the political economy of the postcolonial Kenyan state has provided a local context in Coastal Kenya within which VE is embedded. For one, Jomo Kenyatta's ethnocratic regime had a religious undercurrent, raising the contentious issue of 'the Gikuyu [Kikuyu] domination' and the land question in Coastal Kenya. These issues continue to be a source of conflict under the government led by his son Uhuru Kenyatta: 'by 1975, over 3000 Gikuyu families had been settled and allocated land in the area, with a provision for more to come' (Mazrui et al., p. 19). It is no wonder that one of AS's mobilisation strategies in the Coast has been the promise of land reclamation. The Gikuyu settlers continued to be predominantly Christian while the Swahili are predominantly Muslim. It is against this backdrop that we need to understand the tragic 2014 attacks on Mpeketoni: 'Under a new dispensation that has come to conflate sectarian politics with pre-existing ethnic politics, terrorists were able to capitalise on the discourse of existing land grievances, highlighting an important interplay between terrorism and the economics of marginalisation (ibid.).

The contested Christian identity of the state is also linked with the issue of Islamic VE in Kenya. As noted by Mazrui et al. (2018), 'Given Kenya's colonial history, Christianity always enjoyed an underlying structural presence in the affairs of the state' and this was made explicit during under President Daniel Arap Moi's administration partly because of 'the place of Christianity in Moi's own vision of governance' (p. 20). Mazrui et al. (2018) further mention that religion-based imbalances in in Kenya have included 'discrimination in matters of citizenship and national belonging, unequal access to educational opportunities, disparities in civil service appointments in favour of non-Muslims even in Muslim majority constituencies, [and] the burning question of land ownership and dispossession, among others' (p. 21). President Mwai Kibaki (2002–13) promised to redress these imbalances and set up a commission of inquiry to report on the concerns of Muslim community (Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, 2008). The inquiry's findings, known as the Sharawe Report, validated the Muslim grievances, but, 'like many other reports submitted to the government, little came of it in terms of implementation of the core recommendations' (ibid., p. 33). The issue of Muslim marginalisation is more acute in the Somali-inhabited north-east, where the religious boundary overlaps with a cross-border ethnic identity. The Kenyan Government has securitised its relationship with the Somali minority ever since the Shifta War of the early postcolonial period when Kenyan Somalis were mobilised by Mogadishu's Greater Somalia project, which aspired to create a Somali nation-state including all Somali-inhabited territories of the HoA.

The socio-political status of Uganda's Muslim minority is similar to that of the Muslim minority in Kenya. Uganda is a predominantly Christian country, with various Catholic and Protestant sects alongside a significant Muslim minority (13.7 per cent) that includes diverse Sunni and Shia groups (Minority Rights Group International, 2018). The state has often had a tense relationship with Muslims; this started during the colonial period. According to Romaniuk & Durner (2018), 'under British colonial rule Protestant and Catholic missionaries were privileged. Perceptions of discrimination against Muslims persist today. For example, a recent survey of 262 Muslims indicated that nearly 78 per cent feel they are free to practise their religion in Uganda but almost all feel that the Islamic community is marginalised by the government and society. Further, 48 per cent feel they have been disadvantaged in some way because they are Muslim, and nearly 59 per cent feel that Muslims are not politically influential enough … Muslims invariably articulated a common set of grievances that were unknown to, or elided by, Christian interviewees' (p. 167). A similar story is found among Ethiopia's sizeable Muslim minority of historic marginalisation under the aegis of the country's orthodox Christian majority (Feyissa, 2013).

State Security Practices Constitutive of VE

Research participants noted that one of the major drivers of VE is unscrupulous government interventions in the form of either CT or P/CVE. A peacebuilding approach – one that focuses on improving strained state–society relations – is a more effective response to VE than most state security practices, which often inadvertently nurture VE. Kenya's security responses to AS violence, for instance, involve a wide range of measures that have further alienated the Somali population. In April 2014, the country's internal security minister launched Operation Usalama Watch (Operation Peace Watch) to remove individuals – mainly Somalis – who were in the country illegally and believed to be behind AS attacks. The operation deployed over 6000 police officers and soldiers in Nairobi's Eastleigh neighbourhood. According to human rights organisations, various violations were committed during the operation (HRW, 2014). As noted by Lind et al. (2017), 'Kenya's Somali and Muslim leadership strongly criticised Usalama Watch, which some likened to a state-led profiling of the Kenya-Somali community' (p. 130). This was confirmed by the fact-finding mission established by the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), which recommended 29 officers for prosecution ('29 police officers probed for abuses', 2014).

State security practices are also alleged to involve extrajudicial killings. Kenya's security forces have been accused of being behind a wave of assassinations and forceful disappearances of ordinary Muslims, businesspeople, traders, clerics and activists. In its report The Error of Fighting Terror with Terror, the state-funded Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) accused security agencies of serious human rights violations during the conduct of CT operations such as Usalama Watch:

The KNCHR documented multiple human rights violations and breaches of the law committed by security agencies against innocent civilians, particularly members of the Muslim Somali community. The violations included arbitrary arrests, extortion, theft and looting of businesses and homesteads, sexual harassment, arbitrary detentions, illegal deportations, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment … This report documents over one hundred and twenty (120) cases of egregious human rights violations that include twenty-five (25) extrajudicial killings and eighty-one (81) enforced disappearances … The commission is concerned that the ongoing crackdown continues to disproportionately target certain groups of people particularly ethnic Somalis and members of the Muslim faith in the coastal region. This profiling of people along ethnic or religious lines constitute– discrimination and is therefore unconstitutional and against international norms. (KNCHR, 2015, pp. 4–6, 37)

Human Rights Watch reported on Kenya's CT operations from a human security perspective as it relates to the country's Muslim population: 'Kenyan security forces conducted several abusive counterterrorism operations in Nairobi, on the coast, and in North Eastern region in 2014 following attacks and intercommunal clashes. The operations largely targeted ethnic Somali and Muslim communities' (HRW, 2015, p. 1). As a research participant from a CSO that implements a P/CVE project noted, 'People disappear even between the court and the police station. Not sure where they go. Guantanamo? Ethiopia?'[88] Everyday forms of insecurity among Kenyan Muslims abound, as the following lived experience of a Kenyan Somali Muslim in Nairobi indicates:

These days you see many security dogs in public places. They are trained to identify people with hijabs and beard. Once in Mombasa I was with my sister, and the dog reacted differently when it saw us while it was silent when others, non-Muslims, passed by. This is how far religious profiling has gone, which has made Muslims in Kenya feel very insecure. (Kenyan Somali resident of Eastleigh, Nairobi, 29 March 2018)

International NGO Search for Common Ground's baseline study of the Kenyan Coast (SFCG, 2017) mentioned a similar form of human insecurity experienced by respondents: 'Respondents have accused police of negative profiling. One focus group discussion participant said, "Police target those who look like Muslims (beards, bui bui) and we are very angry"' (p. 21).

These and many other reports indicate that the state security practices that profile and target Kenya's Muslim population have proven to be ineffective responses to the threat posed by VE. If anything, they have inadvertently reinforced it. The subject of VE has been crafted by the Kenyan state as a security question, which has provided it with the authority to use coercive measures as well as military operations to emphasise law and order. An evaluation of the P/CVE project by Search for Common Ground corroborates this:

In response to the growing threat of VE in coastal Kenya, the Government of Kenya … has stepped up counterterrorism and countering violent extremism efforts in the region. However, these tactics tend to focus on overly militaristic and heavy-handed security approaches, which have been found to create more violent extremism than they reduce … Respondents claimed that the government's militarised P/CVE method of interventions has encouraged re-radicalisation, particularly in situations where people who believe they are innocent have been targeted. (SFCG, 2018, p. 7)

How responses to VE/terrorism could be constitutive of the phenomenon of VE is also persuasively argued by Lind et al. in their article '"Killing a mosquito with a hammer"' (2017): 'Guaranteeing equal citizenship rights for all Kenyans, following through on police reforms, and ensuring accountability in state security practices are fundamental parts of a wider peacebuilding approach that could heal both state–society and citizen–society tensions and reduce the AS threat. However, for the moment, a lack of political will, combined with existing levels of public support for a harder security approach, presage further violence at the margins' (p. 134)

The Ugandan Government's response to VE tells a similar counterproductive story. Concerned by the government's handling of suspected Muslim violent extremists, P/CVE practitioners in Uganda work with justice agencies to ensure the rule of law is applied fairly to Muslims and so reduce Muslims' perception that Islam is being specifically targeted or that it is 'under attack', as the following excerpt from a discussion with the leadership of the Muslim Centre for Justice and Law indicates:

We are engaged in the judiciary to help improve state–society (Muslim) relations by advocating for the due process of law. Indeed, there is discrimination against Muslims in the judiciary. For example, two [non-Muslim] MPs are being charged with treason (including Bobi Wine) but they got bail, but Muslims were charged and held for 12 years without bail. We work with DPP [Director of Public Prosecutions]. In September 2018 we managed to acquit three Muslims who were suspected of the 2010 bombing and sentenced for eight years. The feeling of injustice among the Muslim community can fuel VE. Muslims also feel discrimination in the job market – the talk of 'merit' without levelling the playing field is a form of discrimination. Indeed, affirmative action is needed for Ugandan Muslims. Muslims would like to link up with the nationwide call for political reform, such as

88 Interview, anonymous, 29 April 2018.

supporting Bobi Wine. But in doing so, Muslims will run the risk of being labelled. Non-Muslims are also made by the government to feel that Muslims are bad people. (Interview with Jaffer Senganda, Head, Muslim Centre for Justice and Law, Kampala, 24 September 2018)

P/CVE as Governments' Strategic Rent-Seeking

According to research participants, academic publications and the grey literature (Romaniuk & Durner, 2018; Fisher, 2013; Anderson & Fisher, 2016), P/CVE is situated within the broader rent-seeking behaviour of governments in the region as it relates to global CT assistance.

