



TASK FORCE ON
EXTREMISM IN
FRAGILE STATES

PREVENTING EXTREMISM IN FRAGILE STATES A New Approach

FINAL REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE
ON EXTREMISM IN FRAGILE STATES

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Making Peace Possible

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Disclaimer

This report represents the consensus of a bipartisan Task Force with diverse expertise and affiliations. No member may be satisfied with every formulation and argument in isolation.

The findings of this report are solely those of the Task Force. They do not necessarily represent the views of the United States Institute of Peace or the Senior Advisors.



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Letter from the Cochairs

Since September 11, 2001, the courage and skill of our military, intelligence, and law enforcement professionals have prevented another mass-casualty terrorist attack on U.S. soil. American diplomats and development professionals have also dedicated great effort to improving conditions in the dangerous places that give rise to terrorism. Yet all of us recognize that challenges remain. Our success in defeating terrorists has not been matched by success in ending the spread of terrorism.

It is to address this shortcoming that Congress tasked the United States Institute of Peace to “develop a comprehensive plan to prevent the underlying causes of extremism in fragile states.” We have been honored to lead this effort—working with a bipartisan Task Force comprising thirteen of America’s most talented foreign policy professionals. Each of us on the Task Force understands the importance of the problem as well as the difficulty of finding a solution. We have endeavored to learn from previous administrations that have wrestled with this challenge.

Our principal recommendation is both simple and daunting: Prevention should be our policy. Preventing the underlying causes of extremism is possible but requires us to adopt a new way of thinking about, structuring, and executing U.S. foreign policy.

The challenge is not that we lack the tools for prevention. Rather, our prevention efforts are fractured. The relevant capabilities and expertise are spread across the U.S. government, with no shared criteria for when to use them, no policy guidance for how to use them, and no mechanism for coordinating them. When tried, prevention efforts have been disjointed, piecemeal, and intermittent.

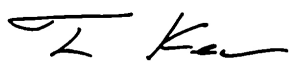
What we need is a sense of urgency. We need a high-level political commitment to undertake prevention. We need a coherent, coordinated, and committed focus to prevent the underlying causes of extremism in fragile states. This will require all U.S. departments and agencies with national security responsibilities to adopt a shared understanding of how to stop the spread of extremism. It will require the Congress to grant U.S. diplomacy, development, and defense professionals greater flexibility in the field, while faithfully executing its oversight role. Most important, it will require the United States to convince other international actors to join and support prevention efforts.

We recognize that this is no easy task. It will take time. It will not succeed everywhere. There will be failures. We will have to make adjustments along the way based on lessons learned. But if we can do it right—engaging the energy, creativity, and resourcefulness of our foreign service, development, and military professionals—our policy will be more affordable and more sustainable. We also believe that this policy will save lives in the years ahead.

This is the right moment for a new approach. After 9/11, U.S. officials rightly focused on imminent threats to the homeland. There was little understanding of how to go about preventing violent extremism. We have learned much since. The weakening of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria creates an opportunity to focus on prevention. The threat that it could reestablish itself in another fragile state underscores prevention's importance. Many international actors share our view; we should harness this emerging consensus.

A preventive strategy is neither passive nor naive. The United States always reserves the right to use force and should do so to confront imminent terrorist threats. The broader challenge before us is to prevent future threats from emerging. We want to foster resilient societies in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel that are capable of resisting the spread of extremism. We want not only to defeat today's terrorists but also to alleviate the conditions that spawn tomorrow's.

We urge Congress and the administration to take up the recommendations in this report, and we look forward to working to implement them.



Governor Tom H. Kean



Representative Lee H. Hamilton

I. Executive Summary

We need a new strategy to prevent the spread of extremism, which threatens our homeland, our strategic interests, and our values. Our current focus on counterterrorism is necessary, but neither sufficient nor cost-effective. Congress has charged this Task Force with developing a new approach, one that will get ahead of the problem.

We need a new strategy because, despite our success protecting the homeland, terrorism is spreading. Worldwide, annual terrorist attacks have increased fivefold since 2001. The number of self-professed Salafi-jihadist fighters has more than tripled and they are now present in nineteen countries in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Near East.

We need a new strategy because the costs of our current approach are unsustainable. Over the last eighteen years, ten thousand Americans have lost their lives and fifty thousand have been wounded fighting this threat, at an estimated cost of \$5.9 trillion to U.S. taxpayers.¹

We need a new strategy because terrorism is not the only threat we face. Terrorism is a symptom, but extremism—an ideology calling for the imposition of a totalitarian order intent on destroying free societies like ours—is the disease. Extremism both preys on fragile states and contributes to chaos, conflict, and coercion that kills innocents, drains U.S. resources, forecloses future market opportunities, weakens our allies, and provides openings for our competitors.

To reduce our expenditure of blood and treasure, protect against future threats, and preserve American leadership and values in contested parts of the world, we must not only respond to terrorism but also strive to prevent extremism from taking root in the first place. This does not mean seeking to stop all violence or to rebuild nations in vulnerable regions of the world. Instead, it means recognizing that even modest preventive investments—if they are strategic, coordinated, and well-timed—can reduce the risk that extremists will exploit fragile states. The objective of a preventive approach should be to strengthen societies that are vulnerable to extremism so they can become self-reliant, better able to resist this scourge, and protect their hard-earned economic and security gains.

This imperative for prevention is not new. Back in 2004, the 9/11 Commission argued that counterterrorism and homeland security must be coupled with “a preventive strategy that is as much, or more, political as it is military.”² That call has not been answered. And so the threat continues to rise, the costs mount, and the need for a preventive strategy grows more compelling.

Progress has undoubtedly been made since 9/11. The U.S. government has a better understanding of what works. There is bipartisan agreement in Congress that a new approach is needed. However, the United States cannot—nor should it—carry this burden alone. U.S. leadership is needed to catalyze international donors to support preventing extremism. And the international community—both donor countries and multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank—are increasingly willing to engage these problems with us, including through the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

But challenges persist. There is still insufficient prioritization, coordination, or agreement on what to do, both within the U.S. government and across the international community.

Our Task Force offers three recommendations to build on emerging opportunities and overcome persistent hurdles to preventing extremism effectively (see figure 1, “Summary of Task Force Recommendations”).

First, there must be a new effort to unite around a joint strategy aimed at preventing the underlying causes of extremism. **The United States should adopt a shared framework for strategic prevention that recognizes that extremism is a political and ideological problem. The framework should also identify building partnerships with leaders, civil society, and private sector actors in fragile states who are committed to governing accountably as the best approach to preventing extremism.** Extremists’ attempts to, in the Middle East and Africa, establish an absolutist state ruled by a rigid, twisted, and false interpretation of Islam resonate only in societies where the existing state has failed its people. The antidote to extremist ideology, therefore, must be political. But inclusive institutions, accountable governments, and civic participation cannot be imposed from the outside. What the United States can do is identify, encourage, and **build partnerships** with leaders in fragile states including nationally and locally, in government and civil society with women, youth, and the private sector who are committed to rebuilding trust in their states and societies. However, bitter experience teaches that where such leaders are lacking, the United States stands little chance of furthering its long-term interests. In such cases, it must seek to **seize opportunities** where possible and always **mitigate the risk** that its engagement, or that of other actors, could do more harm than good.




Second, to ensure that agencies have the resources, processes, and authorities they need to operationalize this shared framework, the **Congress and the Executive Branch should launch a Strategic Prevention Initiative to align all U.S. policy instruments, from bilateral assistance to diplomatic engagement, in support of prevention.** The Initiative should set out the roles and responsibilities of each department for undertaking prevention. Its principal objective should be to promote long-term coordination between agencies in fragile states. It should grant policymakers new authorities to implement a preventive strategy. In particular, because local conditions and needs differ widely, it is important that U.S. diplomats and development professionals on the ground in fragile states be given direct responsibility, flexibility, and funding to experiment with and develop effective and tailored solutions.

However, the United States neither can nor should prevent extremism by itself. It is not the only country with a vested interest in doing so and can build more effective partnerships with fragile states if other countries cooperate. Thus, our Task Force calls on the United States to **establish a Partnership Development Fund, a new international platform for donors and the private sector to pool their resources and coordinate their activities in support of prevention.** This would ensure that the work being done by the United States as part of the Strategic Prevention Initiative is matched by other international donors working jointly toward the same goals. It would create a mechanism for other countries to share the burden and incentivize an enterprise-driven approach. A single, unified source of assistance might also entice fragile states that would otherwise look elsewhere for help.

A preventive strategy will not stop every terrorist attack. It will take time to produce results. It will require us to recognize the limits of our influence and work hard to leverage our resources more effectively. And it is not something that we can implement alone—our international partners should do their fair share. But it offers our best hope. Neither open-ended military operations, nor indefinite foreign assistance, nor retrenchment offers a better alternative.

Through targeted, evidence-based, strategic investments where the risks are the highest, our interests the greatest, and our partners the most willing, prevention provides a cost-effective means to slow, contain, and eventually roll back the spread of extremism. The United States needs to enable fragile states and societies to take the lead in averting future extremist threats. If we succeed, our children and grandchildren will live in a more peaceful world.

