

The “Home Game” Countering Violent Extremism within NATO

by Jacqueline Page¹



The Research Division (RD) of the NATO Defense College provides NATO's senior leaders with sound and timely analyses and recommendations on current issues of particular concern for the Alliance. Papers produced by the Research Division convey NATO's positions to the wider audience of the international strategic community and contribute to strengthening the Transatlantic Link.

The RD's civil and military researchers come from a variety of disciplines and interests covering a broad spectrum of security-related issues. They conduct research on topics which are of interest to the political and military decision-making bodies of the Alliance and its member states.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the NATO Defense College.

Printed copies of this paper can be obtained by contacting
Mary Di Martino at m.dimartino@ndc.nato.int

Research Paper

ISSN 2076 – 0949
(Res. Div. NATO Def. Coll., Print)
ISSN 2076 – 0957
(Res. Div. NATO Def. Coll., Online)

Research Division

NATO Defense College
Via Giorgio Pelosi, 1
00143 Rome – Italy
website: www.ndc.nato.int
Follow us on Twitter
at https://twitter.com/NDC_Research

Printed and bound by

DEd'A srl
V.le Scalo San Lorenzo 55, 00185 Rome, Italy
www.dedaedizioni.it

Portions of this work may be quoted or reprinted without permission, provided that a standard source credit line is included. The Research Division would appreciate a courtesy copy of reprints. Please direct all enquiries to:
m.dimartino@ndc.nato.int

“NATO's role, which is to provide security to its member countries, includes responding to the threat of homegrown terrorism that relies on radicalized individuals.”²

As the complex global security environment faced by NATO members continues to evolve in the coming years, terrorism – waged by actors both in and outside of their borders – will remain a vexing challenge. For over a decade, NATO's counterterrorism strategy has been built on taking the fight abroad. Member nations have been intimately involved in this effort as contributors to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, to the Multi-National Force in Iraq and in a variety of smaller missions around the globe. In recent times, however, there has been growing attention to the threat posed by “homegrown” terrorism and foreign fighters returning from Syria and elsewhere to their home countries throughout the Euro-Atlantic area.

While kinetic action will remain an important component of the counterterrorism mission, any forthcoming strategies must incorporate innovative approaches that draw from multiple disciplines. As then Supreme Allied Commander James Stavridis noted in 2010, “collective security is about more than combat... NATO must recognize the need for a comprehensive approach to Alliance security.”³ The challenge

¹ Jacqueline Page is a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy candidate at the Fletcher School -Tufts University. She wrote this paper in her capacity as a NATO Defense College (NDC) Fletcher Fellow under the mentorship of Brooke Smith-Windsor, PhD.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the NATO Defense College.

² Pick, TM, A. Speckhard and B. Jacuch, eds., *Home-grown Terrorism*, IOS Press, 2009, p. 258. This publication was based on meetings of the NATO Advanced Research Workshop “Indigenous Terrorism: Understanding and Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalisation Among Groups with an Immigrant Heritage in Europe” and was supported by the NATO Programme Science for Peace and Security.

³ Stavridis, J. “The Long Road,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 9, no 1, 2010, p. 26. <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/images/stories/2010-01-tpq/23-29.pdf>



now is discerning what a “comprehensive approach” to security may mean back on the home front. What role, if any, can NATO play in countering violent extremism (CVE) – distinct from traditional counterterrorism— and helping to reduce the threat of a terrorist attack within Alliance territory?

Given that most CVE initiatives will be implemented at the national level led by domestic-oriented agencies, the Alliance’s role will necessarily be limited. However, limited does not mean nonexistent or unimportant. The homegrown threat may not have been appreciated to the same degree four years ago as it is today. Nevertheless, the 2010 Strategic Concept acknowledged the threat extremists posed to NATO nationals:

Terrorism poses a direct threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries, and to international stability and prosperity more broadly. Extremist groups continue to spread to, and in, areas of strategic importance to the Alliance, and modern technology increases the threat and potential impact of terrorist attacks.

Under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty member nations may “consult together” when the “security of any of the Parties is threatened.” As this paper will demonstrate, violent extremism poses a distinct threat to member nations domestically and warrants the Alliance’s attention.

NATO, with its ability to leverage resources from across the transatlantic and throughout its extensive partnership network, is ideally suited to tackle this issue. The Alliance’s value-added lies in its security expertise and the distinctive forum it provides for European nations, both European Union and non-European Union members, to collaborate with North America on issues of common interest, such

as countering violent extremism. The Alliance can provide mechanisms for the exchange of ideas, best practices and lessons learned amongst member and partner nations as they work to counter violent extremism and prevent future attacks.

The Threat

“Homegrown”

NATO defines terrorism as “the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives.”⁴ The phenomenon can take many forms; as one expert said, “there is not one ‘terrorism’ but ‘terrorisms.’”⁵ One variety is “homegrown terrorism” – terrorist plots or activity perpetrated by individuals who hail from the very nations they seek to attack.