In Kenya, P/CVE is situated within the clientelist state. Most of Kenya's CT measures seem to have been carried out as 'impression management': 'The general record especially since the presidency of Mwai Kibaki is of a Kenya government that is doing its best to give the impression that it is doing everything possible to fight terrorism. Much of this impression is created for the benefit of the USA for it is from the American government that the Kenya government gains its foreign aid bonuses for seeming to serve as such a willing, indeed eager, partner in the fight against terrorism' (Mazrui et al., 2018, pp. 30–1).

According to Jeremy Prestholdt, what is even more troubling about the CT partnership between Kenya and the USA is the incentive structure that underpins the global assistance as it relates to CT, which is based more on perceived threat than on performance: 'Kenya's leaders may stand to gain from the prospect of terrorist attacks … US aid to Kenya is largely pegged to the perceived risk of terrorism, rather than to Kenyan authorities' effectiveness in addressing terrorist activity, thus, the Kenyan government has an incentive to tolerate infrequent attacks' (Prestholdt, 2011, p. 21). This is reinforced by the absence of internal pressures, as for the Kenyan public there are more urgent national priorities than terrorism, such as poverty and HIV: 'There is little internal pressure on the Kenyan government to search for terrorists. At the same time, the threat of future attacks and sporadic efforts at foiling terrorist plots yield dividends in foreign aid. This calculus offers few prospects for stemming terrorism or allaying Muslims' fears that they will continue to suffer human rights violations' (ibid.).

The Ugandan context has some similarities to that of Kenya. The Government of Uganda has a history of strategic rent-seeking behaviour regarding CT assistance. As noted by various scholars, Museveni is widely acknowledged to have leveraged the terrorist threat to advance his interests both domestically and internationally. According to Romaniuk and Durner (2018), 'Uganda's strategic behaviour in leveraging the terrorist threat for both domestic political purposes (in the cause of regime maintenance) and to maximise aid flows from external donors is well documented. … counter-terrorism measures have repeatedly been used against domestic political opponents and journalists. The regime has not hesitated to politicise terrorism and counterterrorism in the context of electioneering' (p. 170). Similarly, Fisher (2013) discusses Museveni's rent-seeking behaviour as it relates to global CT assistance by citing the example of Uganda's military intervention in Somalia: 'Intervention in "terrorist haven" Somalia … has provided the regime of President Yoweri Museveni with an opportunity to bolster and develop its international image as a key donor "ally against terrorism". In reinforcing the salience of this narrative among donors, Uganda, in contrast to states like Kenya and Malawi, has continued to escape significant censure from its development partners, who finance between 35 and 50 percent of Ugandan government spending'.

Considering its dependence on foreign aid, the Museveni regime has taken every opportunity to frame its conflict with LRA and ADF as part of the GWOT. In fact, the Ugandan Government has consistently sought to portray ADF as a terrorist group with links to transnational Islamic VE organisations such as al-Qaeda, AS and IS even though the available evidence suggests to the contrary. While questioning the government's strong claim of a link between ADF and transnational Salafi-jihadi networks, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) argued, 'the temptation to look at the ADF through

the prism of jihadism alone … must be resisted. Regional governments have long emphasised the ADF's transnational jihadist connections – to a dubious degree – in the knowledge that military aid will follow. Yet the presence of a few links between the ADF and better-known Islamist groups does not make for concrete operational support' (Beevor, 2019).

Even in Somalia, which is a Muslim country, the federal government invokes the threat of AS to justify power, as noted by a Naivasha participant:

When al-Shabaab is weakened, this would be a problem for the government because they thrive on the AS threat. They have not built a constituency with the people – the fear of AS is the core basis of political legitimacy for the federal government. If not for the fear of AS, what are they for? The AS threat is also instrumentalised by the government to extract resources from counterterrorism assistance.

On the other hand, there is tension within AS [between] those who want power and those who are ideological. Ahmed Mohammad Madabe, for instance, left AS and joined the Jubaland Government because he wanted power.[89] This is the reason why we find many AS [adherents] flipflopping. Some are purely driven by ideological considerations [and] use Somalia to an end, but for others it is about power. Somalia is 100 per cent Muslim and anyone who aspires to power cannot rule out Islam and Islamic ideology. If you are a ruler of a Muslim country, there are principles based on the scripture. It is not about being extremist but about religious values and faith. Said Barre [president of Somalia 1969–91] was a completely different creature for Somali politics – in fact, Somalis became more religious under secular Said Barre. (Interview, anonymous, Naivasha, January 2018)

Sudan's case is somewhat different. There, P/CVE is situated within the government's negotiating strategy vis-a-vis its inclusion in the list of SSTs and the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies. The annual US report on terrorism for 2018 mentioned that 'the Government of Sudan continued to pursue counterterrorism operations alongside regional partners, including operations to counter threats to US interests and personnel in Sudan. Sudan's deradicalisation program focused on reintegration and rehabilitation of returned foreign terrorist fighters and those espousing terrorist ideologies' (Belfakir, 2018). According to the US State Department, 'If we conclude that Sudan has sufficiently built upon the positive actions it has taken, including by improving respect for human rights, enhancing humanitarian access, and advancing Sudan's peace process, and determine that the relevant statutory criteria have been met, we would consider beginning the process to rescind Sudan's State Sponsor of Terrorism designation' (ibid.).

Despite Bashir's cooperation with Western intelligence agencies in CT measures in the region and beyond, that the US seems to have kept the country on the SST list is important because it gives the US leverage over Sudan, as Khartoum continued to support extremist forces in the region including in Libya (Reeves, 2017). A research participant from the Sudanese media critiqued Bashir's commitment to combating VE in the following manner:

Bashir works with VEOs to get access to information as part of his intelligence cooperation with the Americans. For example, the Dendir group from Somalia were invited for training in Sudan, and Bashir gave 30 of them to the Americans. On the other hand, Bashir claims an Islamist agenda, which is contested by the Islamists. It is a very confused and hypocritical situation. The public does not know who to believe – Bashir as an Islamist working with VEOs, or with the West against VEOs. Perhaps it is both. What matters most for Bashir is regime survival, and he goes everywhere to make sure he will stay in power. Many Islamists have left Bashir, such as Atayib Mustafa (uncle of Bashir) and Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, a long-time Islamist who preferred Bashir to Turabi. Bashir has used the Islamist card against real Islamists in Sudan, the Gulf countries, Iran and now the West. Because of that, there is a problem of trusting Sudan because Bashir has changed sides so easily and so frequently. P/CVE is

89 Madobe was a former member of the Islamic Courts Union but later became the disputed president of the Jubaland state of Somalia, with close ties to Kenya. His authority is deeply resented by Ethiopia. He won a new term in August 2019.

viewed by the public as political business principally to negotiate the sanction regime. As such, Bashir's political will to fight VE is suspect. He also views P/CVE through a CT lens. (Editor of Al-Sudani newspaper, Khartoum, 2 October 2018)

In its 2017 report Radical Intolerance, the human rights organisation Enough Project corroborated such a definition of the VE landscape in Sudan and the response to it:

Sudan's intolerant regime has a long-established tradition of religious persecution that continues today despite its bid for normalised ties with the United States and the rest of the world. It also has maintained long relationships with active extremist groups. This record suggests Sudan may be an untrustworthy partner in the bid to push back against religious extremism that is gaining momentum in the region and is essential for combating international terrorism. (Baldo, 2017)

The post-Bashir transitional government of Sudan has signalled a series of policy shifts, not least handing over Bashir to the International Criminal Court. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for Sudan to be removed from the USA's SST list as the listing has impeded much-needed international financial assistance and commercial activity in Sudan ('UN chief calls for Sudan removal', 2020).

The Discourse of VE and P/CVE in the HoA: Summary

The evidence presented in this paper points in the direction of why and how P/CVE programming, at least in the HoA context, is not working well. Globally, there is no evidence that P/CVE works. In his incisive criticism of P/CVE programs, Emmanuel Mauleón from the Brennan Center noted that they 'utilise vague and inconsistent definitions of radicalisation, extremism, violent extremism, and non-violent extremism. This hinders accurate assessment of perceived terror threats and makes measuring the programs' effectiveness nearly impossible' (Mauleón, 2018).

Similarly, the Transnational Institute (TNI) report *The Globalisation of Countering Violent Extremism: Undermining Human Rights, Instrumentalising Civil Society* found that there is no evidence on the causes of terrorism that support P/CVE strategies: 'P/CVE dissuades dissent, stifles transparency, facilitates stigmatisation, undermines secularism, and reinforces gender-stereotypes' (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018, pp. 13–14).