Figure 1. Summary of Task Force Recommendations

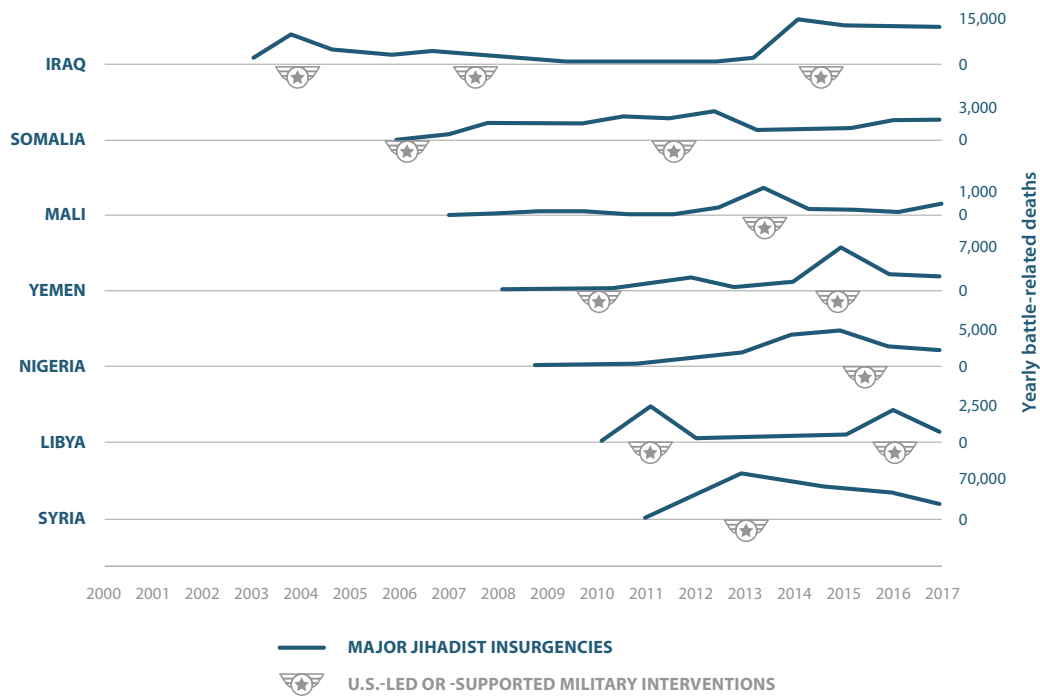
OBJECTIVES	<p>Adopt a shared understanding of how to prevent violence and extremism.</p>	<p>Operationalize the prevention framework within the U.S. government.</p>	<p>Rally the international community in support of locally-led efforts to prevent extremism.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS	 <p>Shared Framework for Strategic Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. government (USG) adopts a government-wide understanding of extremism as a political and ideological problem. • USG prioritizes partnerships with foreign leaders committed to governing accountably. 	 <p>Strategic Prevention Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Branch establishes clear roles and responsibilities for each department undertaking prevention. • Congress grants new authorities for flexible, long term funding for field-based staff. • Executive Branch aligns security assistance with prevention priorities. 	 <p>Partnership Development Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Department and USAID negotiate with international partners to establish new platform to coordinate activities and pool resources to promote prevention. • Ensures other donors and fragile states contribute their fair share.
RESULTS	<p>Ensures greater unity of effort around a joint strategy for addressing the underlying conditions of extremism.</p>	<p>Provides the authorities, procedures and resources needed by agencies to align efforts and empower committed local partners.</p>	<p>Leverages the resources of our international partners and promotes coordination among the U.S., international donors, and partner states.</p>

II. The Imperative of Prevention

On September 11, 2001, nineteen young men from the Salafi-jihadist network of al-Qaeda perpetrated the worst terrorist attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which claimed the lives of nearly three thousand people, have defined the course of U.S. national security policy for the better part of a generation.

That policy has focused on disrupting, degrading, dismantling, and decimating terrorist networks overseas through a variety of means, but primarily militarily. Yet, despite U.S. success on the battlefield, extremist groups, exploiting exclusionary governance, political instability, and local conflicts, not merely persist but thrive. Since 9/11, jihadist groups have participated in major insurgencies in Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Nigeria, and Mali (see figure 2, “The Cycle of Crisis Response: Jihadist Insurgencies and U.S.-Supported Interventions”). In none of these conflicts has the United States and its partners been able to completely contain or mitigate the threat. Instead, after each supposed defeat, extremist groups return having grown increasingly ambitious, innovative, and deadly.

Figure 2. The Cycle of Crisis Response: Jihadist Insurgencies and U.S.-Supported Interventions



This figure displays the conflict trajectories of major jihadist insurgencies where U.S.-led or supported interventions have occurred. Major jihadist insurgencies are conflicts with the participation of an ISIS or al-Qaeda affiliated group with at least ten thousand battle deaths (as in the cases of Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen), or where such groups have seized control of major population centers (as in Mali and Libya). U.S.-led military interventions are those where the United States intervened with ground forces, air strikes, drone strikes, or special forces during a conflict (as in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen). U.S.-supported interventions are those where the United States provided military equipment, training, intelligence, or logistical support to major combatants in confronting jihadist groups. Source on conflict-related deaths: UCDP / PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset: <http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/#d8>, Therése Patterson and Kristen Eck, “Organized Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 55, no.4 (2018), (accessed January 10, 2019). Data on U.S.-led or supported interventions compiled from secondary sources.

Winning the Battles, Losing the Peace: The Case of Mosul, Iraq

Nine months, one hundred thousand troops, and some of the toughest urban combat since World War II is what it took to capture Mosul in July 2017.^a It was the third time in the past fifteen years that the United States and its partners had “liberated” the city, Iraq’s second largest.

The first time the United States swept into Mosul was in April 2003. However, after the United States overthrew Saddam Hussein’s regime, and a Shia-dominated government took power in Baghdad, the predominantly Sunni Arab city resisted. In 2004, insurgents in Mosul declared their allegiance to al-Qaeda and began attacking U.S. forces.

In 2008, the U.S. and Iraqi militaries launched another offensive into Mosul, this time against these al-Qaeda linked groups. This “surge” of two thousand U.S. troops and twenty thousand Iraqi soldiers,^b succeeded in temporarily bringing calm.^c But the U.S. military departed Iraq in 2011, leaving behind largely the same conditions that had sparked the first insurgency. The Sunni population remained disenfranchised as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shia, violently crushed peaceful protests and stopped paying the salaries of Sunni tribal militias that had helped push back al-Qaeda.^d

When, in June 2014, eight hundred ISIS insurgents marched on Mosul, the thirty thousand soldiers of the U.S.-trained Iraqi army turned and ran. Worse, some of the city’s inhabitants were willing to consider that their lives might be better under the extremists than under the Iraqi government.^e Mosul became the political and economic center of the caliphate of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria for nearly three years. American forces returned, for a third time, to assist Iraqi troops in dislodging the extremists.

Already conditions are ripe for extremists to return to Mosul. One year after its liberation from ISIS, much of the city still remained in ruins^f and 80 percent of the youth population was unemployed.^g As it has been since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, a Shia-dominated government in Baghdad remains in charge of the country and is conducting a disturbing campaign of revenge against the region’s Sunni population.^h By the end of 2018, ISIS militants in Mosul had staged a comeback, detonating a series of car bombs.ⁱ

Notes

^a Rupert Jones, “Major General: Battle for Mosul is ‘Toughest since WWII,’” *BBC News*, June 26, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-40409046/major-general-battle-for-mosul-is-toughest-since-wwii>.

^b Drew Brown, “U.S. Troops Setting Down Roots in Mosul,” *Stars and Stripes*, February 23, 2008, <https://www.stripes.com/news/u-s-troops-setting-down-roots-in-mosul-1.75370>.

^c Sam Dagher, “Fractures in Iraq City as Kurds and Baghdad Vie,” *New York Times*, October 27, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/28/world/middleeast/28mosul.html?mtref=www.google.com>.

^d Anna Louise Strachan, “Factors behind the Fall of Mosul to ISIL (Daesh) in 2014,” *K4D*, January 17, 2017, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/59808750e5274a170700002c/K4D_HDR_Factors_behind_the_fall_of_Mosul_in_2014.pdf.

^e Martin Chulov, Fazel Hawramy, and Spencer Ackerman, “Iraq Army Capitulates to ISIS Militants in Four Cities,” *Guardian*, June 11, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/11/mosul-isis-gunmen-middle-east-states>.

^f Mahmoud Al-Najjar, Gilgamech Nabell and Jacob Wirtschaftfer, “Smell of Death Fills Mosul Near a Year after Iraqi City Freed from ISIS,” *USA Today*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/05/02/mosul-iraq-smell-death-isis-islamic-state/543030002/>.

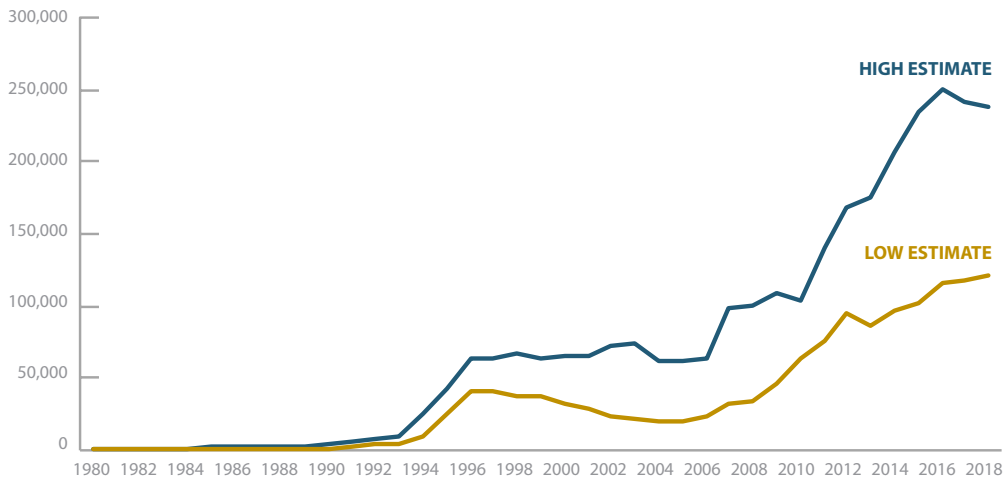
^g “Mosul Still a Pile of Rubble One Year On,” *Norwegian Refugee Council*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2018/july/mosul-still-a-pile-of-rubble-one-year-on/>.

^h Ben Taub, “Iraq’s Post-ISIS Campaign of Revenge,” *New Yorker*, December 24, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/12/24/iraqs-post-isis-campaign-of-revenge>.

ⁱ Salih Elias, John Davison and Kirsten Donovan, “Car Bomb Kills Several People in Iraq’s Mosul—Medical, Security Sources,” *Reuters*, November 8, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/08/reuters-america-car-bomb-kills-several-people-in-iraqs-mosul-medical-security-sources.html>.

As a result, extremist groups continue to grow in number, size, lethality, and geographic reach. Since 9/11, the number of people killed annually in terrorist attacks has increased fivefold.³ ISIS, al-Qaeda, and affiliated groups boast more than thirty thousand foreign fighters from more than one hundred countries, four times the number they had in 2001 (see figure 3, “Estimated Number of Salafi-jihadist Fighters, 1980-2018”).⁴ There are more than twice as many Salafi-jihadist groups as there were in 2001.⁵ Across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Near East, they have established a presence in nineteen countries and are actively seeking to expand.⁶

Figure 3. Estimated Number of Salafi-jihadist Fighters, 1980–2018



Source: Seth Jones et al., *The Evolution of the Salafi-jihadist Threat* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018), 9, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/181221_EvolvingTerroristThreat.pdf.