Though the term “homegrown terrorism” has become a bit of a pundit buzz word in recent years, it represents a serious threat to NATO member and partner nations. The 2004 bombing in Madrid, the 7/7 attacks in London, the Boston Marathon bombing just last year are all examples of deadly attacks perpetrated on the home front by locals. Sixty-eight percent of individuals who were convicted of al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism or carried out suicide attacks in the UK between 1998 and 2010 were British citizens. Fifty-four percent of such incidents in the United States between 1997-2011 involved American citizens.⁶ Further, according to a recent report put out by the United States Congressional Research Service, since 9/11, “hundreds of individuals have been implicated in more than 70 homegrown violent jihadist plots or attacks” in the US alone.⁷

⁴ NATO glossary of terms and Definitions, AAP-06, Edition 2014.

⁵ Jerold Post, “The Psychological Dynamics of Terrorism,” in *The Roots of Terrorism*, ed Louise Richardson, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 17.

⁶ Simcox, R. and E. Dyer, “Terror Data: US vs. UK,” *World Affairs Journal*, July/August 2013, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/terror-data-us-vs-uk>

⁷ Bjelopera, J. “Countering Violent Extremism in the United States,” U.S. Congressional Research Service, R42553, 19 February 2014, 1. <<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesecc/R42553.pdf>



Coalition efforts in Afghanistan have disrupted al-Qaeda core's base of operations leading to the increased prominence of, not only regional and affiliate groups such as AQIM, AQAP, and the al-Nusra Front, but individuals located in Western democracies. Al-Qaeda leaders have supported the diffusion of efforts, increasingly encouraging followers not to travel to war torn regions to wage their jihad, but rather to stay put and carry out attacks locally in their home countries.

Abu Khalid al-Suri, sometimes referred to as Al-Qaeda's "Clausewitz," championed the proliferation of acts of "Lone Wolf" terrorism in his 1600-page Internet manifesto.⁸ Anwar al-Awlaki, the influential American-Yemini Muslim cleric, was instrumental in persuading British recruits, via email correspondence, to remain in the UK rather than travel abroad for jihad. Adam Gadahn, the American convert-turned-al-Qaida spokesman, called on Western Muslims to take advantage of easily accessible firearms to launch attacks at home, asking provocatively, "So, what are you waiting for?"⁹

Service members of NATO nations have been targeted, attacked and killed not only on the frontlines abroad, but in the relative safety of their home countries. Major Nidal Malik Hasan, who was linked with al-Awlaki, killed 13 fellow soldiers at Fort Hood, USA; Fusilier Lee Rigby was slain outside the Woolwich barracks in London by Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, who declared they were "soldiers of Allah"; three French paratroopers were murdered by self-proclaimed al-Qaeda member

Mohamed Merah in the southwest of the country. All the assailants were fellow countrymen of their victims.

The threat posed by homegrown actors is not lost on the leaders of NATO member nations. United States Attorney General Eric Holder cited "Lone Wolf" terrorism as the security threat that "keeps him up at night" and announced the reestablishment of the Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee in June 2014 saying, "We face an escalating danger from self-radicalized individuals within our own borders."¹⁰ Across the Atlantic, the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, head of MI5, declared the threat of homegrown Islamic terrorism would "last a generation."¹¹

Foreign Fighters

Now amplifying this issue is the reality that thousands of individuals from NATO member and partner nations have left their home countries to serve as foreign fighters abroad, most especially in Syria. Officials and counterterrorism experts fear that many of these individuals will return espousing an anti-West, anti-Semitic ideology and desire to "bring the fight home" after having spent time amongst extremists groups, such as Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State (IS), popularly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which were all founded by al-Qaeda members.¹² In fact, US intelligence officials recently acknowledged IS was pushing some of its European recruits to return and establish cells back home.¹³

⁸ Garriaud-Maylam, J. "Combatting Terrorism: Building Security And Defending Democratic Institutions," NATO Parliamentary Assembly Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, 047 CDS DG 14 E, 25 April 2014, 2.

⁹ Hegghammer, T. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining the Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review*, February 2013, 7.

¹⁰ Perez, E. and L.A. Caldwell, "Holder fears 'lone wolf' terrorist attack, doesn't want TSA armed," CNN, 6 November 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/05/politics/holder-terror-snowden-interview/> and US Department of Justice, "Statement by Attorney General Holder on Reestablishment of Committee on Domestic Terrorism," 3 June 2013. <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2014/June/14-ag-592.html>

¹¹ Cowell, A. "Blair Says Homegrown Terrorism Is Generation-Long Struggle," in *The New York Times*, 11 November 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/11/world/europe/11britain.html>

¹² "The three groups that have attracted the most foreign fighters, despite the in-fighting between them, are Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic State of Iraq and the Greater Syria (ISIS). Each was founded by people who at the time were members of al-Qaeda." Barrett, R., June 2014, 6.