Besides, P/CVE seems to have failed to live up to its raison d'être, i.e. the claim that projects and programs consult and have the cooperation of the communities involved, which is one of the presumed major differences between CT and P/CVE – so-called, respectively, hard and soft responses to terrorism/VE.

This report has critically appraised the discourse and practice of P/CVE based on evidence from the HoA context in general and three countries in the region in particular: Kenya, Uganda and Sudan. Echoing the global trend, P/CVE thinking and practice in the region singularly focus on an Islamic form of VE, as noted by research participants who are calling for a broader understanding of VE for more effective P/CVE programming – an understanding that goes beyond the traditional focus on non-state actors and includes VE trends in other religions as well.

The report has also documented and analysed the discursive practices of Muslims in the region who criticise the attribution of violence to Islam, which is at the root of stereotyping and profiling practices as they relate to P/CVE. Reacting to this, Muslims in the region are actively engaged in 'talking back' practices. However, Muslims' talking-back discursive practices do not merely focus on countering stereotypical representations of a 'violent Islam' with equally essentialist representations of Islam as 'a religion of peace'. Rather, instead of being in denial mode they recognise the Islamic variant

of VE but call for a more nuanced understanding of violence as it relates to Islam. While explaining the Islamic form of VE they situate it within wider geopolitical contexts (such as the Western quest for global hegemony and local discontents) and local political contexts (such as the issue of Muslim marginalisation in Christian-majority countries).

Critical voices noted how most of the current responses to VE – largely the responses of governments – are constitutive of VE. They include police brutality, extrajudicial killings, the hosting of P/CVE programs within CT institutions, and national P/CVE strategies that focus on religious ideology at the expense of the structural drivers of VE. The hypocrisy of repressive governments championing the P/CVE agenda is pointed out by research participants as a major constraining factor for effective P/CVE programming. Validating the available evidence, research participants point out that the participation in P/CVE programming by most governments in the region is situated within broader strategic rent-seeking behaviour as it relates to global CT assistance.

THE COMPLEXITY OF P/CVE PROGRAMMING IN THE HORN OF AFRICA: WHAT WORKS WELL & WHAT DOES NOT?

The Complexity of P/CVE Programming in the Horn of Africa; What Works Well & What Does Not?

Introduction

Recurrent attacks in Somalia, Kenya and other countries in the Horn of Africa (HoA) affected by extreme forms of violence have given rise to counterterrorism (CT) efforts. However, it is emerging that the military tactics and techniques employed by governments and regional mechanisms to combat terrorism have not been as successful as anticipated. Over the past few years, there has been a shift within the global discourse from a pure CT approach to recognising the importance of developing proactive, inclusive, and durable approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE).

In September 2014, the UN Security Council (UNSC) referred to P/CVE for the first time, in Resolution 2178. The following year, in February, the United States convened a three-day White House summit on P/CVE that discussed countering the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and violent extremism (VE). In 2016, the UN Secretary-General presented his action plan on preventing VE to the General Assembly. These international efforts have been complemented at the regional level with Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member states seeking to be involved in P/CVE interventions. IGAD's Regional Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, validated by member states in 2017, is expected to provide a road map to guide the region in addressing VE in a more collaborative and cooperative manner. So far, Kenya and Somalia have developed national strategies to counter VE. Kenya has gone one step further through the devolution of its national P/CVE strategy to the county level, through County Action Plans. Other countries in the region are working on their own P/CVE strategies.

Numerous workshops and summits on P/CVE strategies have been organised in the IGAD region since 2015, and projects and programs are being implemented at various levels by international, national, and local organisations. Despite wide support from donors and governments, however, the field of P/CVE remains relatively undefined. Policymakers and practitioners often use the terms 'counterterrorism' and 'preventing and countering violent extremism' interchangeably, yet they refer to two different approaches. This confusion is compounded by the sensitivity of the projects and the general lack of trust between governments and citizens. The proliferation of P/CVE programming has also raised questions and concerns about the effectiveness of the programming. Challenges abound in designing P/CVE programs that can be evaluated. This has resulted in limited evidence of what works, where and when.

To reflect further on these issues, the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) through its Horn of Africa Regional Program (HARP), collaborated with the Rift Valley Institute (RVI), to convene a two-day P/CVE learning event in January 2018 in Naivasha, Kenya. The event, entitled 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly on Countering Violent Extremism Programming', brought together 65 well-respected thought leaders and practitioners in the field of conflict prevention and violent extremism from civil society, academia, research, government, and donor communities.[90] Its objective was to review and question the P/CVE interventions implemented so far in the HoA. It also aimed to share lessons learnt from the field to expand knowledge of P/CVE practice. Specifically, LPI and RVI took the initiative to bring relevant stakeholders together to:

- look at how P/CVE interventions have so far delivered on the promise of preventing and countering extremist violence at the grassroots level
- draw on lessons and good practices that have emerged from activities related to P/CVE in the HoA region
- discuss ongoing and emerging challenges and enduring questions that remain to be explored and addressed
- look across P/CVE interventions in the HoA region and recommend opportunities for further

90 Given the confidential nature of the discussion, names of the participants are withheld.

developing the field of P/CVE, including where program adaptations and funding should (or should not) be prioritised.

Essentially, the event aimed to foster honest discussion on 'the good, the bad and the ugly', of collective lessons learnt from P/CVE practice in the region. P/CVE as a field of practice has strong supporters but also strong critics. The organisers hoped that, in listening to all perspectives on this highly complex topic and reflecting on them together, participants would learn something new. To this end, participants at the Naivasha learning event were asked:

- What is VE, especially in the Horn of Africa?
- How is the understanding of VE translated to P/CVE projects?
- How are these projects affecting targeted communities from a human security perspective?

Most P/CVE projects in the region have been implemented with a sense of urgency. As is bound to happen in real-life situations, the distinction between the phenomenon (VE) and the response to it (CVE) can be blurred. Often the programs have not developed concurrently with their evaluation, which means that the interventions have not always responded to perceptions of what seems to work.

The organisers (LPI and RVI) seek to learn from the lived experiences of different actors (civil society organisations or CSOs, governments, donors, academics, and researchers) as no one sector has a monopoly on understanding or practising P/CVE given the complex nature of VE and the contested field of P/CVE programming. To this end, the participants went into working groups to self-reflect on these issues from practical and first-hand experience, to contribute to the growth of understanding in the area. Instead of asking 'Who should we target?', participants were encouraged to ask themselves, in relation to their specific programs:

- Who did we target?
- How did we understand P/CVE?
- How did we respond to this or that situation?

Objectives of Working Groups at the Naivasha Event

CSOs

What additional value is P/CVE giving in combating violence? Emerging evidence shows that P/CVE has not been able to draw clear boundaries between itself and related interventions, such as peacebuilding and poverty eradication, that have been able to define themselves better. It has been observed that P/CVE programming is affected by how a program is designed and implemented. How are perceptions of communities factored in?

Governments

P/CVE programming is still evolving. How does it differ from other types of intervention with similar objectives, or any intervention such as peacebuilding? What makes P/CVE different from CT? How do CSOs and local communities engage with government interventions, particularly when confronted with the sensitive matter of security? What should be the modality of this articulation between state and non-state actors in P/CVE programming?

Donors

What should be prioritised when funding P/CVE programs? What has been learnt so far about the two approaches – upstream (preventive) and downstream (deradicalisation) – and how they work? Which actor is best placed to intervene, and at which point/level?

Academics and Researchers

Evidence-based knowledge is needed in P/CVE. Systematic, scientific knowledge on what works remains limited. What is the available evidence for answering the question 'What works well in the context of the HoA?' What is needed to inform P/CVE programming? How are researchers negotiating access to this sensitive area of VE and responses to it? To what extent do practitioners and governments give academics space to inform them on new and developing information?

This report presents and examines the key debates and issues from the Naivasha event and highlights the conceptual and operational challenges various actors face in the course of their work. Overall, it provides an insight into the reality on the ground, and the work that lies ahead for the improvement of P/CVE programming. Section 2 discusses how participants addressed the issue of lack of clarity in what VE is/means, and how this plays out in P/CVE programming. Section 3 looks at the challenges CSOs face while implementing P/CVE projects. Section 4 brings in donor perspectives: how preferences are given in funding, and how these preferences relate to the flexibility of funding mechanisms, given the complexity of P/CVE programming. Section 5 discusses the need for a conflict-sensitive approach and the use of a human security lens in P/CVE programming. The last section draws conclusions from the different perspectives.

Responding to Violent Extremism

The term 'violent extremism' is not easy to define. This is in part because different people and organisations have different views on what it is. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that VE affects people's existence. As explained by the keynote speaker at the Naivasha P/CVE event, a highly respected academic, we live in a multicultural world where the use of violence for the purpose of achieving political goals can be traced as far back as humans have existed. These pre-existing conflicts have been given a new lease of life in the post–Cold War era.

He highlighted the problem of conceptualisation in P/CVE programming, saying that the avoidance of a P/CVE definition only makes the task more challenging – as he experienced during the designing of the IGAD Regional Strategy on P/CVE,[91] where different organisations had different approaches. The notion 'One person's terrorist is another person's nationalist' illustrates the dilemma of what a person is called versus what that person is doing. Historically, the 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis, which sees international relations as clashes, has in a sense demonstrated how certain relations are already defined.