A new approach is needed. The current approach is unsustainable and ineffective. But withdrawal from the fight against extremism is not an option. At a time of global political struggle between freedom and its adversaries, the United States faces real threats, not just of terrorism against the homeland, but from the conflict, chaos, and coercive governance that extremists spread in fragile states.

A new focus on strategic prevention, recommended by this Task Force, would shift the paradigm from reaction to prevention, from just stopping terrorist attacks to also addressing the conditions that have led to the growth of extremism, from focusing only on immediate threats to building long-term partnerships.

It is to address this challenge of extremism that Congress has charged the United States Institute of Peace and this Task Force. Section 7080 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-31), signed into law on May 5, 2017, calls for a “comprehensive plan to prevent the underlying causes of extremism in fragile states in the Sahel, Horn of Africa and the Near East.”

The Task Force finds that the United States should turn to a third option **by seeking to act early to prevent the dangers of extremism**. A new focus on strategic prevention, recommended by this Task Force, would shift the paradigm from reaction to prevention, from just stopping terrorist attacks to also addressing the conditions that have led to the growth of extremism, from focusing only on immediate threats to building long-term partnerships.

The Unsustainable Costs of the Cycle of Crisis Response

In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, U.S. policymakers rightfully focused on making sure that terrorists would never again strike America. In this respect, the strategy of dismantling terrorist networks has been effective: there has been no mass-casualty terrorist attack against the United States since 2001. If this were still the sole metric for success, the current approach might suffice.

But extremism persists, despite U.S. offensives, because it adapts. Since 9/11, groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS have recognized that overseas wars of attrition are more likely than attacks against the American homeland to precipitate U.S. withdrawal from Muslim lands; that the existing political order in many Muslim-majority states is already weak; and that, therefore, inflaming already volatile societies, latching onto existing conflicts, and instigating new ones is the best strategy against an adversary such as the United States.

Even when extremists threaten to seize territory, the U.S. response tends to be reactive, and focused only on short-term objectives directly related to the immediate threat of violence.

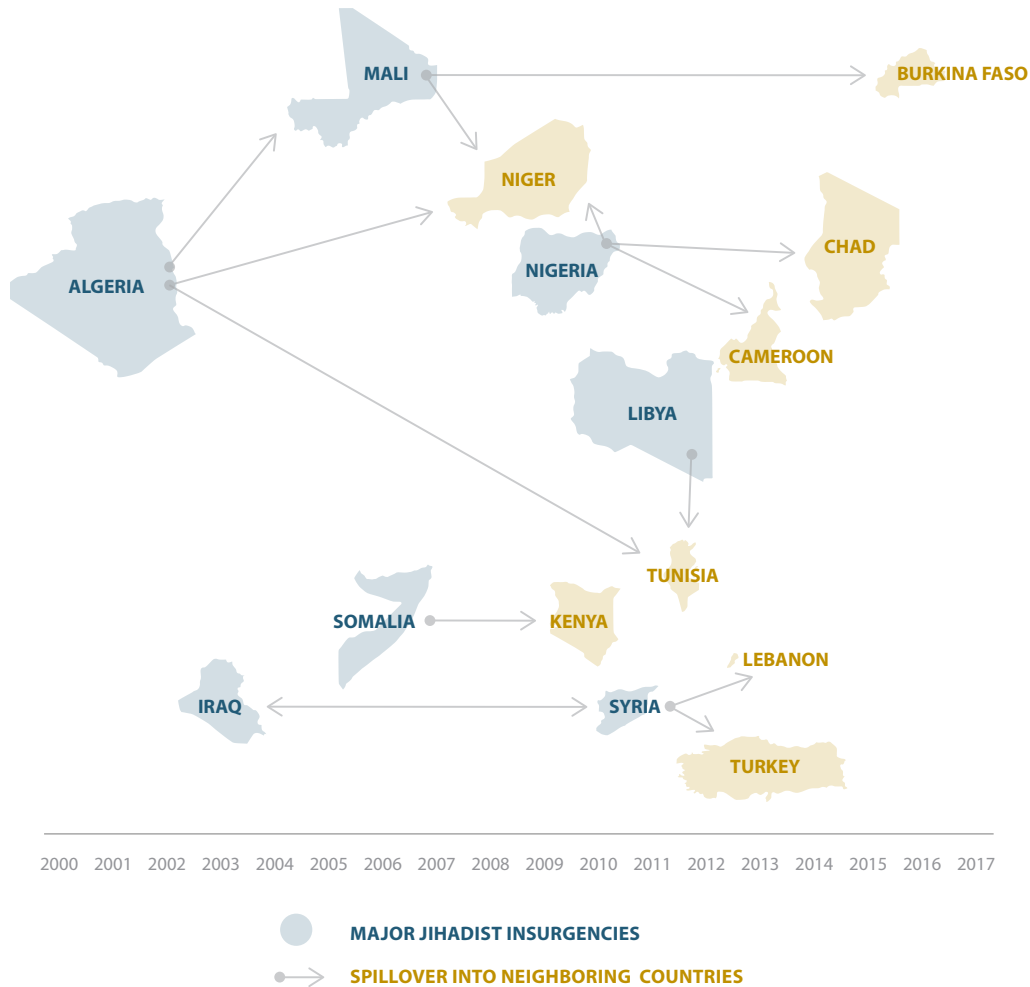
Yet, even when extremists threaten to seize territory, the U.S. response tends to be reactive, and focused only on short-term objectives directly related to the immediate threat of violence. Nearly all U.S. policy tools, both hard and soft, aim to dismantle terrorist networks, thwart attacks, or stop individual radicalization. U.S. air strikes and special operations are used to evict jihadist groups from the territory they seize; security partners in fragile states, supported by U.S. military assistance, do much of the fighting. And even nonmilitary programs that aim to “counter violent extremism” (CVE) focus primarily on “efforts by violent extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence”—efforts that are typically the immediate precursor of terrorist attacks.⁷

These responses, even when successful, do little to prevent, and at times even lay the groundwork for, further extremist eruptions.

These responses, even when successful, do little to prevent, and at times even lay the groundwork for, further extremist eruptions. The U.S. military interventions in Iraq and Libya, for example, contributed to political vacuums that extremists were able to fill. Substantial U.S. security cooperation with regimes in Mali and Yemen may have inadvertently contributed to systematic neglect and exclusion that extremists exploited to gain support for their cause. Too often, U.S.-supplied weapons are diverted to, or U.S.-trained fighters defect to, extremists.

With every major jihadist insurgency whose causes remain unaddressed, extremists seize opportunities to move into neighboring countries. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which has established an ongoing presence in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Tunisia, was born from the bitter fruits of a civil war that began in Algeria in 1991. After a decade of intermittent insurgency in Iraq, extremists inserted themselves into the Syrian Civil War, leading to the rise of ISIS in both countries (see figure 4, “Spillover from Major Jihadist Insurgencies, 2000–2017”).

Figure 4. Spillover from Major Jihadist Insurgencies, 2000–2017



The above chart depicts instances where jihadists have used their presence in countries with major insurgencies to “spill over,” establish themselves, and launch terrorist attacks in neighboring countries for a period of at least two years continuing through the end of 2017. Countries are placed along the chart according to the year of the first terrorist attack or the start date of the major insurgency with the exception of Algeria, whose insurgency against Islamist militant groups started in the 1990s. Source used for establishing the start date and whether or not terrorist campaign was ongoing: Global Terrorism Database at the website of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> (accessed January 10, 2019). Start date of major insurgencies derived from figure 2, which used the following source to chart the course of major jihadist insurgencies: UCDP / PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset: <http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/#d8>, Thérèse Patterson and Kristen Eck, “Organized Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 55, no.4 (2018), (accessed January 10, 2019).

The United States thus finds itself trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of crisis response. Since 2001, the fight against terrorism is estimated to have cost the United States between \$2.8 and \$5.9 trillion dollars and sixty thousand killed or injured,⁸ with no end in sight. In the words of former National Security Advisor and Task Force member Stephen Hadley: “When you have a series of crises and all you end up doing is crisis management, all you’re going to get is more crises.”⁹

Yet, the United States can ill afford to be consumed by terrorist crises. The strategic environment has grown more challenging and complicated in recent years. The United States confronts, according to the 2017 National Security Strategy, “rivals [that] compete across political, economic, and military arenas . . . to shift regional balances of power in their favor. These are fundamentally political contests between those who favor repressive systems and those who favor free societies.”¹⁰ Yet, the continuous cycle of counterterrorist crisis response is likely to impede any attempt to pivot U.S. foreign policy to address these new strategic realities.

Counterterrorism taxes the national security enterprise, consuming blood, treasure, political will, and bureaucratic bandwidth, diminishing policymakers’ ability to focus on more important priorities. “There is no doubt in my mind that the resource shift and focus on terrorism,” former Acting Director of Central Intelligence Michael Morrell has warned, “were in part responsible for our failure to more clearly foresee some key global developments such as Russia’s renewed aggressive behavior with its neighbors.”¹¹ To compete effectively on the global stage, the United States must get ahead of the extremist threat.

Beyond the Homeland: The Evolving Threat of Extremism in Fragile States

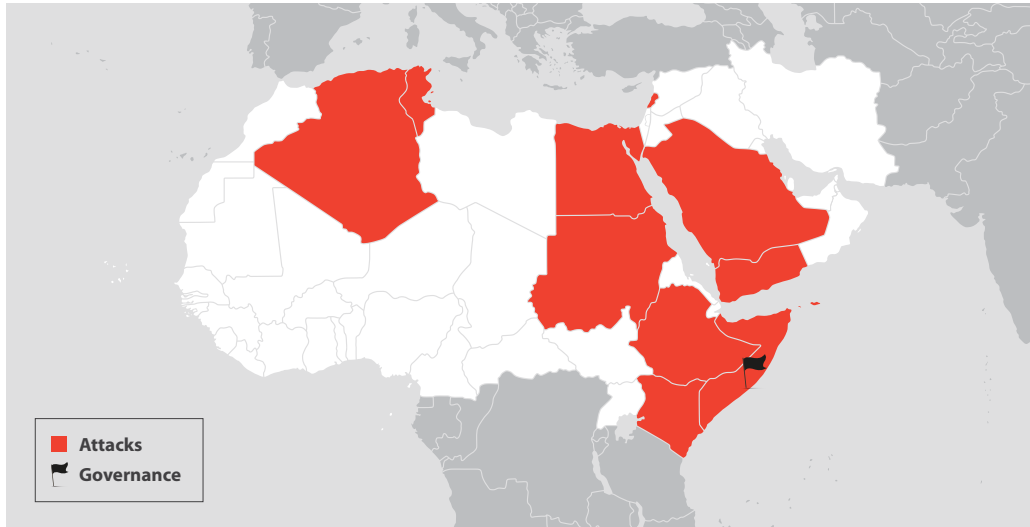
Although the current approach is costly, failure to address the spread of extremism into fragile states would be extremely dangerous. “Prominent terrorist organizations, particularly ISIS and al-Qa’ida,” observes the 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism, “have repeatedly demonstrated the intent and capability to attack the homeland and United States interests and continue to plot new attacks and inspire susceptible people to commit acts of violence inside the United States.”¹²

Such attacks, however, are not the only major extremist threat confronting the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Defense’s 2018 National Defense Strategy, “We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order—creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory.”¹³ Terrorism—like the unprecedented rise in nonstate armed groups over the past two decades—is a symptom of this disorder.