¹³ Miller, G. "Islamic State working to establish cells outside Middle East, U.S. says," in *The Washington Post*, 14 Aug 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/islamic-state-working-to-establish-cells-outside-iraq-and-syria-us-says/2014/08/14/639c32b0-23f5-11e4-8593-da634b334390_story.html



The first “blowback” attack has already materialized. Mehdi Nemmouche, a twenty-nine year old French national, returned home in March 2014 after a year of fighting in Syria with the Islamic State. In May, he opened fire at a Jewish museum in Belgium killing 3 people and was picked up a few days later by French police carrying Kalashnikov rifle wrapped in an ISIS flag. At least two other attacks involving returning fighters have been uncovered in NATO member countries: a March 2014 plot involving three nail bombs on the Cote d’Azur was thwarted by French officials, and a “Mumbai-style” attack was broken up through a series of arrests in Britain last fall.

More than 2,500 individuals are estimated to have traveled from NATO member nations to Syria; over 11,000 including NATO partner nations.¹⁴ These figures may well be conservative. Richard Barrett of the Soufan Group, and the former head of counter-terrorism at MI6, points out that many individuals from the West can get into Syria without detection and can keep their identities secret while there. Regardless, the numbers are staggering for such a short period and exceed the number of foreign fighters estimated to have participated in the decade-long Afghan campaign against the Soviets in the 1980s.¹⁵

Of additional concern is the fact that the majority of foreign fighters entering Syria do indeed join extremist groups (e.g. the Islamic State and al-Nursa) as opposed to more moderate units.¹⁶ This is likely due to a number of factors including that these groups tend to be “more inclusive, better organized and better financed than their more moderate counterparts.”¹⁷ Additionally, their strong ideological narrative may attract newcomers who are still piecing together their own personal justifications

for their ‘jihad.’

Though there is certainly a need to be discriminate in the response to returning fighters – not all will seek to launch an attack on their home countries – it is important to remain vigilant in monitoring and managing this threat: “some foreign fighters may not return as terrorists to their respective countries, but all of them will have been exposed to an environment of sustained radicalization and violence with unknowable but worrying consequences.”¹⁸

A report by Thomas Hegghammer, the director of terrorism research at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, attempts to quantify the threat nations face from returning foreign fighters. In his study of Western (American, Canadian, West European and Australian) foreign fighters from 1990-2010, Hegghammer found that, “Veteran foreign fighters are more likely than nonveterans to view domestic operations as legitimate” and estimates that 1 in 9 “returned for an attack in the West.”¹⁹

Even those who opposed domestic attacks upon their departure may become open to the idea. This can occur through direct recruitment for a plot. For example, Najibullah Zazi was recruited during his attempt to join the Taliban. Others may come around to the idea through gradual socialization during their time abroad. This appears to be the case of the Frankfurt cell whose members trained in Afghanistan and then plotted an attack in Germany upon their return.

The threat posed by returning foreign fighters motivated to carry out an attack is multifaceted. Not only do they present a threat in and of themselves, but they are well positioned to inspire and motivate others to join them. Additionally, the skills and

¹⁴ Barrett, R., June 2014, and Zelin, A. “ICSR Insight: Up to 11,000 foreign fighters in Syria; steep rise among Western Europeans,” The International Center for the Study of Radicalisation, 17 December 2013, <http://icsr.info/2013/12/icsr-insight-11000-foreign-fighters-syria-steep-rise-among-western-europeans/>

¹⁵ Barrett, R., June 2014, p. 12.

¹⁶ Hosenball, M. “U.S. steps up scrutiny of American fighters in Syria,” Reuters, 22 May 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/22/us-usa-syria-foreigners-idUSBREA4L0UC20140522>

¹⁷ Barrett, R., June 2014, p. 25.

¹⁸ Barrett, R., June 2014, pp. 25 and 7.

¹⁹ Hegghammer, T., February 2013, pp. 11 and 7.



experience they bring back with them increases their effectiveness, as Hegghammer explains.

The JPW [Jihadi Plots in the West] data suggest that the presence of foreign fighter returnees increases the effectiveness of attacks in the West. Whereas only 26% of all plotters are known to have foreign fighter experience, around 46% of all plots (49 of 106) included at least one veteran. For executed attacks, the rate is 58% (14 of 24), and for executed attacks with fatalities, it is 67% (8 of 12)... The available numbers tentatively suggest that the presence of a veterans increases — by a factor of around 1.5 — the probability that a plot will come to execution and it doubles the likelihood that the plot will kill people.²⁰

Again, the threat is not lost on officials. An April 2014 report for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly listed the “‘blowback’ problem” – the return of fighters from Syria and elsewhere – amongst the biggest threats to the Euro-Atlantic community.²¹ General Philip Breedlove, NATO’s senior commander in Europe, called foreign fighters, “a source of concern for all of the NATO countries.”²² The head of Britain’s Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, Charles Farr, cited the issue as the “‘biggest challenge’ to UK security services since 9/11” and Prime Minister David Cameron concurred recently saying, “No-one should be in any doubt that what we see in Syria and now in Iraq in terms of ISIS is the most serious threat to Britain’s security that there is today.”