Citing Ali Mazrui (1977), the keynote speaker further noted that in Africa, the old warrior tradition is sometimes used to justify violent actions. Furthermore, the dynamics of religion cannot be excluded in this discussion when the major faiths in the world (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism) are seen to be clashing within themselves. Other forms of extremism, inspired not necessarily by faiths but by

91 The IGAD P/CVE Strategy was designed in 2016. The process included wide consultation with government agencies, civil society and academics/researchers in the IGAD countries: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda, plus Tanzania. See IGAD, 2019.

certain beliefs, are also on the rise, such as Mungiki in Kenya.[92] It is probably more accurate to say that they have been on the rise, but their status and level of activity are disputed in 2019. Some say they wax and wane during and after elections, respectively.

There is a general tendency to move straight to programming without defining P/CVE. Consequently, it is not clear whether P/CVE programs are working.

Challenges in Researching P/CVE

The working group of academics and researchers considered the conceptual, political, socio-cultural, and ethical issues in P/CVE research and programming. It was pointed out that P/CVE is a new and expanding field of inquiry and that researchers and academics face a combination of old and new definitional, social, political, and ethical challenges that accompany social science research in general. On sensitive topics such as VE and P/CVE, who decides to ask what questions? Who collects the data? Who writes about the findings? Whose voice ends up being recorded at the end of a research exercise? Researchers in geographical areas that have been studied a lot, such as Majengo and Eastleigh in Nairobi, all tend to ask the same questions. Consequently, community 'experts' have emerged who give answers based on what they think the researchers want to hear – a variation on the halo effect.[93] This limitation should be mitigated or complemented by additional research methodologies. Existing donor priorities, including the political, social, and cultural P/CVE landscape, have also given rise to uneven knowledge output, where certain areas and/or thematic concerns receive more attention than others. In Kenya, a great deal of work has been done at the Coast, but less is known about radicalisation trends in the North East and in new areas such as Western Kenya and urban centres. More empirical data about these localised contexts is needed.

P/CVE research is accompanied by huge emotional burdens because of the very sensitive information that is collected. This affects both researchers and respondents. Balance is needed between pure academic interest (production of knowledge) in the issues, and the need to inform action (policy and programs). Sometimes respondents put themselves at risk during an exercise and doing research purely to satisfy academic interest can be unethical, especially if the researcher or academic comes from the community they are studying. This is like the ethical issues that affect all research on political violence and conflict dynamics. The role of the researcher should primarily be to inform potential constructive change. Researchers face challenges in accessing information that only government agencies have but will not share. With access to such information, researchers can frame wider narratives of VE – something governments cannot do so well – for more knowledge production to inform better programming. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of existing programs is weak due to a rigid programming landscape that does not give much room for the shifting nature of VE and for sharing lessons, including failures. It is important to create databases on the lessons, failures, and implications of certain programs. The whole aid architecture is effectively geared to publicising success rather than celebrating success and learning from failure equally. Failure is covered up or minimised.

The academics and researchers also noted the issue of how public perceptions and the plurality of local realities have been addressed during the implementation of P/CVE programs. In Kenya, for instance, there is a distinct difference in the framing of P/CVE by the dominant religious groups. Muslim

92 Mungiki is a predominantly Kikuyu movement inspired by the ideological and political legacy of the Mau Mau, who fought against British colonial powers. Mungiki's cause is essentially the transfer of power from the old to the young generation, particularly in response to Daniel arap Moi's presidency of Kenya (1979–2002). In the post-Moi era, the group has exhibited more criminal elements than previously. See Kagwanja, 2005.

93 The halo bias/effect is 'the widespread human tendency in impression formation to assume that once a person possesses some positive or negative characteristic, other as yet unknown qualities will also be positive or negative, in other words, consistent with the existing impression' ('Halo effect', n.d.).

religious leaders emphasise marginalisation theory, while Christian religious leaders refer to religious ideology and indoctrination. This issue – different definitions of VE – needs to be factored into P/CVE programming. There is a strong need to learn from people on the ground (local communities) to improve programming. The Building Resilience in Civil Society (BRICS) P/CVE program in Kenya was mentioned as being good practice in this regard.[94] Through BRICS, practitioners have learnt that it is important to ask local actors, who have the deepest understanding of the situation, to define who is at risk and what they are at risk of. Some partners are working with women and youth affected by VE: they define these groups as at-risk, then deal with the issues and needs that are important to them. Additionally, BRICS practitioners recognise that traditional M&E is a challenge in such cases, so they have adopted flexible programming that allows continuous learning from the field.

Key Issues to Address in P/CVE Programming

Various suggestions were offered by the Naivasha participants about the key issues in VE that need to be addressed to improve P/CVE programming. According to the keynote speaker, VE exists at three levels:

- *Ideology (the idea)*: how VE is articulated and what materials, scriptures, narratives, or sources are used to support the underpinning idea – interventions in this case are on counternarratives
- *Radicalisation (the process and locations)*: how people are radicalised and where it happens, e.g., refugee camps, kiosks, online – this is largely the area for CSOs, where a set of programs is needed to counter the process and shape the environment
- *Terrorism (the action)*: how violence is meted out to targets or communities; intervention here largely takes the form of CT.

It is critical that P/CVE tackles the root causes of VE, taking into consideration national and regional peculiarities and contexts, where some countries are the epicentres and others bear spill-over effects by virtue of being neighbours of the epicentre countries. Despite these complexities, the difficult task of P/CVE programming must be done.

The keynote speaker identified three groups of people in the discussion of VE that might help inform targeted P/CVE programming.

- *Owners of war (radicals, extremists)*: These are the people who weave the ideologies, strategise and mobilise resources for VE. They have no remorse and are committed to their cause, in some cases enough to die for it as they view themselves as revolutionaries. Changing the behaviour of this category of extremists is very difficult, and P/CVE programs are not the best vehicle to achieve this. The problem is to access them as well as change them, and how P/CVE workers will be perceived even if the programs are successful.
- *Bearers of grievance (individuals, communities)*: These people live with certain grievances. They are not only Muslims and Christians, but also other groups.
- *Those seeking change (CSOs, donors, governments, academics)*: These people want to bring change and make society a safer place, where extremists are not a threat. It is important that those in this category really understand what P/CVE is and whether they are supporting and funding the right programs.

94 Funded by the UK Government and implemented by DAI and Wasafiri Consulting, BRICS has carried out research focused on the main drivers of VE in the HoA and the activities working to counter them; the research also aims to identify vulnerable regions. It has also supported the creation of national CVE policies in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and helped national governments and civil society improve CVE projects by providing grants, training and guidance to NGOs and government institutions. See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630248/Countering_Violent_Extremism_East_Africa_2017.pdf.

It was found that there is a fundamental link between the abovementioned 'owners' and 'bearers'. This can become the entry point used by the owners to stoke negative sentiments against authorities who have failed to provide certain services or safety nets to the bearers of grievance, who are therefore at risk of succumbing to the owners' ideologies. In trying to bring change, P/CVE practitioners need to focus on strengthening human rights, education, democracy and justice or on counternarratives to the radicalisation agenda.

The Importance of Local Perspectives

Another highly respected extremism and radicalisation researcher also highlighted the complexity of P/CVE programming in the HoA. She concurred with the keynote speaker that radicalisation is a process that affects different groups differently. Not all groups facing socio-economic challenges or frustrations will respond to these challenges with violence. In P/CVE, she argued, programmers need to know which group they are responding to. Interventions are not simply for those who are violent but also for those who are at risk of turning to violence. In its research seeking to understand recruitment to radical groups and radicalisation, her institution found a combination of three factors: structural motivators (repression, corruption, unemployment, inequality, etc.), individual incentives (sense of purpose/ideology, adventure, belonging, etc.), and enabling factors (radical mentors, radical online communities, etc.).

According to her, P/CVE involves interventions before and after engagement in violence. 'Before' interventions involve preventive communication, dialogue and religious discussions, mentorship, and programs to address structural motivators. 'After' interventions consist of disengagement, deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reinsertion into society. As such, P/CVE and CT efforts should not be seen as alternatives but as complementary approaches. She further urged participants not only to consider these factors but also to be realistic about how programs are designed (not to do too much at once), the change intended (have focused, specific programs), and the capacity and will of governments, always keeping in mind that different places require different responses. Through its research, her research institution has learnt that recruitment to extremist causes is local. Programmers must be very well versed with local concerns and knowledge and should ensure that their program can be evaluated in order to contribute to the strong evidence needed to improve P/CVE. Therefore, research in the future needs to continue with threat analyses, identifying empirical and specific links between local and group dynamics, having a specialised focus (e.g. on women or clans), and holistically looking at the effects of programming and different P/CVE strategies at local, regional and international levels.