One of the pathologies driving this assault on the rules, institutions, and values critical to U.S. national security is extremism, specifically militant groups professing false Sunni and Shia Islamist teachings. They seek to displace the existing, rules-based international order and the states within it with a transnational, absolutist and totalitarian entity ruled by a rigid, twisted, and distorted interpretation of sharia law. The extremists’ pursuit of this goal, and the response it provokes from governments, often generates destructive cycles of violence. The success of extremists’ experiments in governance in parts of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Afghanistan, pose a grave, long-term threat to U.S. interests (see figures 5 and 6, “Extremist Attacks and Extremist Governance in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel”).

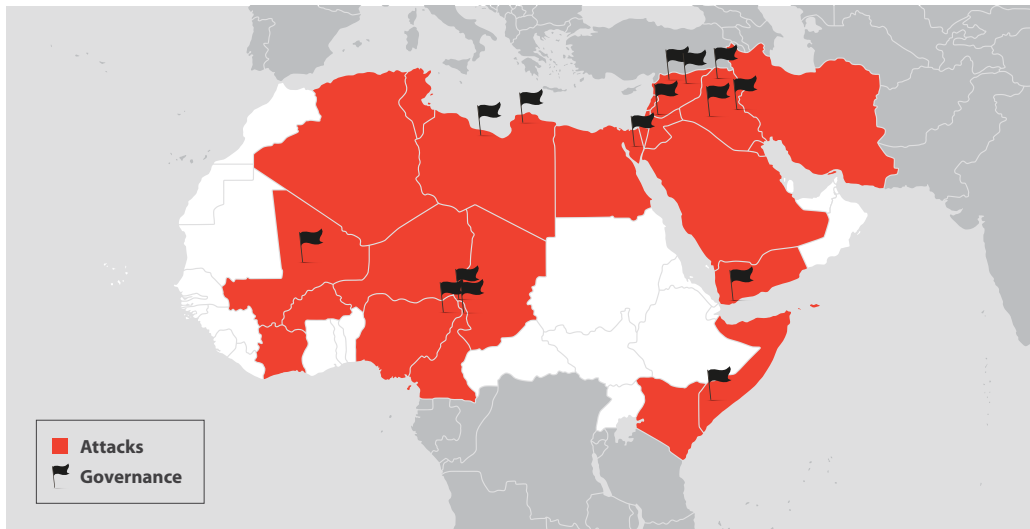
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Figure 5. Extremist Attacks and Extremist Governance in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel, 1996–2001



Source: Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, *Beyond the Homeland: Protecting America from Extremism in Fragile States* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, September 2018), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Taskforce-Extremism-Fragile-States-Interim-Report.pdf>.

Figure 6. Extremist Attacks and Extremist Governance in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel, 2013–18



Source: Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, *Beyond the Homeland: Protecting America from Extremism in Fragile States* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, September 2018), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Taskforce-Extremism-Fragile-States-Interim-Report.pdf>.

The most conducive environments for extremist attempts at statebuilding, and therefore for demonstrating the validity of the extremist ideological agenda, are fragile states. According to the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, “These groups stoke and exploit weak governance, conflict, instability, and longstanding political and religious grievances to pursue their goal.”¹⁴ It is no coincidence that 99 percent of all deaths from terrorist attacks over the

past seventeen years have occurred in countries that are in conflict.¹⁵ Nor is it surprising that, today, 77 percent of conflicts in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel have a violent extremist element, compared with 22 percent in 2001.¹⁶

These same fragile states and conflicts are also the front lines of regional and global competitions for power, influence, and resources. Russia, China, and Iran have preyed on the weakness of fragile states to extend their spheres of influence. Fragile states in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel are also increasingly arenas for regional rivalries, particularly between Iranian-backed Shia and the Middle East's looser Sunni bloc, but also the growing intra-Sunni contest between Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, on the one side, and Turkey and Qatar, on the other.

These twin dynamics of the extremist political project and authoritarian influence set up self-sustaining conflicts, making fragile states a vital battleground in the fight against the adversaries of freedom. The more support that extremists garner for their critique of the state, the more inclined the state is to repress them harshly, which in turn alienates citizens, who look to radical alternatives. Societies trapped between fragility, predation, and extremism—with no viable alternatives for just, inclusive, and competent governance—will remain unstable, impoverished, and susceptible to conflict and foreign interference.

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Once a country is caught in this trap, there are few good options for the United States: stay out of the fray and appear powerless; side with the rulers and compromise America's democratic principles while inviting potential extremist growth; or intervene to oust the extremists and be held responsible if stability does not quickly return. The United States has tried all three options and found that each one can be ineffective and erode its standing in the region and the wider world.

As long as extremism persists and extremist beliefs persuade and inspire more people than does the hope for tolerant and inclusive governance, the United States will see its ability to shape the prospects for peace and prosperity in the twenty-first century diminished.

Changing the Paradigm: The Case for Prevention

The United States needs to adopt a different approach. To break out of the costly cycle of crisis response and push back against the growing threat of extremist political orders, U.S. policymakers need to better balance efforts to respond to terrorist threats with efforts to prevent these threats from arising in the first place. This means proactively and preemptively identifying countries and regions that are vulnerable to future extremist penetration in fragile states. It requires adopting a paradigm of prevention.

This Task Force finds that prevention should be understood as a **pro-active and inherently political endeavor that requires aligning U.S. government and international efforts—diplomatic engagement, foreign assistance, and defense—to support local and national leaders in seeking to strengthen state legitimacy.**¹⁷

A preventive strategy should be a complement to, not a replacement, for counterterrorism. But prevention is superior to a counterterrorism-only approach. While the 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism aims to eliminate threats to the United States by pursuing terrorists to their source,¹⁸ a complementary preventive strategy should seek to avert the emergence of extremism. Thus, prevention could, over time, supplant counterterrorism as the primary policy focus in fragile states.

A preventive approach is also superior to a policy of retrenchment. Strengthening the ability of fragile states to withstand political assaults—whether from extremists or from authoritarian state adversaries and insurgents—builds strategic depth for the United States. Prevention must become an integral part of a broader strategy of political competition against the adversaries of freedom.

The goal of a preventive approach cannot and should not be to avert individual terrorist attacks; to eradicate every extremist group in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Near East; or to prevent all violent conflict. Nor should it necessarily be to establish Western-style democracies across the region. **Instead, in targeted countries where conditions are conducive and engagement can happen sufficiently early, preventive efforts should seek to reduce the likelihood that extremists will turn local conflicts into transnational jihads, hold territory, or establish governance. The success of such preventive efforts should be determined by whether national and local leaders are becoming more widely trusted within a given community or society.**

Savings from Prevention

The costs of violent conflict, military expenditure, counterterror operations, and law enforcement are extremely high. In 2017, the global economic impact of conflict was \$14 trillion, two-thirds of which was spent on internal security, incarceration, and military operations. The costs of violent conflict were over \$800 billion, \$161 billion of which was from the economic impact of terrorism.^a Even though the cost of fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has declined, total counterterrorism spending by the United States amounted to \$175 billion in 2017, an elevenfold increase over 2001.^b

By contrast, activities aimed at preventing violence have been shown to save money compared with the costs of responding to conflict.^c The most pessimistic estimates place the cost-effectiveness ratio of investments geared toward prevention at two dollars saved for every dollar invested.^d Two of the most recent estimates, conducted by the United Nations and the World Bank (2017) and the Institute for Economics and Peace (2018), put the ratio at sixteen to one.^e

Notes

^a Conflict deaths, refugees and IDPs, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and “terrorism” are included in the costs of violent conflict; see Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), *The Economic Value of Peace, 2018: Measuring the Global Economic Impact of Violence and Conflict* (Sydney: IEP, October 2018), 9, <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Economic-Value-of-Peace-2018.pdf>.

^b Stimson Center, *Counterterrorism Spending: Protecting America while Promoting Efficiencies and Accountability* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, May 2018), 5. <https://www.stimson.org/content/counterterrorism-spending-protecting-america-while-promoting-efficiencies-and-accountability>.

^c United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), 4–5, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

^d M. Chalmers, “Spending to Save? The Cost-Effectiveness of Conflict Prevention,” *Defence and Peace Economics* 18, no. 1 (2007): 2.

^e United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace*, 4; IEP, *Global Peace Index*, 2017, (Sydney: IEP; June 2017), 4.

Yet a preventive approach need not be costly or ambitious; to the contrary, in the longer term it will result in considerable cost savings. According to a recent analysis by the World Bank and the United Nations, every dollar invested in efforts to prevent conflict saves sixteen dollars in spending on reconstruction, crisis management, and the military.¹⁹

This strategy should be undertaken humbly and with realistic expectations. There are no simple prescriptions for addressing the challenge of extremism. Prevention is a step-by-step process that happens within societies, one that plays out on a generational timeline. The United States cannot hope to fix the underlying drivers everywhere. Nor can it hope to solve other countries' problems from the outside, or by acting alone. But with a new policy paradigm—supplementing a short-term, reactive focus on terrorism with a longer-term commitment to preventing extremism, aligning all its policy tools behind a shared strategy, and leveraging its unique convening power to encourage its international partners to do their part—the United States will be able to make a difference.

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A Difficult Road: Getting to Prevention

The need for policies that do more than react to terrorist threats and instead address the root causes of the problem is hardly new. In 2004, the 9/11 Commission foresaw the possibility for extremism to spread, mutate, and reemerge. Thus, the Commission recommended a comprehensive strategy that would not only “attack terrorists and their organizations” and “protect against and prepare for terrorist attacks,” but just as critically “prevent the continued growth of Islamist terrorism.”²⁰

Since then, the U.S. government and the international community have designed and implemented policies to prevent extremism. Progress has undoubtedly been made.²¹ Yet, serious challenges persist. More often than not, the United States and its partners lose focus on prevention; fail to work with and through communities; fail to integrate development, diplomacy, and defense interventions; or fail to follow up on hard-won gains.