The Far-Right and Other Extremists

With all this focus on Islamist extremism, it is easy to lose sight of threats emanating from other fronts. A recent report for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly highlights that the phenomenon of homegrown terrorism is “ideologically heterogeneous and involves not only violent Islamists, but also far-right, far-left, separatist and environmental extremists.”²⁴

Indeed NATO member nations have been struggling with extremism of many forms for a number of years. Since 9/11, there have been a string of attacks in the United States by white supremacists, including an assault on a Sikh temple by Wade Michael Page, a former soldier, which left six people dead. As of May 2013, 33 Americans had died in acts related to Muslim-American terrorism since 9/11, while more than 200 had been killed “in political violence by white supremacists and other groups on the far right.”²⁵

European allies have also suffered from similar streaks of violence. Sweden and Hungary were plagued by murders of Roma and other ethnic minorities, including the stabbing of a 25-year old man of Iranian origin, Showan Shattak, by four neo-Nazis in April 2014. In late 2013, eighteen members of the Greek parliament – 6 percent of the democratically elected body – were members of the neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn. Germany is dealing with an uptick in its neo-Nazi movement. Authorities there estimate “that there were 22,150 right-wing extremists in Germany in 2012, almost half of whom the intelligence service considers to be violence-prone.”²⁶ French anti-Semites and anti-Muslims have attacked synagogues,

²⁰ Hegghammer, T., February 2013, pp. 10-11.

²¹ Garriaud-Maylam, J., April 2014, p. 5.

²² Ibrahim, W. “NATO delays addressing foreign fighters in Syria,” Al-Monitor, 23 May 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/05/syria-foreign-fighters-nato.html>

²³ Hammond, A., “West’s biggest threat: Battle-hardened homegrown terrorists,” CNN, 2 May 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/02/opinion/homegrown-terrorism/>, and James, W. and A. Osborn. “Cameron says foreign fighters in Iraq, Syria most serious threat to UK,” Reuters, 17 June 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/06/17/uk-iraq-security-britain-idUKKBN0ES1VL20140617>

²⁴ Garriaud-Maylam, J., 25 Apr 2014, p. 5.

²⁵ Hirsh, M., “Stopping Terrorism at the Source,” in *National Journal*, 2 May 2013, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/stopping-terrorism-at-the-source-20130502>

²⁶ Stern, J., “X: A Case Study of a Swedish Neo-Nazi and His Reintegration into Swedish Society,” *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 32, April 2014, p. 440.



mosques and individuals in various locations. And, of course, there was the horrific attack by Andres Breivik in 2011 that claimed the lives of 77 people in Norway.

Programs

Given the urgency of the threat described above, what exactly is being done to address the issues? Counter violent extremism initiatives are being stood up by governments and multi-national organizations across the globe. Approaches typically include a mix of counter-radicalization and either disengagement or de-radicalization programs. The scope and level of sophistication of such efforts vary widely. The examples provided below are illustrative.

United Nations

The United Nations (UN) has launched a number of counterterrorism efforts. The UN recognizes that while it does not have a role to play in “kinetic counterterrorism operations” or in intelligence analysis related to counterterrorism, it can serve as a “trusted partner” and “a neutral convener for practitioners and key stakeholders to develop cooperative professional networks and to exchange best practices.”²⁷

The UN’s current counterterrorism structure is rooted in UN Security Council Resolution 1373 passed after 9/11. This resolution led to the establishment of the Counter-terrorism Committee and the 2005 framework for the Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). In 2006, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the “Global

Counterterrorism Strategy,” which Secretary General Ban Ki-moon described as a “multidimensional, comprehensive and integrated approach to combating terrorism.”²⁸

The Global Counterterrorism Strategy was based upon four pillars, including one directly related to CVE: “measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.”²⁹ When the CTITF was formerly institutionalized in 2009, a Working Group devoted to “Addressing Radicalisation and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism” was established.