The researcher stated that in order to improve P/CVE programming, clarity is needed in two areas: identifying who is 'at risk' (target population) and identifying who the extremists are. The target population depends on what is to be achieved. For example, if children are at risk of being recruited, the intervention program could be about minimising this risk. It is important to ask how the recruiters work, what their narratives are and how to respond to these, while avoiding the risk of stigmatising the community. In Kenya, to take one example, information on the people at risk and what is driving them to VE is not entirely clear yet, even though there are many groups working on P/CVE in urban areas such as Majengo and Eastleigh in Nairobi. Al-Shabaab commander Ahmed Iman comes from Majengo, and there are many poor young people in this neighbourhood who are vulnerable, but organisations are 'lecturing' them on P/CVE as opposed to listening to their issues. It is unclear why some people are resilient and reject these ideas while others are at risk. Values of tolerance, humanity, and respect, among others, have to be employed when engaging with target populations.

There is no silver bullet in P/CVE programming as to whether one should deal with only structural factors or only ideological ones. Either of these can be used as a grievance, but it can vary depending on

who is the focus of discussion. Regarding extremist groups, the senior leadership can tend to be more ideologically motivated whereas the foot soldier is more structurally motivated. Moreover, duration of membership matters in assessing the balance of these factors in motivating individuals: is motivation high at the beginning when they joined the group, and after some years? The motivating reasons may change over time. Another thing to keep in mind is the labelling of some programs as P/CVE that may lead to them becoming unnecessarily politicised. Policy has changed since the time of US president George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq: today, different countries have different P/CVE programs that might not necessarily reflect or be aligned with the US-conceived so-called Global War on Terror (GWOT). There is room for conversations around these issues, depending on donors and their programs, to ensure that certain ideologies such as GWOT do not undermine a program.

A panellist from Taita Taveta University noted that local perspectives are important in understanding who extremists are. In Kwale on the Kenyan Coast, for instance, discussions on P/CVE cannot be held meaningfully without understanding the significance of four men: Aboud Rogo, Abubakar Shariff Ahmed 'Makaburi', Samir Khan and Ahmed Iman.[95] To understand extremism in the area, local researchers are asking where these men went, who they interacted with, and what they talked about. In studying these questions, the narrative gradually becomes clear. A young man in Kwale will not know what a sheikh in Somalia said, but he knows what Aboud Rogo said. Talking about the role social media plays in the radicalisation process, the panellist said, 'Rogo is dead, but he lives on YouTube. Researchers have found that young people have been able to access Rogo's inflammatory videos on YouTube despite their being pulled down.' Local religious leaders are afraid to listen to Rogo's messages and counteract them, partly because there are legal repercussions to being found in possession of his videos. However, according to the panellist, 'it is in counteracting Rogo's and other radical clerics' messages that the interventions in this area can bring change because the problem is mainly ideological, around the question of jihad and the call to institute a caliphate. This agenda is opposed to the [secular] one of upholding democracy and human rights.'

Another panellist from the Sudan National Commission for Counter Terrorism (SNCCT), drawing on lessons learnt from Sudan's deradicalisation program, pointed out that to be able to respond to the groups at risk, adequate information on them is needed. In Sudan, the intervention agencies use baseline surveys and studies to get correct information on who should be targeted and who the extremists are. This information has helped the government know who is being recruited and from where. The agencies have found that recruitment is more intense in certain areas. For example, in Central Sudan, where there is less government involvement, recruitment and VE are higher. Other reasons for VE – including clashes with the police and military, and misinterpretation of Islamic teachings – also differ in this region compared to other parts of the country. Those who have been disengaged from VE activities in Sudan are reintegrated back into society through a return to education, being supported with their marriage processes (which makes them 'more responsible') and having psychosocial and socio-economic support.

An in-depth interview with the head of SNCCT in October 2018 sheds further light on how Sudan's deradicalisation program has involved participation by moderate Muslim clerics:

We have seen the traditional way of dealing with violent extremists [CT] is not working, i.e. the reliance on the response through law enforcement agencies. Even prisons have become sites of radicalisation and a main vehicle of recruitment because of the ill-treatment of prisoners. Extremists leave prisons with a sense of revenge. Prisons poison people.

95 Rogo, Makaburi and Khan were Muslim clerics and high-profile terror suspects living and preaching on the Kenyan Coast who were killed between 2012 and 2015. Iman, a Kenyan commander in al-Shabaab, is currently on the run after allegedly falling out with fellow Somali commanders (see 'Ahmed Iman', 2017).

We are now implementing a more innovative program. The idea of talking to the extremists before we send them to prison has proved to be a more effective way of dealing with the problem of VE. We put extremists in a more conducive place than a prison to generate trust. We then bring psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers to check their mental health. We put those who have health problems aside and engage the others. We divide them into those who have join violent extremist organisations [VEOs] for ideological reasons and those who have joined for political reasons. We have learnt from the process that there are different reasons to join VEOs: some imagine the caliphate offering a better life, while others join because of material reasons. Still others join because they are against Western governments and their foreign policy towards Muslim countries.

The ideologically motivated extremists are asked to write a position paper on what they think the issues are and why they joined a VEO. This is followed by moments of socialisation so that we get to know each other better. We bring in their family or friends so that they feel more comfortable. We then enter into theological discussion and dialogue that includes professors of Islamic studies and moderate imams who are very knowledgeable about Islam.

We have seen how these discussions transform the extremists. We did an assessment and found that 80 per cent of the extremists who participated in the dialogue changed. Some have even become our consultants, and we have benefited from their expertise. They are crucial to understanding the whole issue of VE, recruitment strategies and how VEOs function. Seventy-five per cent of the persuaded are successfully reintegrated into society, and only 5 per cent will go back to VEOs. The program has been implemented since 2008. (Interview with Dr Mohamed Gamal, Director of SNCCT, Khartoum, 6 October 2018)

As reported by Kira Zalan,

The Sudanese government's deradicalization program focuses on 'intellectual immunization and welfare', based on 'intellectual dialogue', rather than force, said Issam Ahmad al-Bashir, the head of the Islamic Jurisprudence Council, which oversees [Sudan's deradicalisation] program. 'The security approach has limits … If someone just has ideological thinking [that supports violence], you need to convince them otherwise. You need to disprove these ideas through discussion,' he explained, adding that the talks are held away from prison cells in a 'healthy environment'. (Zalan, 2017)

Critics mention that the Sudanese Government's claim of a high success rate is exaggerated and the whole program is based on a shaky foundation. For example, CT expert Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, was reported as saying:

'When you have a government like Saudi Arabia or Sudan trying to correct misinterpretations of Islam, you start with a baseline that's somewhat problematic from the perspective of jihadism … You start with a system that has intolerant ideals,' he added, referring to the two governments that have rooted their legitimacy in Islamist ideology. That legitimacy runs the risk of being challenged by extremist groups at home and abroad. (Zalan, 2017)

The Challenges of P/CVE Programming: The View from the Perspective of CSOs

CSOs face various challenges as they implement P/CVE programs. Some of these challenges were pointed out by the CSO discussion group at Naivasha.

- Distrust between communities and authorities such as the police. Due to labelling of certain communities as perpetrators of VE, it is not easy for CSOs in these areas to work well with authorities, and community members are also denied their rights, such as not being issued with national identity cards, which are central to accessing public services and to even securing employment.
- Extrajudicial killings. These are a feature of areas that have been negatively profiled, such as Majengo and Eastleigh in Nairobi, and the northern parts of Kenya.
- Marginalisation of communities who do not feel they belong because of negative profiling and attendant injustices. Moreover, members of these communities' fear to speak up concerning VE because of the repercussions, which are usually in the form of communal punishment.
- Frustration of communities always having to prove themselves innocent of VE activities, which sometimes drives people to react with extremism.
- Limited resources to effectively deal with the drivers of conflict and root causes of VE, beyond just holding workshops and undertaking other short-term projects.
- Dealing with certain perceptions that arise from misinformation and religious misinterpretations, e.g., the issue of jihad.
- Difficult program design and execution when there is no clarity on P/CVE, no resources, and a lack of support. Sometimes groups working on similar P/CVE programs compete and end up undermining each other.
- Unrealistic timelines because of project and budgetary constraints as dictated by donors. This means that interventions rarely follow the flow of things in the community, which would be more beneficial in the long term.
- Coordination and linkages among actors needing to be improved.

CSOs that have implemented P/CVE projects have tried to address these issues in direct and indirect ways, including encouraging coexistence and trust among communities, and building the capacity of youth, the unemployed and other vulnerable groups. To improve these efforts, CSOs require more resources to provide further skills and opportunities. They also recommend inclusive governance that reduces marginalisation.

The Challenges of P/CVE Programming: The View from the Perspective of Donors

At Naivasha the role of donors in P/CVE programming was discussed at length – that is, how donors view VE, how their view shapes who they fund, what their expectations are, and how P/CVE practitioners can inform themselves on what and how donors fund. P/CVE programs do not fit into the average five-year project duration, which means there is a need to ensure continuity in programming regardless of the term of funding. Addressing the coordination issue so that implementers work together on certain thematic areas can solve part of this problem. While criticising donors' short-term engagement with P/CVE programming, a panellist from SNCCT noted:

Extremism is transnational now and donors like to work with those whose programming is clear. Yet donors sometimes disrupt the programs due to changes in focus, maybe as a result of a change of government in their home country. Some are also very rigid with funding, which negatively impacts on projects, e.g., funds could be allocated to work on Somalia only, yet there could be cross-cutting issues for Kenya that could benefit from the same project.