The Persistence of Extremism amid Failure to Consolidate Gains: Somalia

Iraq is not the only country where extremists have regrouped in the aftermath of U.S.-led or supported military operations, and where the international community has failed to follow up on hard-won gains. In Somalia, between 2009 and 2011, the al-Qaeda linked group al-Shabaab controlled most of the country, including significant portions of the capital of Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab gained power following Ethiopia's 2006 military invasion—an invasion tacitly supported by the United States—to rid Mogadishu of the Islamic Courts Union, an Islamist group of warlords. Following the Courts' removal, the group's most radical members reconstituted to become al-Shabaab and eventually seized most of the country. They were pushed out of Mogadishu yet again by U.S.-backed African Union peacekeepers between 2011 and 2013.^a Yet al-Shabaab retains control of a substantial part of Somalia and has sought a presence or mounted major attacks in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.^b

Notes

^a "Somalia Profile—Timeline," *BBC News*, January 4, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094632>; and "Al-Shabab in Somalia," Global Conflict Tracker, Council on Foreign Relations, (accessed January 15, 2019), <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#/conflict/al-shabab-in-somalia>. In fact, the roots of U.S. involvement in Somalia go back even further. The regime of Siad Barre, a major patron of the United States during the Cold War, collapsed in 1991, leading to the collapse of the Somali state and close to three decades of nearly continuous conflict. The Islamic Courts Union established itself in the early 2000s in the aftermath of a failed international effort to provide humanitarian aid, which included the 1993 "Black Hawk Down" incident in which nineteen U.S. servicemembers killed and seventy-two wounded.

^b See International Crisis Group, *Al-Shabaab Five Years After Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2018), <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/265-al-shabaab-five-years-after-westgate.pdf>.

This Task Force's analysis suggests that three key hurdles have hampered previous efforts and need to be overcome to render effective efforts to prevent the underlying conditions of extremism in fragile states: (1) **the lack of a shared understanding of the conditions of extremism**, which has inhibited the development of a cohesive policy framework to guide the activities of agencies in fragile states; (2) in contrast to measures taken to confront terrorists, **efforts to prevent extremism have not been a consistent, sustained priority** for policymakers, and; (3) **U.S. diplomatic, development, and defense tools are not well integrated with one another, nor are they coordinated** with those of international partners. Each of these hurdles merits elaboration.

First, policymakers for the most part still lack a shared understanding of the underlying conditions that make fragile states vulnerable to extremism and strategies for addressing those conditions. As the independent, nonpartisan Fragility Study Group convened by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Center for New American Security, and the United States Institute of Peace concluded in 2016, "across the U.S. government there is no clear or shared view of why, how, and when to engage fragile states."²² This problem is only magnified at the international level and exacerbated by politically-motivated debates about the origins and nature of terrorism.

Yet, over the past two decades, a series of studies has contributed to a growing evidence base on the underlying causes of extremism and violence as well as the types of approaches needed to mitigate their recurrence in fragile states.²³ These insights are known in some parts of the U.S. government and increasingly across the international community. Within the U.S. government, the Stabilization Assistance Review, a new shared policy framework to guide stabilization activities, represents a step forward; it provides a shared definition of stabilization and describes agencies' respective roles. The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development have also launched a *Strategic Prevention Project* to respond to the need for a new approach to fragile states.²⁴ However, their application has been largely confined to development agencies and remains uneven, at best. But when preventing extremism, much more needs to be done to harness lessons learned from disparate fields and integrate them into a coherent and shared policy framework.

To succeed, however, prevention needs to be the primary modality and objective of U.S. and international engagement in priority countries. A new level of political commitment will be needed to elevate prevention as a strategic priority.

Second, the long-term goal of addressing the underlying conditions that enable extremism still fails to rise to the top of the list of U.S. and international strategic priorities. In general, policymakers too often fail to act on early warning analysis and to take the long-term perspective that is needed to address root causes. Short-term imperatives take precedence; donors lose focus and often fail to provide the sustained support and assistance that partners in fragile states need.

Prevention tends not to be a high priority in our bilateral relationships with fragile states. To succeed, however, prevention needs to be the primary modality and objective of U.S. and international engagement in priority countries. A new level of political commitment will be needed to elevate prevention as a strategic priority.

Third, despite some progress toward more coordinated approaches, security, development, humanitarian, and diplomatic stovepipes persist within the U.S. government and among donors. This inhibits their ability to prevent extremism through comprehensive and integrated activities that cut across governance, peacebuilding, health, and other development sectors. Across departments and agencies, U.S. activities in fragile states need to be better prioritized, more closely integrated, or even discontinued to ensure they do not work at cross-purposes. In addition, a lack of coordination among donor governments and international agencies leads to fragmented approaches within the same target country and missed opportunities to pool resources and join forces. New incentives and institutional structures are needed to create greater cohesion and drive concerted action across diplomatic, security, and development systems, both internationally and within the U.S. government.

Across departments and agencies, U.S. activities in fragile states need to be better prioritized, more closely integrated, or even discontinued to ensure they do not work at cross-purposes.

Recommendations for a New Approach

To get ahead of the threat of extremism in fragile states, this Task Force recommends that the United States adopt a shared framework for prevention as a key U.S. national security priority, and launch two new initiatives to facilitate its implementation:

Recommendation 1: Adopt a Shared Framework for Strategic Prevention



To date, the United States has lacked strategic guidance, shared across all government agencies, for engaging *preventively* to address the *underlying* conditions of extremism in fragile states. For prevention to become a key tenet of U.S. foreign policy and to better align the activities of agencies working in fragile states, the United States government must adopt a **shared framework for strategic prevention** to create a common understanding among all agencies of the conditions of extremism and how to mitigate them effectively.

Recommendation 2: Establish a Strategic Prevention Initiative



Second, to operationalize this shared framework and ensure that agencies have the resources, processes, and authorities they need, the Task Force recommends that the U.S. government establish a **Strategic Prevention Initiative** that creates and codifies the capabilities, procedures, authorities, and resources to improve and integrate U.S. efforts to prevent extremism. The Initiative's principal objective should be to promote long-term coordination between agencies in fragile states.

Recommendation 3: Launch a Partnership Development Fund



Third, the United States cannot carry the burden of addressing extremism alone. To galvanize international support for country-led efforts to promote prevention, the Task Force recommends that the United States initiate diplomatic efforts to launch a **Partnership Development Fund**, a new mechanism that can coordinate donor activities and pool donor funds in support of a shared approach to prevention.

III. A Shared Framework for Strategic Prevention

Informed by a review of research, existing programs and policies, and established best practices, this Task Force **recommends that the United States adopt a new, shared framework for strategic prevention.** Informed by lessons learned about what works, the purpose of this framework should be to create a common, government-wide understanding of: (1) the underlying conditions for extremism; (2) how to address those underlying conditions; (3) criteria for where and when the United States should engage preventively; and (4) effective approaches for engaging fragile states preventively.

The Conditions for Extremism: Political and Contextual

First, the framework for strategic prevention should reflect the emerging consensus that the conditions that enable extremism to spread across fragile states in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Near East are both political and context-specific in nature.²⁵

Extremism

As used by this Task Force, “extremism” refers to a wide range of absolutist and totalitarian ideologies. “Extremists” believe in and advocate for replacing existing political institutions with a new political order governed by a doctrine that denies individual liberty and equal rights to citizens of different religious, ethnic, cultural, or economic backgrounds. “Violent extremists” espouse, encourage, and perpetrate violence as they seek to create their extremist political order. Extremism is not unique to any one culture, religion, or geographic region.

The local conditions that fuel extremism vary widely by place and over time. At the same time, despite the variance across contexts, a core pattern is evident across communities where extremism has taken hold: a community tends to become vulnerable to extremism when the compact between society and the state has broken down. When citizens blame the government for their plight and when the bonds across diverse population groups have frayed, violent extremist groups can gain a foothold by exploiting political and economic grievances, advancing a radical ideology, provoking violence, establishing a presence, and offering a viable alternative to the state.²⁶

Fragile states are vulnerable to extremism precisely because a defining feature of fragility is a breakdown in the relationship between the state and society. Communities already alienated by an oppressive, corrupt, or unresponsive government are fertile ground for extremists’ attempts to create alternative political orders. Boko Haram, for example, played on Nigeria’s extrajudicial killings of civilians in 2011 to fan outrage into popular support for their cause: “Nobody is persecuting us like this government. . . nobody is persecuting our religion and our Prophet like it. They use their soldiers, their police, their system of unbelief. . . We are being persecuted. . .”²⁷

Fragility





According to the Fragility Study Group, fragility can be defined as “the absence or breakdown of a social contract between people and their government.” Fragile states suffer from deficits of institutional capacity and political legitimacy that increase the risk of instability and violent conflict and sap the state of its resilience to disruptive shocks.^a Fragility also enables transnational crime, fuels humanitarian crises, and impedes trade and development.

Note

^a William J. Burns, Michele A. Flournoy, and Nancy E. Lindborg, “U.S. Leadership and the Challenge of State Fragility” (Washington, DC: Fragility Study Group, September 2016), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/US-Leadership-and-the-Challenge-of-State-Fragility.pdf>.

The conditions that foster extremism in fragile states can be both internal and externally-driven as well. Seeking influence or access to resources, global and regional powers sometimes intentionally exploit them. At other times, external actors—including donors themselves—unwittingly exacerbate the conditions that foster extremism. Civil wars sometimes spill over borders, affecting neighboring countries and fueling extremism. Challenging as it may be, a comprehensive preventive strategy must therefore assess, address, and, where possible, mitigate the role of external actors in exacerbating these conditions (see figure 7, “The Conditions for Extremism”).

Figure 7. The Conditions for Extremism

	 SENSE OF INJUSTICE	 POLITICAL EXCLUSION	 IDEOLOGICAL SUPPORT	 ORGANIZATIONAL PRESENCE
EXTREMISTS	Cast secular governments as illegitimate, provoke security forces abuse.	Threaten or intimidate nonextremist activists.	Use mosques, schools, and media to proselytize extremism.	Smuggle operatives and weapons into territory.
FRAGILE REGIMES	Govern by patronage, corruption, neglect, and/or repression.	Close political space, imprison nonextremist activists.	Fail to provide schools, leaving space for extremists. Weaken traditional religious authority.	Preside over ineffective or abusive security forces. Tolerate extremists.
INTERNATIONAL ACTORS	Give unconditional security aid and diplomatic cover to abusive regimes.	Prioritize security assistance over political concerns and conditions.	Propagate fundamentalist religious ideologies. Turn a blind eye to citizens funding extremism.	Pour arms into territory. Back unreliable proxies.