The UN’s attention to countering extremism was furthered in June 2010 when the “Center on Policies to Counter the Appeal of Terrorism” was stood up. The Center’s responsibilities include: “analyzing different policies and programmes on detection and prevention of pathways into terrorism, early intervention efforts against terrorist recruitment, and rehabilitation initiatives.”³⁰ The Center runs a number of initiatives including the “Disengagement and Rehabilitation of Violent Extremists and Terrorists” project. Through this program the Center extends support to member-states who request assistance in “implementing capacity-building activities based on best practices and using proven methodologies.”³¹ The Center also produced two documentaries which are designed to educate vulnerable communities on what may draw individuals to terrorist activity and dissuade those who may be considering such a path from joining. Overall the Center’s efforts, and those of the UN more generally in this area, focus on analysis, information-sharing and convening member-nations, organizations and experts to share best practices and strengthen networks.

²⁷ Fink, N.C., “Meeting the Challenge: A Guide to United Nations Counterterrorism Activities,” International Peace Institute, June 2012, p. 6. http://www.ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/ebook_guide_to_un_counterterrorism.pdf

²⁸ UN General Assembly, “Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: activities of the United Nations system in implementing the Strategy,” A/66/762; 4 April 2012, 4, http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/ctitf/pdfs/A_66_762_English.pdf

²⁹ UN Counter-terrorism Center (UNCCT). Accessed on 17 July 2014. <http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/ctitf/uncct/>

³⁰ UN Counter-terrorism Center (UNCCT). Accessed on 17 July 2014.

³¹ UN General Assembly, April 2012, 10.



European Union

In March 2004, the European Union (EU) created a full time position to oversee all of the organization's counter-terrorism efforts. The Counter-terrorism Coordinator is designed to “bring cohesion to the efforts of the 27 [now 28] EU countries’ fight against terrorism in prevention, combating it, and response.”³² The EU released a Counterradicalization Strategy in May 2008 and seeks to find ways in which the union can add-value, while recognizing that the “primary responsibility for combating terrorism lies with the individual Member States.”³³ The EU's emphasis is on facilitating and improving cooperation in the areas of sharing expertise and information and promoting partnerships. To this end, the EU formed the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) in 2011 as a platform to “pool expertise and facilitate the exchange of ideas on de-radicalisation topics” and has earmarked €20million for its programs for 2014-2017.³⁴ On the prevention end, the EU pays close attention to the way it communicates and takes measures to ensure its messaging and policies do not provoke extremism.

The European Union is also acutely aware of the threat posed by the potential return of foreign fighters. Counter-terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, expressed his concern: “We've had in the last 7 to 10 years a flow of Europeans going abroad for training purposes and to fight. And many of them were getting back home, quite easily because they have the passport of one of our member states...They are dangerous because they have been trained to use explosives, to asymmetric warfare. They are dangerous because they inspire others.”

[sic]³⁵ Though the Union has not adopted an official response effort yet, an informal group of nine EU countries – Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom – have conducted meetings to try to formulate a more coordinated response.

NATO Member States

Many NATO member nations have robust CVE programs. However, for the purpose of this paper, a few examples of programs in non-EU member nations will be highlighted: Norway, Turkey and the United States.

Norway

Norway has been coping with violent extremism since its struggles with right-wing, neo-Nazi groups in the 1980s. Today, officials believe levels of violent Islamist extremism in the country are “extremely low” and assess their bigger issues to be with “lower-level extremism”: fundraising, political protest, individuals traveling to abroad to wage jihad.³⁶ However, concern over an attack appears to be increasing. On 24 July 2014, the Police Security Service (PST) issued a statement that the country was in imminent danger of attack: “individuals affiliated with an extreme Islamist group in Syria may have the intention of carrying out a terrorist action in Norway...we also have information indicating that a terrorist action against Norway is planned to be carried out shortly – probably in a few days.”³⁷

³² “Homegrown terrorism: how the EU sees it,” *NATO Review*, 12 July 2012, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2012/Threads-Within/Homegrown-terrorism-EU/EN/index.htm>

³³ “The EU Counterradicalization Strategy: Evaluating EU Policies Concerning Causes of Radicalization,” *Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law*, May 2008, 8, <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/EU%20Counterradicalization%20Strategy>

³⁴ Garriaud-Maylam, J., Apr 2014, p. 12.

³⁵ “Homegrown terrorism: how the EU sees it,” 12 July 2012.

³⁶ Vidino, L. and J. Brandon. “Countering Radicalization in Europe,” *The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, 2012, p. 60, <http://icsr.info/2012/12/icsr-report-countering-radicalization-in-europe/>

³⁷ Norwegian Police Security Service, “Pressemeldinger: Terror Threat against Norway,” 24 July 2013, <http://www.pst.no/media/pressemeldinger/terror-threat-against-norway/>



The Norwegians have supported de-radicalization programs since the 1990s, then largely aimed at the country's violent far-right. In 1998, Norway launched the first of the "EXIT" programs; the model was later adopted by Sweden and Germany. The aim is to help young people who want to leave extremist groups to do so. The program has its origins in the private sector, but was then taken up by the government and has now become "integrated into the normal activities of established public agencies."³⁸