A gap was identified in how practitioners with experience can influence and inform what and how donors fund. A participant from the donor community shared his view on the role of donors, including the challenges from their side in funding P/CVE programming:

The reality in donor coordination is that different donors have different timelines, which do not always go well with projects. This is sometimes tied to political reasons back in the donor's home country. There are some like-minded

donors who work together but avoid others with whom they do not share objectives. It is naive to think that this issue can be resolved easily. P/CVE discourse and programming is different in different countries. It develops over time and is not always about money – there are other issues on the ground such as vulnerability, perceptions, and feelings of marginalisation. These problems cannot always be solved with money; therefore, partnerships with governments are needed to make people feel they are a part of society. It is imperative to keep in mind that some issues driving VE are wholly external, e.g. population growth, climate change and degradation of the environment, which exacerbate existing internal situations. (Netherlands Embassy representative, responsible for P/CVE programming in Ethiopia and Sudan)

On the issue of who donors prefer to work with in P/CVE programming, participants learnt that due to perceived or real lack of capacity within governments to effectively implement P/CVE programs, and political sensitivities, some donors prefer working with NGOs, who are perceived as more transparent and accountable than governments. Government representatives at Naivasha felt that donors need to allow national ownership of projects. Certain donors respect this, but others prefer to run the projects themselves or give more ownership to CSOs. Some donors are viewed as 'arrogant' by CSOs and governments and sometimes withdraw support when projects are in full swing, thereby jeopardising their success – offering a strong case to improve coordination between governments, donors, and NGOs. Relationships between governments and CSOs need to be improved as these relationships are generally delicate across the region. Some countries have space for civil society to work well, but others have limited freedoms. There are multiple instances where governments have interrupted meetings and projects of CSOs. More respectful and constructive ways of relating and working together are needed.

A criticism of the current approach of P/CVE in the region is that it is looked at very technically, yet VE is a transnational issue. It was pointed out that there is a need to reach a consensus on the issue of who will drive and lead the P/CVE agenda in the region. If it is IGAD, how will IGAD be strengthened to do this? How will IGAD link up with CSOs? How will the differences found in each of the IGAD countries be factored in? How are interventions by external actors, such as[96], aligned and synchronised with interventions by continental (e.g., the African Union) and regional (e.g., IGAD) bodies? As it stands, there is more competition and duplication of efforts than cooperation and synergy.

The issue of whether P/CVE funding is replacing funding for peacebuilding projects was also discussed. Representatives of the donor community felt that some replacement of programs is not necessarily problematic, but that consideration must be given to ensure the goals of the original programs are not lost. On whether donors are always open about whether their projects have P/CVE intentions, it was noted that some can be secretive about this to avoid stigmatising a community; for some donors, the omission of the P/CVE label in the projects they fund is thus ethical. In the discussion that followed, a more realistic perspective was taken as it relates to donors' funding of P/CVE programming. It is self-evident that donors are interested in P/CVE, like other interventions, primarily because it is in their own national interest to ensure that VE and terrorism do not spread to their countries. They also fund P/CVE efforts to deal with root causes that fuel VE and terrorism, such as unemployment, poverty, and other socio-economic issues. As Abu-Nimer has noted, 'many programmes are externally imposed and intended to carry out the externals' own political agendas. Programme designers face pressure to rapidly produce success, causing programme designs to fall short of long-term effectiveness. Their designs specifically target selected communities and neglect wider stakeholders who are also in need of such programmes' (Abu-Nimer, 2018, p. 6).

96 https://www.hedayahcenter.org/

P/CVE Programming: Conflict Sensitivity and a Human Security Lens

It was pointed out that given the sensitivity of the topic, P/CVE programming needs to be conceived in a more conflict-sensitive manner and through a human security lens. For community workers implementing programs at grassroots level, there is danger in possessing certain information. Sometimes workers are aware of the influencers who radicalise, but do not want to create fear in the community by saying, 'These are the people we want.' Communities and/or governments are sometimes suspicious of CSO implementers; consequently, the implementers might end up missing out on working with the right categories of people. Some government actions also make it difficult to gain the trust of communities. In Kenya, for instance, the amnesty program for returnees has been questioned by observers because those who have turned themselves in appear to have been arrested or 'disappear'. With a lack of documented evidence, this issue needs further exploration.

The Example of Kenya's Amnesty Program for Extremists

In April 2015, Kenya's government announced an amnesty for young Kenyans who had gone to neighbouring Somalia to train with the VEO al-Shabaab. In a statement, then Cabinet Secretary for the Interior Joseph Nkaissery urged repentant members of the group to return home and report to their county commissioners, where their cases would be considered: 'The Government hereby calls upon all individuals who had gone to Somalia for training and wish to disassociate themselves with terrorism to report to the National government offices … the Government will consider granting amnesty and appropriate reintegration support. Those who are failing to do so within the prescribed time frame will be treated as criminals and will face the full force of the law' (Ombati, 2014). According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 'the amnesty reflected an important shift in the government's approach to the terrorist threat. Henceforth, hard counterterrorism operations were to be accompanied by activities to reduce the appeal of violent extremism among at-risk groups and – in some cases – work with individuals who were disengaging from al-Shabaab rather than merely eliminating them or jailing them indefinitely' (Downie, 2018). We do not know how many former al-Shabaab soldiers have returned because of the amnesty program. Citing government estimates, CSIS says that as many as 1500 former al-Shabaab members had surrendered to the authorities by February 2016. According to CSIS, 'the government maintains that the amnesty remains open, but few details are publicly known about it, and there has been no attempt to measure either its take-up or effectiveness' (ibid.).

Those CSOs who have worked on the returnees' issue have questioned the government's political will for a genuine amnesty. Panellists from a women's movement in Coastal Kenya, vividly pointed out at Naivasha the human security dilemma and the risks taken by P/CVE practitioners, especially those who work with returnees. These women face great challenges due to the sensitivity and danger associated with working with young people who are in criminal gangs or who have returned after being members of extremist groups such as al-Shabaab. They bear immense emotional and mental burdens as a result of listening to returnees' horrific stories and the stories of suffering family members left behind, and due to the blame they receive from communities when they are perceived as traitors who are in cahoots with the police. The women have been forced to go into hiding on some occasions to escape the wrath of communities. They also lose gains made in the course of their work. Despite these personal sacrifices, the women continue to work tirelessly against VE. Here are some of their experiences, expressed in their own words:

I thought amnesty is a good thing, that it will help us all. I convinced the parents and children to embrace the

amnesty. When I took them to the police, the government brought the media, showed them that the children are fine and free. But after the media left, they arrested them and up until today I do not know where they are. Others around started disappearing. The parents of these young people turned against me, so I hid. But because they always knew where I was, I fled to Tanzania for one month. The parents wanted their children back, but I could not reach [the children] through the police. It was only through the help of other local partners that the community was convinced that it was not my fault, that this program was meant to be a good thing. Upon my return, I found that the women I used to work with had scattered. Through coordination with the partners, we were able to re-establish contact with some women and their returnees, and we began a counselling program. I too underwent counselling in order to accept the very emotionally difficult and dangerous work I do. I had to move house, and people do not know where I live. (Panellist, women's movement in Mvita).

What motivates youth to join al-Shabaab is the promise of lots of money and the 72 virgins in heaven when they die. They are given some money before they leave. Some die there; others return in bad shape with injuries. The one most affected by this is the mother. There is a billboard at the Likoni Ferry with the faces of their children (most are wanted by the police for terror activities), and it hurts them very much when they see this. They also receive news that their children have died. Young married women are widows in a short time, like one after only two months of marriage. VE in the Coast is also related to criminal gangs. There is a lot of crime in the neighbourhood, in Likoni and Mombasa. There are over 50 youth gangs in Likoni alone. They are so hardened, they neither know God nor the Devil. They are usually between 10 and 18 years old. They are organised according to neighbourhoods and are always fighting among themselves. It is like they are preparing themselves before going for the bigger fight in Somalia. Whenever they go out on a murderous spree, they say machete cheza (the machete will dance), meaning they will kill brutally … This is a problem for the whole country and even for the whole world. We have tried to talk to parents and their children during the amnesty period. We went through the administrative process (the police, county commissioner) and now some are free. However, when others tried recently, the government turned against them. They were told to bring back everything they had: knives, machetes, the hands and heads they had cut … Now they are stranded. (Panellist, women's' movement in Likoni).

At the local level, Kenya's amnesty program is extremely messy. Returnees 'are nervous about their security, the community is nervous the people coming back are not transformed, and nervous that if they associate with these returnees, they might be punished by the cops' (IRIN, 2016).

Ethical Issues in P/CVE

P/CVE programming needs to consider ethical issues and the moral dilemmas of extremists' families, as some extremists were forcefully recruited. During the panel discussion a case was cited of an old man whose two sons were forcibly recruited into al-Shabaab in Doble, Somalia. As the man was struggling to take care of his goats in his old age, he went to see the al-Shabaab leader to ask for at least one son to return to help him. He was nearly killed and ran for his life. The African Union Mission in Somalis (AMISOM) is cracking down on al-Shabaab in the old man's region, but he does not want them to attack the extremists as he fears that his sons, who did not join willingly, will be killed.