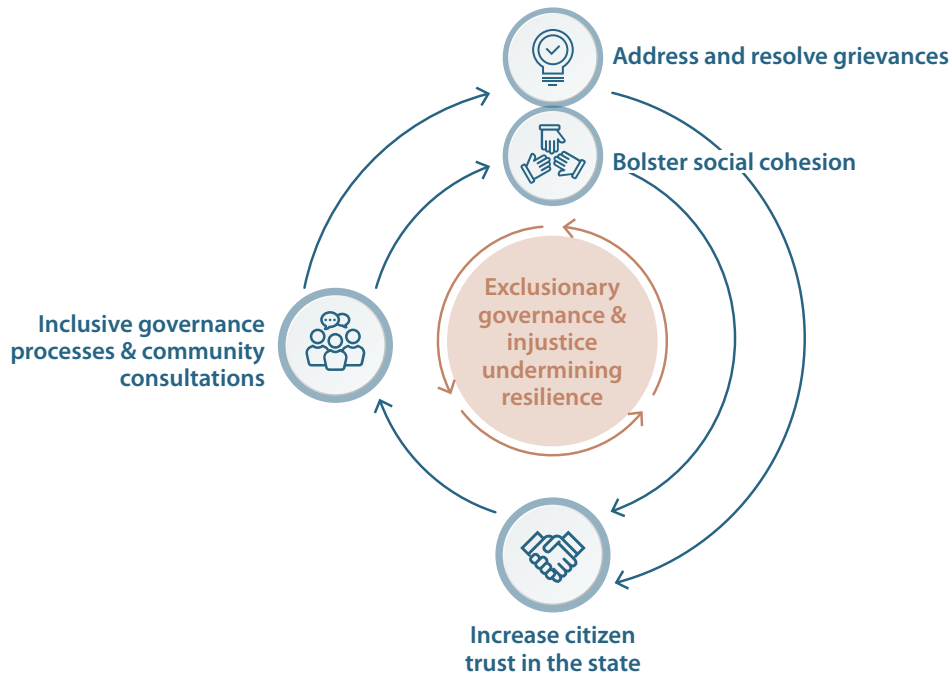
Source: Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, *Beyond the Homeland: Protecting America from Extremism in Fragile States* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, September 2018), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Taskforce-Extremism-Fragile-States-Interim-Report.pdf>.

Addressing the Conditions for Extremism: Country-Led and Inclusive Programs

Second, the framework for strategic prevention should recognize that addressing the political and contextual conditions for extremism will require adaptive programs that empower leaders to strengthen state-society relations and better respond to their citizens' needs. The success of such preventive efforts should be gauged by whether national and local leaders are becoming more widely trusted within a given community or society.

Because the conditions that undermine the legitimacy of a state or spread mistrust in a society are specific to individual contexts, a preventive strategy must be adapted to each country in which it is applied, rather than offer general prescriptions for entire regions. Rebuilding the social compact between a society and the state requires strengthening inclusive, responsive, and accountable political and economic institutions at both the local and the national levels²⁸ (see figure 8, “Building Resilience against Extremism”).

Figure 8. Building Resilience against Extremism



Accountability is important at the local level because, in the short term, it is the timely demonstration of political will to listen and respond to citizens' needs that gives societies their best chance to withstand extremism. Over the longer term, such locally visible “quick wins” need to translate into sustained results—unfulfilled promises could serve to exacerbate grievances and alienation. More important, local accountability is not a viable long-term substitute for national reforms. Local gains can quickly be undermined by a predatory central government, whether through coopting local elites or by allowing security forces to commit abuses (see appendix 5, “Prevention Program and Policy Priorities”).²⁹

The impetus to repair the frayed bonds between state and society must originate from and be sustained by the citizens and leaders of fragile states themselves. Donors cannot inject the political will necessary to undertake such changes. External actors satisfying local needs while the state remains visibly unresponsive do little to alleviate, and could increase, perceptions of injustice.

A Tale of Two Cities: Extremism and Resilience in Tunisia

Sidi Bouzid and Metlaoui are alike in many respects. Both are similarly sized towns in Tunisia's interior, suffer from similar social and economic problems, have a shared tribal heritage, and are centers of political resistance and unrest.^a Yet whereas jihadist preachers gained control of most of Sidi Bouzid's mosques and sent dozens of fighters to fight with ISIS in Syria, jihadists failed to take over a single mosque in Metlaoui and sent only one fighter.

These different experiences with extremism in otherwise similar towns appear to be due to the historic presence of labor unions in Metlaoui. These unions gave the citizens of Metlaoui an outlet for expressing their grievances and a mechanism for taking collective action to seek redress. As a result, resistance to the state has historically been nonviolent. In Sidi Bouzid, by contrast, an absence of strong unions, and of any other way to express discontent, has made grievances against the state more likely to be expressed violently, leaving the town more susceptible to extremist ideology.^b

Unions are not the solution to extremism everywhere. But this example shows that it is the presence of avenues for people to make their concerns known and to act to address them—including through civic participation, informal institutions, and nonviolent action—that addresses the political nature of local grievances and can help prevent extremism.^c

Notes

^a See Aaron Zelin, "Tunisian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria," Policy Note 55 Washington Institute for Near East Policy, (New York: 2018), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyNote55-Zelin.pdf>.

^b See Michael Marcusa, "Radicalism on the Periphery: History, Collective Memory, and the Cultural Resonance of Jihadist Ideology in Tunisia." *Comparative Politics* 51, no. 2 (2019): 177–197.

^c See Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

Strategic Criteria for Prevention

Third, the preventive strategy should establish and follow clear strategic criteria for U.S. engagement in key vulnerable countries. Through even moderate investments in prevention that are strategic and well-timed, the United States can help keep key fragile countries on a path toward sustained stability and development.

Preventing extremism in fragile states is not a goal that can or should be pursued everywhere. Whether the United States should consider a given fragile state as a candidate for a preventive approach should be based on clear criteria, such as:

- **Scope of the threat:** The likelihood that extremist groups might attempt to gain support in a country due to, for example, proximity to other extremist-occupied territory, porous borders, ungoverned spaces, or local conflicts.
- **Strategic significance:** A country's or region's strategic significance to the United States.
- **Opportunity for impact:** The emergence of opportunities to affect positive change in conditions that make the country vulnerable to extremism, including a regime's commitment to prevention.
- **Leverage:** The amount of leverage available to push for reforms.

In line with the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2017, the United States should prioritize prevention in countries where extremist groups show signs of making headway, where the emergence of extremism would pose a larger strategic threat to U.S. interests, and in which there are opportunities to support responsible national and local leaders. Gathering the data needed to identify priority countries based on such criteria in a timely manner will require the United States to deploy its intelligence community and diplomatic missions, as well as make use of existing tools that have been developed to identify country trends and risks, to systematically monitor fragile states. Undertaking timely and sustained preventive action on the basis of such early warning analysis, will require leadership at the highest levels of the U.S. government to ensure that agencies strike a better balance between preventive action and crisis response.

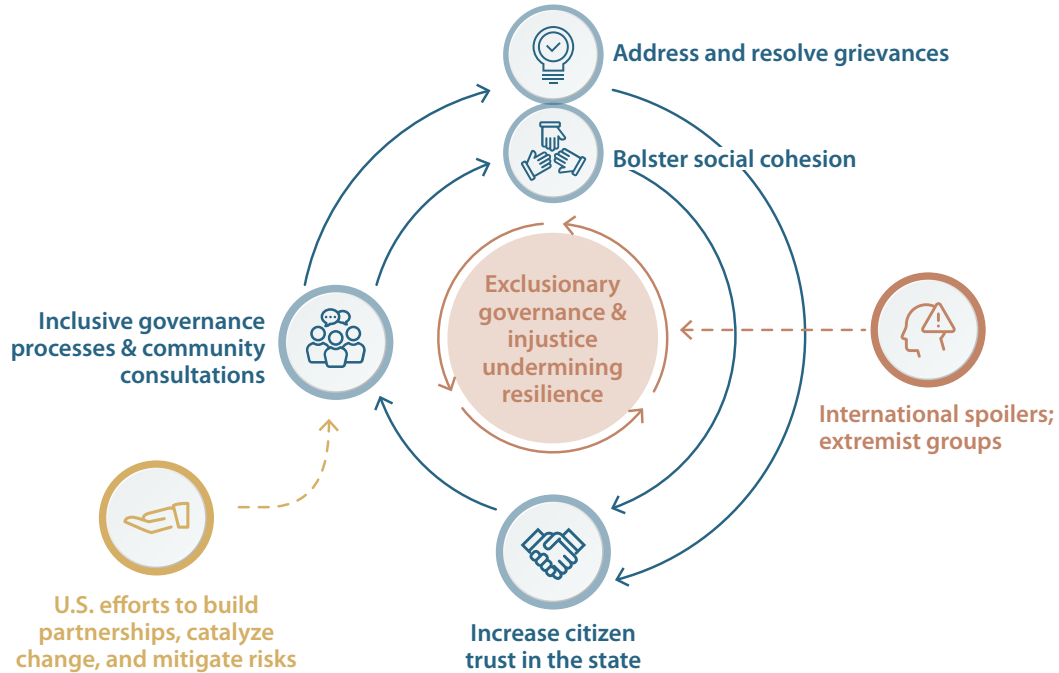
Undertaking timely and sustained preventive action on the basis of such early warning analysis, will require leadership at the highest levels of the U.S. government to ensure that agencies strike a better balance between preventive action and crisis response.

Preventive Approaches in Fragile States: Partnerships, Opportunities, Risks

Finally, the strategy should recognize that in those countries where the United States chooses to prioritize prevention, sustained partnerships will be needed to affect change. More often, however, it will be necessary to seize opportunities for progress as they present themselves while recognizing the risk that its own engagement—or that of other international actors—might make the situation in fragile states worse (see figure 9, “U.S. Role in Building Resilience against Extremism”).