More recently, the government began a counter-radicalization campaign. In December 2010, the Norwegian Prime Minister announced the government's "Action Plan against Radicalization." The Action Plan is informed largely by the country's experience in 1990s with violence from the far-right, though it incorporates elements of Danish, Dutch, and British counterradicalization work as well. The Plan focuses on three areas: (1) undermining recruitment (2) encouraging disengagement and (3) community policing, a long standing practice in Norway. The "small-scale counter-radicalization program" focuses on all forms of extremism and is overseen by the Ministry of Justice and Police.³⁹

The "centerpiece" of the plan are the "Empowerment Conversations" in which local law enforcement seek to intervene at an early stage with youth who are beginning to be involved with political extremism. As the Oslo Police Superintendent stated, "Our message to the young people is: 'We could arrest you – but we really would prefer to help you.'"⁴⁰ The conversations involve the individuals' parents who must pledge to help the youth follow the program.

Other government programs include efforts to foster positive relations with the Muslim community and religious organizations.

Turkey

For decades, Turkey has struggled with violent extremism of many varieties – Marxist-Leninist, separatist and religiously motivated, including the al-Qaeda linked Great Eastern Islamic Raiders Front (IBDA-C). There are a number of Ministries within the Turkish government – including Interior, Justice and Foreign Affairs – that contribute to the nation's counterterrorism efforts. The government recently established the "Counter-terrorism Coordination Board," which is chaired by the Prime Minister, to oversee all counterterrorism activity in the country.

The Turkish government has adopted a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism, understanding that the "fight against terrorism cannot be won by security and military means alone."⁴² These efforts include initiatives in "judicial, social, economic and cultural areas."⁴³ Turkey invested heavily in the "Southeastern Anatolia Project," otherwise known as GAP (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi), "the biggest economic investment in Turkey's history."⁴⁴ The program was designed to help improve the social and economic conditions in areas typically targeted by the PKK for recruitment and support.

Outside of social and economic development initiatives, the Turkish National Police (TNP) leads the nation's efforts in countering violent extremism.

³⁸ Bjorgo, T. and J. Horgan, eds., "Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement," Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration of Denmark, p. 2, https://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/82A2FB65-27B0-4129-ACC5-284E2B4F5F43/0/leaving_terrorism_behind.pdf

³⁹ Vidino, L. and J. Brandon, 2012, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁰ Vidino, L. and J. Brandon., 2012, p. 63.

⁴¹ Committee of Experts on Terrorism, Council of Europe, "Profiles on Counter-Terrorist Capacity -Turkey," May 2013, 7, http://www.coe.int/t/dlapil/codexter/Country%20Profiles/Profiles-2013-Turkey_EN.pdf

⁴² Ker-Lindsay, J. and A. Cameron, "Combating International Terrorism: Turkey's Added Value," Royal United Services Institute, October 2009, 3. https://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/Turkey_terrorism.pdf

⁴³ Ker-Lindsay, J. and A. Cameron, 2009, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Nikbay, O. and S. Hancerli, eds. "Understanding and Responding to the Terrorism Phenomenon: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective," *NATO Science for Peace and Security Series*, IOS Press, 2007, pp. 331.



Community policing is a very large component of the country's prevention campaign and includes efforts to intervene with "high-risk youth," traditionally a primary target group of PKK recruitment, "at a relatively early age."⁴⁵ The TNP also runs studies with families, public awareness campaigns and a variety of other social projects to support preventative efforts.⁴⁶

Turkey is emerging as a leader in counterterrorism and countering violent extremism. Its experience contending with "terrorisms" of varying ideologies, structures, capacities and tactics makes it well suited help other nations grapple with this diverse and amorphous threat. The TNP has been tapped to train delegations from a number of other nations in counterterrorism techniques – over 20 countries have sent students to the TNP Academy. In 2003, Turkey volunteered to host a Center of Excellence (COE) for the study of terrorism. It followed through and stood up COE-Defense Against Terrorism which was accredited by the NATO in 2006. Turkey also serves as co-chair, along with the United States, of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), established in 2011 and its "International Center for Terrorism and Transnational Crime" is a very active contributor to GCTF initiatives.⁴⁷

United States

The Obama Administration released its countering violent extremism strategy, "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," the first of its kind, in August 2011. Its follow-up, the "Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent

Extremism in the United States" (SIP), was released just a few months later in December 2011. Though the formulation of the SIP involved consultations with number of components from across government – including the departments of Defense, Treasury and Education, among others – the majority of the programs are led by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The SIP stresses community engagement and enhancing community and individual resilience to terrorist radicalization efforts. The resulting programs focus largely on the promotion of civil rights and liberties, outreach, and engagement. Locally, there has been a proliferation of community policing and attempts to "build bridges" and foster enhanced cooperation with American Muslim, Arab, and Sikh communities.⁴⁸ The Department of Defense remains engaged in countering violent extremism through sponsorship of a number of research efforts and conferences across the service branches, the German Marshall Center, National Defense University, and various other bodies.