This is the reality of many in the community. How can P/CVE practitioners handle this dilemma? What interventions are there at the family level, especially for those enduring such trauma? What of girls or women who have been forcefully married and are now liberated – how are they viewed? How are the children born to them viewed, particularly in a society where identity is strongly attached to clan?

Portrayals of VE to the public also raise ethical issues that need to be addressed. The media generally report VE in a problematic way. How can journalists be more ethical and balanced in reporting incidents? In addition, news items on investigations, arrests and other developments need to be followed up.

Conclusions

The Naivasha P/CVE learning event broadened the evidence base for what works well and what does not in P/CVE programming in the HoA region and beyond. Radicalisation is a process that affects different groups differently. Thus, P/CVE programmers need to know which group they are responding to. Interventions are not simply for those who are violent but also for those who are at risk of turning to violence. Various factors are at play in the recruitment and radicalisation process, and they are often a combination of structural motivators, individual incentives and enabling factors. P/CVE implementers should be realistic about how their programs are designed, the change intended, and the capacity and will of governments, keeping in mind that different places require different responses. P/CVE programmers must be very well versed in local concerns and knowledge, as these will have great implications for the success of interventions – as seen in the examples of Sudan and Kwale (Kenya). Programs should also be able to be evaluated, to elicit strong evidence to better define and improve future P/CVE programming. Communities need to be assisted in P/CVE by identifying who the local influencers are, strengthening their capacities to deal with the effects of extremism, and finding solutions to chronic problems rooted in historical and socio-economic issues. Donors should be flexible in adjusting to the realities on the ground, as exemplified by the BRICS approach.

The framing of a problem shapes the strategies for addressing it, which means that effective P/CVE programming depends on how VE is framed. Part of the challenge in P/CVE programming is in how it is defined, managed, and implemented at the regional and/or national level. P/CVE programming can be improved by asking specific questions that will factually present the magnitude of the problem and dilute the politicisation of programming. CSOs should be more proactive in donor relations to ensure that the best approaches are used in P/CVE programming, and donors should aim to be more flexible, taking the reality on the ground into consideration during funding. Coordination among donors, governments, CSOs and other actors should be improved through comprehensive partnerships and more information-sharing for effective programming. Several efforts are ongoing in the region, as seen in the development of P/CVE research hubs and partner meetings.

Specialisation in P/CVE programming is also critical to improve coordination among different agencies and to support evidence-based outcomes. Country- and locale-specific issues first need to be identified for the right approaches to be applied through various local and expert means, as illustrated by programs in Sudan.

Although the issue of VE is not specific to Islam, Muslim communities should have honest conversations about the radical factions within them. Intrareligious dialogue is important to offer well-informed contributions and solutions to VE. P/CVE programming should also look at the radical actors – not just their actions.

Above all, program implementers should allow communities to define their issues, as they know best what affects them. This local knowledge will contribute to more success in programs and improve approaches to the measurement of this success.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS

Concluding Summary and Reflections

The Horn of Africa Environment

The Horn is a **Regional Security Complex** in which conflicts and tensions between elements of society, occur on multiple levels and often transcend national boundaries. Issues such as conflict drivers, causes, and consequences in one country can be traced to other countries. The challenge of violent extremism in the Horn frequently focuses on Somalia, and the violent actions of al-Shabaab, but violent extremism in the region cuts across countries and religions. These cross-cutting tensions across the region, both within Muslim communities and between certain extremist groups and broader society, have become more visible in recent years and cannot be viewed in isolation from broader developments in Africa, the Middle East, and globally. However, whenever considering the regional dimensions of a phenomenon, there are also challenges associated with lifting one's perspective away from situations attached to specific cultural and political contexts. A significant risk, in particular, is the potential for unrealistically over-reaching and drawing conclusions from a situation to be found in one part of the Horn of Africa and applying them to another that has some common characteristics, but also significant differences.

Nevertheless, some of the broad characteristics identified across the region that influence the P/CVE landscape and the manifestation of violent extremism include: the importance of domestic motivations and situations operating alongside international perspectives that influence violent extremism (such as links with Al Quaeda). However, domestic factors typically assume far greater prominence. The nature of governance across the region, with countries mainly being forms of anocracy with varying levels of democratic compared to autocratic characteristics, usually means that states often have some strong functions but also significant capacity restrictions. These restrictions are often most clearly seen in peripheral and border areas where state control may also be mediated through various mechanisms involving customary or traditional forms of governance and the role of civil society. These limitations may also be seen in informal urban settlements as well, where the state struggles to exert its influence. There may also be conflict and violence in these areas resulting from a diverse set of causes, often influenced by various forms of historical and colonial legacies of marginalisation affecting certain populations. These issues may have generated inequalities and uncertainties, with some communities experiencing fewer opportunities to benefit and contribute to national development. Across the Horn of Africa, relationships between civil society and the state are also found to be complicated. While in some cases, there has been an opening up of space for civil society (more recently in Sudan and Ethiopia to some extent), the civil society space tends to shift. Generally, governments have an uneasy relationship with civil society. They may tend to seek to control it or suppress dissent which may also be counterproductive while trying to address violent extremism. The Horn is also a region characterised both by ethnic and religious diversity while being one of the historical boundaries between Islam and Christianity.

The series of briefs, reports, and discussion papers found within this compendium, drawn from LPI and its partners' research across different countries in the Horn of Africa, reflect many of the elements described above. Besides, there are common themes, differences, and various views, perspectives, and responses to violent extremism to be found in each of the countries considered.

Drivers of Violent Extremism Across the Horn of Africa

The structural drivers for violent extremism exist in all the member states of the IGAD. While the violence may be localised, the challenges posed by violent extremism are transnational, regional, and global in scope. The politics, history, and contextualisation of religious marginalisation are seen in

the discussions with Muslim respondents in Uganda and Kenya. These views also feed into the global discourse that Muslims are under threat, and a target of western governments. Other aspects and challenges emerging as contributing to driving violent extremism may reflect specific critical localised dimensions, like clan dynamics in Somalia, in addition to the broader structural dynamics that may beset multiple locations, such as poverty and lack of opportunities.

It is also clear from the literature and reinforced by the findings from the various research pieces that while there are commonalities in terms of many of these structural drivers, the exact mechanisms, and combinations of factors, which may influence someone to move towards violent extremism are still unclear. Questions as to why similar underlying economic and social conditions to be found in Turkana or Samburu in Northern Kenya, or the Karamoja in Uganda, do not tend to result in violent extremism compared to areas of these countries where there are Muslim majorities, tend to reinforce perceptions of the critical role that religious ideology may play in conjunction with them. This is recognised by religious organisations and faith-based civil society across the Horn, but it is also acknowledged that too great a focus on religious ideology and people's understanding of it as a driver of violent extremism is overly simplistic and does not take into consideration the specific historical contexts in which the development, tensions, and differences within streams of thought in Islam in each country have emerged. Nor does it take into account the way that violent extremist groups may take advantage of this situation by framing the broader political and socio-economic marginalisation in religious terms, intentionally aligning them to global and regional negative narratives and discourse on Islam as a recruiting ploy.

Who is a Violent Extremist?

The question of who is labelled a violent extremist or violent extremist organisation (VEO) also lacks some clarity and may be contested within the region. The majority of the discourse is focused on non-state actors being defined as violent extremists, generally, those categorised as such by the authorities, depending on how the national definitions of violent extremism and terrorism are framed. The Ugandan effort to frame violent extremism in terms of violating its national objectives differs from other policy approaches in the region. It opens the door for the possible theoretical interpretation of a violent extremist being a state actor. The head of the Ugandan National Technical Committee (NTC) noted the 'let out interpretation' that the problem is 'not with the military or the police' but rather with individuals within the institution. Al-Shabaab in Somalia is considered a VEO by most actors including the international community. However, within Somalia itself they may have a degree of legitimacy with some communities given they often provide law and order and bring a degree of security and justice, that is otherwise absent in certain geographies. In Uganda, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) has been labelled a VEO by the government, but no other regional state or the international community has followed suit. The lines can therefore be blurred in categorising groups using armed struggle with political agendas that may be considered rebels or opposition groups to the government. Also, in many countries, the state itself may be considered by some to fit the definition of a violent extremist, by using unacceptable violence in pursuit of their ideologies and agendas (for example research participants from Sudan referred to al-Bashir and National Islamic Front's (NIF) regime, and others in Kenya and Uganda all made such suggestions).

Responses to Violent Extremism

Regional Level: At the regional level, IGAD has created some initiatives including the establishment of a Centre of Excellence to Counter Violent Extremism and launching a Transnational Security Threats Initiative to promote security cooperation between member states. Responses at both the national and regional levels by all actors have also been evolving and vary in the ways and extent to which they may include 'softer' preventative efforts primarily involving civil society and communities in conjunction

with 'hard' security-oriented approaches of military and security agencies. States in the region (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia being cases in point) have mainly relied on counter-terrorism tactics, which tend to be more reactive, focus on the symptoms, prioritise military means, leading to both stigmatisation of communities based on ethnic or religious signifiers and also actually actively stimulate further resentment and potential increased vulnerabilities to violent extremism. Some governments have also used the struggle against extremism as an opportunity to expand control over civil society space and constrain the autonomy of religious institutions. Other regional initiatives such as the AMISOM presence (and support from the USA) in Somalia also appear to reinforce state rent-seeking behaviours or political clientelism from the global community that perpetuates a security-oriented approach to resolving internal political issues and intractable conflicts.