The United States should base the decision to engage in fragile states on whether a fragile state's political environment is conducive to establishing the foundations for inclusive political and economic governance. In a select few countries, the United States may find partners at the national and local level—inside government or civil society—that are committed to preventing extremism. In such countries, comprehensive and inclusive prevention partnerships offer the best chance of reinforcing locally-led inclusive political processes. As the 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy notes, U.S. efforts have the most impact where “reformers are committed to tackling their economic and political challenges” and local actors provide input.³⁰

Figure 9. U.S. Role in Building Resilience against Extremism



The compact model pioneered by the U.S. government’s Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which provides long-term grants to alleviate poverty in well-governed low- and middle-income countries, offers a foundation on which to build compact-based partnerships with countries that are vulnerable to extremism. Under a compact-based agreement with vulnerable countries, donors and other partners should work together to identify a package of shared goals and respective responsibilities for achieving those goals. This approach is already gaining currency.³¹

A preventive strategy should also recognize that fragile states demonstrate a broad spectrum of governance challenges. For some, the promise of long-term partnerships with the United States may help incentivize more responsible governance.

Yet, unlike the MCC, which focuses on fostering economic growth, these partnerships should address the underlying condition of extremism. Host governments and donors would be required to agree on a plan for rebuilding state-society relations. These plans would be based on genuinely inclusive consultations and set priorities widely accepted by all stakeholders, including civil society. Partnerships with fragile states need to be adaptive, to account for limited administrative capacity in partner countries, and to place greater emphasis on learning than on rigid, externally imposed benchmarks.

A preventive strategy should also recognize that fragile states demonstrate a broad spectrum of governance challenges. For some, the promise of long-term partnerships with the United States may help incentivize more responsible governance. In many places, however, opportunities for partnership will be limited and different approaches will be necessary.

Where national-level partnerships and countrywide progress are not possible, the United States and the international community should seize opportunities wherever they can. In some cases, this may mean seeking out and engaging leaders who show some commitment to addressing the underlying conditions fueling extremism, wherever and whenever such partners can be found. Engagement with provincial governments, municipalities, community leaders, business owners, civil society, and nongovernmental organizations, as well as women, youth, religious leaders, and others, should seek to empower such actors to build coalitions for reform.

In other cases, opportunities for prevention and progress may arise quickly and unexpectedly. For that reason, the United States should systematically monitor these countries. Long before such opportunities present themselves, particularly around national elections and peace agreements, the United States should have contingency plans in place to swiftly pivot to building national and international coalitions to foster commitment to strengthen resilience against extremism. Deepening our engagement with and strengthening our understanding of local communities will allow the United States to have greater impact at these critical moments.

Whenever the United States engages with fragile states, whether for the purpose of prevention or to achieve other objectives, it must be aware of the political risks and trade-offs involved across all U.S. government activities. This will require applying assessments of the political environments of fragile states to all forms of U.S. assistance, especially security cooperation.

Moreover, the risk posed by other external actors, such as those that support the spread of extremist ideology, also should be considered and addressed. Where possible, the United States should seek to cooperate with other outside actors, including its competitors, to reduce fragility and extremism.

Managing the Role of Strategic Competition in the Spread of Extremism

Despite concerns that Chinese investments are “predatory” and pose a “significant threat to U.S. national security interests,”^a the United States and China have at times cooperated to reduce the risk of conflict or the growth of extremist capabilities that would be detrimental to both countries’ interests. For instance, the two governments collaborated in Nigeria to prevent nuclear material from falling into the hands of extremist groups such as Boko Haram.^b

Notes

^a John Bolton, “Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton on the Trump Administration’s New Africa Strategy” (presentation at the Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC, December 13, 2018), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/>.

^b Aaron Mehta, “How the US and China Collaborated to get Nuclear Material out of Nigeria—and Away from Terrorist Groups,” *Defense News*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2019/01/14/how-the-us-and-china-collaborated-to-get-nuclear-material-out-of-nigeria-and-away-from-terrorist-groups/>.

IV. U.S. Strategic Prevention Initiative

Operationalizing the framework for prevention prescribed above requires a coherent U.S. government approach and adequate capabilities, procedures, and resources. If the United States has not itself prioritized prevention or aligned its own activities around a preventive strategy, it will face difficulty having direct impact on the ground or marshaling the support of other donors. Political, budgetary, and bureaucratic impediments—from fractured funding and oversight to lack of a high-level political mandate and the need to reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy and development—impede the ability of the United States to lead these efforts. These obstacles must be addressed.

Therefore, to ensure that the framework for strategic prevention is elevated to a national security priority and organize U.S. government activities around it, the Task Force recommends **Congress authorize and fund, and the Executive Branch implement, a comprehensive Strategic Prevention Initiative**, which will include the following actions:

- **Establishing clear roles and responsibilities for departments and agencies to promote long-term coordination in fragile states**
- **Providing agencies with authorities and resources needed to carry out a preventive strategy effectively**
- **Developing a plan to mitigate the political risks of providing security and foreign assistance to fragile states**

The key elements of this new Strategic Prevention Initiative should include:

- **The Congress should authorize:** the **State Department** to be the overall lead for establishing U.S. foreign policy and advancing diplomatic and political efforts; the **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)** to lead the implementation of civilian assistance programs; the **Treasury Department** to lead U.S. contributions to multilateral entities; and the **Department of Defense** to support these efforts as needed under a new U.S. prevention strategy. Additional departments, including the Commerce Department, the Department of Justice, and the Development Finance Corporation, should also be assigned clear roles and responsibilities. The Strategic Prevention Initiative should build on existing efforts to improve U.S. engagement with fragile states, including the Stabilization Assistance Review and the Strategic Prevention Project.
- **The Executive Branch should designate a new Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Prevention to coordinate the policies and activities of agencies.** The National Security Council should work with the intelligence community to establish an early warning and risk management system to identify priority prevention countries based on clear criteria and an assessment of both risks and opportunities for engagement.
- **Congress should provide new authorities for adaptive funding of prevention efforts in fragile states in exchange for greater accountability to Congress.** Congress should authorize the creation of a new account to support sustained, multiyear investments in prevention programs, based on an agreement between Congress and the Executive Branch on specific countries to be prioritized. These authorities should be flexible

enough to allow adaptive implementation of programs that are responsive to evolving conditions on the ground. The Executive Branch should closely consult with Congress throughout the program planning, implementation, and evaluation phases concerning challenges and results.

- **Congress and the Executive Branch should empower U.S. diplomats and development practitioners in the field to focus on longer-term prevention goals.** Chiefs of mission and USAID Mission Directors need the ability to plan, experiment with, and adapt innovative prevention strategies to local conditions over sufficiently long time horizons. Building on USAID’s strong presence on the ground, field-based staff need the flexibility to engage widely outside of embassy compounds to reach, work with, and support the actors that know the local contexts best. Congress and the Executive Branch should give Foreign Service Officers greater leeway to take risks to test promising approaches, grant the Defense Department the authorities it needs to more effectively support U.S. civilians in the field, and undertake acquisition reforms that will allow for more rapid and flexible grant-making. Congress should work with the Executive Branch to support a strategy for recruiting, training, and retaining personnel with the skills to implement prevention strategies, including expertise in early warning and political economy analysis, provision of technical advice to partner governments, and community-led prevention activities.
- **The State Department should request, and Congress should appropriate, adequate funding for programs and capabilities that are critical to addressing the underlying conditions of extremism and violence in fragile states.** The United States has often under-resourced capabilities that have proven effective at reinforcing state-society relations (see appendix 5 for illustrative programming that might be required in a prevention country).
- **Congress should require the State and Defense Departments to develop and implement a plan to better align U.S. security cooperation with prevention priorities, and improve security sector governance, in vulnerable countries.** Building on the 2018 Quadrennial Security Sector Assistance Review’s call to better tailor security assistance in fragile states, the plan should consider (a) providing all security sector assistance to fragile states through five- to ten-year compacts based on a joint strategy to improve the country’s security sector and subject to oversight from civilian authorities and civil society; (b) restricting the types of security assistance available for fragile states with poor security sector governance, unless exempted by senior officials; (c) establishing a security sector reform endowment to support partner-proposed initiatives to build institutional capacity or undertake reforms; and (d) supporting and expanding existing accountability efforts by appropriately funding Defense Department assessment, monitoring, and evaluation programs (AM&E), mandating an AM&E program for State Department–managed security assistance, designating an Assistant Secretary–level official at the Defense Department to oversee the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and designating a lead office for coordinating all State Department–managed security assistance. (See appendix 6, “Aligning Security Sector Cooperation with Prevention,” for more detail.)
- **Congress should consider establishing a bipartisan, bicameral prevention Working Group composed of Members serving on relevant authorizing and appropriating committees.** Congress has a vital role to play in enabling the adaptive, multiyear, and accountable investments that are necessary to promote prevention. The Working Group could hold joint hearings, draft and cosponsor legislation, and meet to discuss issues relevant to U.S. prevention programming.

V. Partnership Development Fund

The United States cannot carry the burden of preventing the underlying conditions of extremism alone. U.S. partners and international donors are increasingly exhibiting willingness and commitment to support stabilization in the Middle East and the Sahel. But the institutional and financial framework that is needed to catalyze a coordinated approach to and concerted investments in prevention is currently lacking. A new vehicle is needed to bring donors together around a shared approach to prevention.

Innovative new pooled funds and mechanisms designed specifically for fragile states exist, but they focus overwhelmingly on short-term crisis response and are, for the most part, not designed to effect enduring change. The scope of the challenge of preventing extremism in fragile states, together with the long-term commitments and country-led solutions that are needed to accomplish that objective, require a new international coordination and financing mechanism to support long-term prevention partnerships in those countries. Furthermore, with sufficient buy-in from fragile states and the international community, such a mechanism could also be a powerful diplomatic vehicle to limit the ability of outside actors to undermine prevention efforts.

To meet these needs, this Task Force recommends that **Congress authorize, and the State Department and the USAID lead, a diplomatic effort to establish the Partnership Development Fund, an innovative international coordination and financing mechanism to align programs and activities and raise and disburse funding to country-led, inclusive programs that address the underlying conditions of extremism.** (See appendix 4, “A Global Fund for Prevention,” for a more detailed proposal.) These efforts should build on the twenty-plus years of U.S. experience in leading multilateral global health and other impactful development efforts, and should leverage the unique convening power of the United States.