US officials are working with European allies to address the threat of foreign fighters. Attorney General Eric Holder stressed the interconnected nature of the threat, calling it a "global crisis" at a meeting in Oslo on 8 July 2014. Holder said, "because our citizens can freely travel, visa-free, from the U.S. to Norway and other European states — and vice versa — the problem of fighters in Syria returning to any of our countries is a problem for all of our countries."⁴⁹ Internal efforts on the part of the United States include the outlawing of "preparatory

⁴⁵ Dikici, A., "Preventing the PKK's Misuse of Children by Introducing Community Policing: The Şanlıurfa Case," *Defense Against Terrorism* 1, no 2, COE-DAT, Fall 2008, p. 119. <http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/datr/volumes/datr2.pdf>

⁴⁶ Turkish National Police, "Slide Deck: Turkey and Counterterrorism," 30 January 2009, and

"Workshop on Countering Violent Extremism in South-East Europe," International Center for Terrorism and Transnational Crime, 2012. <http://utsam.org/IcerikDetay.aspx?pid=414&cid=195&lang=EN>

⁴⁷ Özeren, S. and K. Yilmaz. "Fighting Terrorism and Organized Crime: Turkish academies increase professionalism in police forces around the world," *per Concordiam* 15, May 2014, p. 17. http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/news/pC_V4N3_en.pdf

⁴⁸ Bjelopera, J., February 2014, pp. 2, 8 and 5.

⁴⁹ Horwitz, S., "Eric Holder urges European countries to help stop flow of radicals to Syria," *Washington Post*, 8 July 2014.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/eric-holder-urges-european-states-to-help-stop-flow-of-radicals-to-syria/2014/07/08/b50d01ae-0692-11e4-8a6a-19355c7e870a_story.html



acts to terrorism,” undercover operations to “infiltrate terrorist groups,” and a number of programs designed to counter-violent extremism before it can lead individuals to terrorism.⁵⁰

Recommendations for NATO Engagement

“Homegrown” and “blowback” terrorism pose a threat to members across the Alliance and represent a porous, fluid danger. As US Attorney General Holder mentioned, our global, interconnected environment allows for ease of travel between many of the member nations, meaning that one nation’s radicalized dissident can be another’s active assailant. While the majority of efforts to counter violent extremism and mitigate the risk of attack from returning foreign fighters fall on the shoulders of individual member nations, there are complimentary ways in which NATO can, and should, be involved in this important issue.

NATO member nations’ ability to discuss such threats, in accordance with Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, gives the Alliance the opportunity to contribute to security efforts in these areas.

NATO should leverage its broad coalition of partners from North America, Europe and beyond in this endeavor. The Science and Technology Organization and Center of Excellence for Defense Against Terrorism are two standing Alliance entities well suited to contribute to the international community’s efforts to combat violent extremism and prevent terrorist attacks from materializing in member nations.

Science and Technology Organization (STO)

In 2011, NATO’s Research and Technology Organization (RTO), now the Science and

Technology Organization (STO), released a report, “Psychosocial, Organizational and Cultural Aspects of Terrorism,” which explored the issues of radicalization and disengagement in depth. The task group responsible for the report, Human Factors and Medicine Research Task Group 140 (HFM-140), engaged Partner Nations and Mediterranean Dialogue Nations in their efforts and convened an Advanced Research Workshop (ARW) entitled “Home-grown Terrorism: Understanding and Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalisation among Groups with an Immigrant Heritage in Europe.”

Dr. Anne Speckhard, who chaired HFM-140, lauded the endeavor as a mechanism to bring together top experts from across the Alliance and its partners and highlighted that “the bonds between researchers and the exchange of ideas are critical and extremely valuable.”⁵¹ Laurie Fenstermacher of the US Air Force Research Lab, who also participated in HFM-140, stressed the value of the working group’s ability to bring in a variety of perspectives, including the Middle East and other nations that are on the frontlines of these issues and stated that, “NATO is exactly the right place to do this.” She also emphasized that the benefits extend beyond the scope of the working group. The relationships established can be leveraged for subsequent initiatives run by member nations and add “a richness of perspectives you would not otherwise have.”⁵²

NATO’s policy guidelines on counter-terrorism from May 2012 highlight “engagement” as an important aspect of the Alliance’s counterterrorism efforts. The document reads, “The challenge of terrorism requires a holistic approach by the international community, involving a wide range of instruments...NATO will enhance consultations and ensure a more systematic approach to practical cooperation with partner countries using existing mechanisms.” Multilateral research projects which connect experts from member and partner member nations would be an

⁵⁰ Ewig, P., “Eric Holder: U.S. must ready now for Syria threat,” *Politico*, 8 July 2014, <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/07/eric-holder-syria-threat-oslo-speech-108650.html?hp=l6>

⁵¹ Personal communication with Dr. Anne Speckhard, 2 July 2014.