State Level: Increasingly the majority of states in IGAD have developed national strategies for P/CVE or similar comprehensive approaches and action plans, and also, some have established specific institutions such as a National Counter-Terrorism Center (Kenya), National Technical Committee (Uganda) or a P/CVE Unit (Somalia) to oversee their response to the phenomenon. There are some differences, structurally and in the language and discourse used to frame and describe the issues within the policy documents. The most notable one noted above is the Ugandan effort to frame violent extremism in terms of violating its national objectives.

In this context, with a growing sense of threat from violent conflict, governments are setting up various mechanisms and regulatory frameworks. While the intent to coordinate more widely than simply across state security organs is expressed in most of the policy documents, the space for inclusion and the political will from security agencies to consult and collaborate, as opposed to merely instrumentalising civil society as a means to implement security, needs to find ways of access to the decision-makers to share evidence that shed light on how human beings are living with the consequences of systemic insecurity in the Horn, how that human insecurity translates to national insecurity in the long term, and which actions and policies could be taken to disrupt the vicious cycle.

Interestingly, in Kenya, the task of addressing violent extremism has been devolved to the administrative level of each county, through the County Action Plans (CAPs) which articulate the development issues and needs of the county. Despite being hugely ambitious and all-encompassing in terms of development requirements, these action plans do provide opportunities for local governments to work more closely with communities and civil society in addressing structural issues and more specific potential drivers of violent extremism holistically.

Increasingly civil society and religious organisations are being appreciated as critical in P/CVE and are included as stakeholders in national P/CVE policy approaches, either being specifically mentioned or included within terminology such as 'whole of society' approaches. The different countries studied, vary in the ways that they provide institutional mechanisms to coordinate and liaise with their new civil society partners, such as the P/CVE Coordination Unit and Task Force in Somalia or the "National Level Organisations" Partnership and Coordination Forum in Kenya. The relationship between state agencies and civil society is not necessarily an easy one as there may be regulatory dimensions (for example in Kenya) that provide potential opportunities for overly controlling the space and role of civil society. However, at the local level, there are much closer relationships (for example, at the county level in Kenya) that provide possibilities for greater collaboration.

P/CVE Programming

It is the people living in communities within states who are the most directly affected in terms of their human security by the broader regional security complex and the issues surrounding violent extremism. Insufficient attention to human security more broadly though, may feed a vicious cycle where rising

human insecurity exacerbates the region's security complex by catalysing further political dissent, potentially fuelling armed struggles, increasing susceptibility to violent extremism, and encouraging political clientelism as a means to access resources. This, in turn, motivates national security-minded responses, actions, and policies. And so the cycle continues.

It could be argued that P/CVE is a counter to this cycle. P/CVE programming has been emerging as the central programmatic and policy approach to violent extremism. In theory, it involves a multiplicity of approaches that also clearly recognises and engages with the structural drivers of violent extremism. Over the past few years, it also increasingly accepts and involves stakeholders such as civil society, religious leaders, and communities as well as the government. However, P/CVE as a field of practice and discourse is also beset by multiple ambiguities and questionable assumptions, and a lack of clarity in interpreting concepts and phenomena such as radicalisation, extremism, and social inclusion. The evidence and analytical bases for P/CVE initiatives are often insufficiently deep and may also produce ambiguous results. In some of the countries where the research was conducted, outcomes may even, at worst, result in stigmatisation of individuals and communities or create suspicion of socio-developmental agencies as being complicit in counter-terrorism actions.

From work undertaken in Kenya and Somalia, these ambiguities are partly a result of a lack of rigour associated with articulating then testing, and evaluating the theories of change that are being addressed through the different initiatives. While there may be indications of some progress and success, there is a lack of deep understanding of what works and what does not. There have been increasing efforts to learn lessons on P/CVE programming across the region, but there is also often a lack of transparency in sharing some of these findings within the sector partly due to sensitivities of the material and partly because agencies may wish to maintain competitive comparative advantages to access funding.

Given that P/CVE programming implies the need for a collective, integrated and holistic approach to address all the factors involved, there appears to be a degree of relativity, regarding the significance and quality of anyone factor versus another, which is affected by the local context and meaning. These dimensions may be in the relative strengths of individual issues and factors, or it may be in their 'flavour' and quality. This requires coordination, working in a complementary manner, and specific targeting as well. The realities of effective coordination vary across the region as well, with Kenya possibly the most advanced with both formal institutional mechanisms as well as more informal donor coordination. While this has enabled a greater degree of spread and potentially fewer gaps in programming, it does imply that stakeholders understand the levels of investment and length of time required in specific programming to achieve social change; otherwise there is a danger that coordination enables a thinning of interventions across broader geography constraining the possibility of attaining impact.

Peacebuilding and P/CVE

P/CVE borrows many of the methodologies and tools of the peacebuilding community but often applies them more narrowly. P/CVE programming may also be implemented by peacebuilding organisations that have had to adjust to donor prioritisation and framing of issues associated with conflict and violence. Both disciplines (if one can refer to P/CVE as a separate discipline now) however, seek to address violence and resolve and transform issues that may lead to violence. Practitioners in both fields have also been guilty of making simplistic assumptions about the primacy of causes involved in driving violent behaviour both at the level of individuals as well as communities. P/CVE practitioners and peacebuilders also recognise the importance of addressing the underlying structural dynamics and processes that create a conducive environment for violent extremism. It is increasingly clear that conflict and violence have multiple causes and factors that impact a situation and then determine how people respond. Similarly, how these multiple factors interact with each other and what balance is required in terms of investments in addressing each potential factor, to achieve success is still unclear.

In this regard, addressing the multiple factors that make up the ingredients for conflict and violence simultaneously, it is not only the role of peacebuilders that needs to be considered. The way that the assistance architecture operates and the ecology and mix of development, humanitarian, peacebuilding, P/CVE, and counter-terror initiatives together in creating collective impact and positive social change, deserves a greater degree of scrutiny. How can these various disciplines and approaches blend in a more effective way that creates an efficacious result that can inform multiple dimensions simultaneously? In the Horn of Africa, the emergence of the global emphasis on adopting a Triple Nexus approach in conflict-affected countries (aligning and linking the peace, development, and humanitarian sectors) might be well advised in including a fourth dimension that encompasses violent extremism in some contexts.

Both the P/CVE community of practice and the peacebuilding community in the Horn would therefore greatly benefit from an increased interface, with coordinated and more transparent lines of engagement. Peacebuilding can support a non-securitised space for dialogue around violent extremism, tested and tried methodologies on how to address causes of conflict and tensions, and processes for how to engage local communities and civil society in an authentic, non-instrumentalised way to ensure local ownership on preventing and tackling issues of concern, including violent extremism in some contexts.

In terms of praxis, they would also benefit from developing sophisticated ways to measure and assess the long-term impacts of their work. The long-term perspectives involved and needed to assess social change in complex contexts and environments are similar challenges faced and constrained by the projected nature of the aid architecture.

Thus, a critical distinction between the two is the focus of peacebuilding to prevent violence and conflict writ large, not just extremist violence. P/CVE, in this sense, is much more limited in that future political dialogue and reconciliation is beyond its remit. The peacebuilding approach advocated by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) avoids vilification and profiling of individuals and groups that are often the inevitable outcome of standard counter-terrorism and P/CVE practice, which often alienates certain groups and reinforces polarisation.

Prospects for the Future

The future for P/CVE programming within the context of international development is difficult to predict. On the one hand, there are ongoing developing P/CVE agendas in the global aid architecture in the UN and with donors. This is reflected in the rhetoric and language of reports, guidelines, strategies, and approaches. It is also being mirrored by the different member states of IGAD through their emerging policies, institutions, and mechanisms to prevent violent extremism. The interest and emphasis in terms of prevention of conflict is also significant – particularly from the UN. On the other hand, there are also disturbing trends around potential reducing donor funding and concurrently an increasing hard securitisation of approaches (for instance within the EU) that do not bode so well for either the peacebuilding or P/CVE sectors.

While actions aimed at countering violent extremism and conflict in the Horn of Africa are underpinned by IGAD's regional strategy intended to shape national policies, both levels would benefit from being better informed by a deeper peacebuilding perspective. There also needs to be a more precise analysis of where investments in P/CVE and conflict prevention should best be targeted in a more balanced fashion to be most efficacious. At present, the bulk of P/CVE initiatives tend to focus on certain countries (particularly Kenya, and to some extent in Somalia) at the expense of others. Given that violent extremism has a transnational dimension, initiatives concerning violent extremism should also encompass Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. Before further developing additional initiatives and

programmes, it is imperative that stakeholders carefully assess and map out what has worked, what has not, and capitalise on lessons learned. In this regard, more significant investment in developing a clear evidence base in terms of the effectiveness of different types of programming. Similarly, investment in local context analysis would be decisive in understanding local risk factors and the relative priorities of and the interplay between the key drivers of the phenomenon. Responses to violent extremism need to be highly contextualised, innovative, and proactive.

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