⁵² Personal communication with Laurie Fenstermacher, 21 July 2014.



excellent way to pursue this engagement objective.

There are currently no STO activities underway that address CVE.⁵³ The Alliance should take advantage of the platform the STO provides to explore these critical security issues. Future programs could include empirical evaluations of best practices across participating nations, explorations of opportunities for coordination or collaboration, analysis of foreign fighters, and further investigation into the processes of radicalization and disengagement.

Center of Excellence for Defense Against Terrorism (COE-DAT)

The Center of Excellence for Defense Against Terrorism in Ankara, Turkey, provides another mechanism for engagement in the study of these fields. In 2010, James Farwell, an author, lawyer and consultant for the US Department of Defense, advocated for the creation of a COE for counterterrorism. Although that would be an ambitious development, a more practical and sufficiently effective approach would be to increase coverage of countering violent extremism under COE-DAT. While there is no question that counterterrorism and countering violent extremism are distinct fields, they work towards the same objective – the elimination of terrorism – and thus it seems appropriate to include the study of CVE under COE-DAT. As Farwell envisioned, COE-DAT could provide a forum “to exchange ideas and knowledge, build capacity, enable member states and allies to plan and execute campaigns, and provide expert or technical assistance to achieve success.”⁵⁴

COE-DAT is beginning to incorporate some elements of CVE in its programming. In June 2014, it hosted workshops addressing homegrown

terrorism and related strategic communications. These workshops brought together academics, field experts, military personnel and civilian leadership and provided a venue for a constructive exchange of ideas and dialogue regarding these important issues. The organization is exploring expansion of their CVE curriculum for the year to come.⁵⁵

COE-Defense Against Terrorism possesses an inherent flexibility to address topics as it only has to gain approval from the eight sponsor nations. Three of the COE-DAT state-sponsors – the United States, the United Kingdom and Turkey – have expressed a keen interest in enhancing exploration of these fields.⁵⁶ One hundred and two countries have sent representatives to participate in COE-DAT activities with speakers bringing expertise from over 50 nations, including from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa. COE-DAT provides an ideal platform to pursue the study of radicalization and disengagement with an objective of enhancing the security of nations across the Alliance. Initiatives at COE-DAT can help enhance intra-Alliance understanding of the threats posed by homegrown terrorism and returning foreign fighters. Over the long run, they can serve to foster more cohesive and complementary countermeasures in the area of CVE.

Conclusion

Though military force will remain an important component of Alliance security, the challenges faced by NATO member nations in the years ahead will necessitate a combination of both hard and soft power. Counterterrorism, in particular, requires a balanced approach. Therefore, NATO efforts to “safeguard the freedom and security of its members” – the Alliance’s “fundamental and enduring purpose” according in the 2010 Lisbon Summit Declaration – should

⁵³ Correspondence with Science & Technology Organization Official, July 2014.

⁵⁴ Farwell, J. “Part I – Focusing the Fight on Counter-Radicalisation: Why NATO Must Protect Its Own,” *Defense IQ*, 20 September 2010, <http://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/part-i-focusing-the-fight-on-counter-radicalisation/>

⁵⁵ Personal communication with NATO official, July 2014.

⁵⁶ Personal communication with NATO official, July 2014.



include efforts on the political end of the spectrum to “encourage consultation and cooperation on defense and security issues” in the area of countering violent extremism. As Admiral Stavridis wrote while serving as NATO Supreme Allied Commander, “The future of security in the coming decades is predicated on the notion that the preservation of peace is fueled by the persistent application of soft power.”⁵⁷ This philosophy applies to counterterrorism efforts and speaks to the need to support efforts in the area of countering violent extremism.

Given that domestic agencies will take the lead on countering violent extremism on the home front, NATO’s role will be limited although complementary. As Juliette Bird, the Head of the Emerging Security Challenges Division’s Counter-Terrorism Section, suggested, NATO can be a “very useful player” as

part of “an international, global counterterrorism strategy.”⁵⁸ NATO’s access to CVE experts and practitioners from around the world – not only from North America and both EU and non-EU Europe, but the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Africa – should be leveraged to contribute to broader international efforts. In an era of growing fiscal constraints, the ability to partner with others on this important security initiative should add further appeal to member nations. The Alliance’s Science and Technology Organization and the Center of Excellence for Defense Against Terrorism are obvious places to encourage and expand efforts on countering violent extremism. What remains is for the Alliance to muster the collective political will to use them.

⁵⁷ Stavridis, J., 2010, p. 27.

⁵⁸ “Homegrown terrorism: how can NATO fight it?,” *NATO Review*, 11 July 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmDv6VAPpOk>