- **The mandate of the Fund should be to support five- to ten-year partnerships based on comprehensive country-led plans for strengthening relations between citizens and the state.** Unlike traditional development and stabilization programs, it would provide resources for country-developed and -led programs and plans to prevent extremism. Programming priorities should be based on local assessments of vulnerabilities and could include a wide range of sectoral or multisectoral activities designed to achieve this goal, from short-term stabilization initiatives to longer-term efforts to empower marginalized groups such as women and youth, to inclusive dialogues, justice sector reform, community policing, civilian security, and accountable and fair service delivery.
- **The Fund should be structured as a partnership between international donors, fragile states, affected communities in those states, civil society, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.** It should be supported by a small and nimble secretariat. The Fund should also be structured to optimize the potential for **public-private partnerships** that could facilitate contributions and innovations from foundations and other private actors, including for locally led proactive development.
- **The United States should contribute no more than 25 percent of the Fund’s overall operating budget.** U.S. contributions to the Fund should be contingent on contributions from other major donors, the private sector, and fragile states themselves.

- **An inclusive board or steering committee should be created to oversee the Fund’s policy and strategic decisions, including approving funding decisions.** The United States could seek to sit on the board as part of an equal number of developed countries and fragile states, with representation from the private sector, civil society, and nongovernmental organizations. USAID’s Associate Administrator should represent the U.S. government on the board of the Fund.
- **The Fund should establish realistic eligibility criteria for candidate countries that are adapted to fragile states and based on governance, inclusivity, civic participation, and transparency metrics.**
- **Funding should be provided through long-term, adaptive, and compact-based agreements comprising shared assessments, plans, and monitoring and evaluation, all supported by a strong and country-led coordination mechanism.**
- **The Fund should foster a rigorous culture of design, monitoring, and evaluation to generate more consistent and evidence-based standards of practice that improve the impact of programs to strengthen state-society relations and prevent extremism.**

While beyond the scope of this report, there are additional steps the United States should take as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy to strengthen the capacity of existing international and regional organizations—including the United Nations, the World Bank, and other key actors—to address the underlying conditions of extremism.³²

Demonstration Project

In addition to requesting this study, Congress has appropriated funds “to implement the Plan . . . through a demonstration project.” It is the recommendation of this Task Force that those funds be used to demonstrate the viability of a Partnership Development Fund by establishing a provisional pooled fund, to be administered by an existing multilateral institution.

The immediate availability of monies to be put into a Partnership Development Fund should be a signal to other international donors, philanthropic leaders, and private sector innovators of U.S. commitment to the effort and make it more likely that they will choose to participate. In this way, the funds appropriated for this project can be used to demonstrate the viability of an internationally coordinated prevention strategy and the Fund as the mechanism for implementing that strategy. Furthermore, to test the effectiveness of the Fund’s approach to prevention, this Task Force recommends that the monies it makes available to a provisional pooled fund be used to issue grants to one to three countries for pilot projects.

However, in keeping with Congress’ directive that “such funds shall be made available to the maximum extent practicable on a cost-matching basis from sources other than the United States Government,” funds should be disbursed only once other international donors have pledged contributions.

VI. Conclusion

A new, comprehensive strategy for reducing extremism in fragile states can bring coherence to and amplify existing U.S. and international initiatives while harnessing favorable political winds. Three dynamics point in the right direction.

First, the U.S. government has already begun to work toward more unified, interagency approaches to this long-term fight. Second, bipartisan agreement is emerging in Congress on the need to change how the United States engages in fragile states. Third, new opportunities have arisen for burden sharing and international collaboration.

It is time to build on this progress and adopt a new paradigm for dealing with a threat that has plagued the world and impeded stability and prosperity for far too long. For a preventive strategy to succeed, it will need to outpace attempts by extremist groups to undermine fragile states. The time to put a preventive strategy in place is now.

Appendix 1

Authorizing Legislation

H.R. 244—CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017

Public Law 115-31, May 4, 2017

DIVISION J—DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017

FRAGILE STATES AND EXTREMISM

SEC. 7080.

(a) **FUNDING.**—Funds appropriated by this Act under the heading “Economic Support Fund” that are made available for assistance for Syria, Iraq, and Somalia shall be made available to carry out the purposes of this section, subject to prior consultation with, and the regular notification procedures of, the Committees on Appropriations.

(b) **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.**—Funds made available pursuant to subsection (a) shall be transferred to, and merged with, funds appropriated by this Act under the heading “United States Institute of Peace” for the purposes of developing a comprehensive plan (the Plan) to prevent the underlying causes of extremism in fragile states in the Sahel, Horn of Africa, and the Near East: *Provided*, That such funds are in addition to amounts otherwise available to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) under title I of this Act: *Provided further*, That USIP shall consult with the Committees on Appropriations prior to developing such Plan: *Provided further*, That USIP shall also consult with relevant United States Government agencies, foreign governments, and civil society, as appropriate, in developing the Plan.

(c) **DEMONSTRATION PROJECT.**—Funds made available by subsection (a) shall be made available to implement the Plan required by subsection (b) through a demonstration project, consistent with the requirements described in section 7073(d)(2) of S. 3117 (as introduced in the Senate on June 29, 2016): *Provided*, That such funds shall be made available to the maximum extent practicable on a cost-matching basis from sources other than the United States Government.

Appendix 2

The Conditions for Extremism

(From the Interim Report of the Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, *Beyond the Homeland: Protecting America from Extremism in Fragile States*)

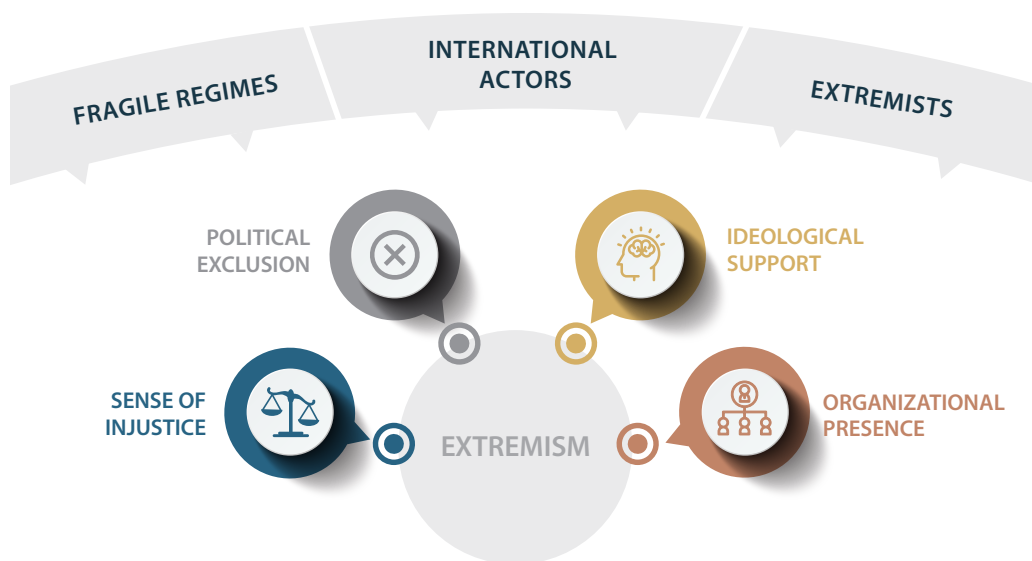
The new strategic environment demands a new U.S. strategy to reduce the ability of extremism to take root and spread in fragile states. This strategy requires a common understanding of why and how extremism emerges. Disagreements over the root causes of extremism have bedeviled U.S. and international policy; the time has come to move past them.

The Task Force has focused on the conditions that give rise to violent extremism in fragile states and the actors that reinforce and exploit these conditions. This focus conveys the importance of environmental factors in addition to individual motivations, looks beyond any single cause of extremism, and highlights the complex and dynamic interactions that make a society vulnerable to extremism.

The Local Conditions for Extremism

Extremism is most likely to emerge in fragile states when the following conditions prevail: (1) citizens experience or see injustices perpetrated by the state; (2) significant segments of society are excluded from political processes; (3) extremist ideology gains support; and (4) extremist organizations establish a presence (see figure 10, “Conditions for Extremism”). These conditions are shaped by the local context and thus vary significantly from one context to another.

Figure 10. Conditions for Extremism



Sense of Injustice

In fragile states, reasons for frustration abound: poverty, unemployment, economic inequality and exclusion, violence, and conflict can be rampant. But these conditions alone do not push individuals to join extremist movements.³³ Instead, **extremism is enabled by the belief that**

existing indignities and suffering are the direct result of poor, undemocratic, or predatory governance. This sense of injustice aligns with a core tenet of extremist political ideology: rejection of the state in favor of a new political order.

In Iraq, ISIS gained prominence by presenting itself as the defender of Sunnis marginalized by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shi'a-dominated government.³⁴ Abusive security forces are a major factor contributing to extremism among youth in Africa.³⁵

Political Exclusion

Even when trust in government is low, as it is throughout the Middle East and much of Africa, support for extremists remains limited.³⁶ **Extremism appeals less to citizens who can advocate for their interests and believe their appeals might be heeded than to citizens who believe they have no future opportunities.** Where governments extend basic services and economic opportunities (even if they are limited) to the entirety of their societies, and where citizens are free to engage in civic and political organizations, extremists struggle to attract followers.³⁷ In Tunisia's mining basin, labor unions helped build community resilience against extremism.³⁸ In Syria, ISIS struggled to penetrate regions such as Aleppo and Deraa that have traditions of vibrant civil society and political activism.³⁹

When extremists provide the only viable option for change, they gain traction. Tunisian foreign fighters were more likely to come from parts of the country where labor unions were less embedded in the community. And Libya, a completely closed society under Muammar el-Qaddafi's rule, easily fell prey to violent extremism.

Ideological Support

The move to extremist violence can be facilitated, or justified, by exposure to extremist ideology. **Extremist ideology, even when peaceful, can support the same objectives as violent extremist groups: rejection of the secular nation-state, hostility to Western values, and strict public morality.** Individuals in societies where (even nonviolent) extremism is prevalent are more likely to favor these objectives, particularly if people have been exposed to extremist ideology from a young age. They may also be relatively easily persuaded to pursue these objectives violently.

Egyptian foreign fighters, for example, tend to come from religious fundamentalist families.⁴⁰ Analysts have attributed Algeria's paroxysms of extremist violence in the 1990s to the influx, three decades earlier, of foreign teachers, many of whom held extreme religious views.⁴¹

Organizational Presence

The presence of an organizational infrastructure can make it easier for extremists to recruit, inspire, and direct followers. Oftentimes, such organizational capacity comes from outside a country's borders. Iraqi extremists penetrated eastern Syria after the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, laying the foundations for ISIS's later emergence.⁴² In Yemen, the arrival of Saudi fighters in 2009 led to the formation of AQAP.⁴³

In other contexts, violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and al-Shabaab in Somalia emerge organically, in response to local conditions, but their leadership might draw heavily on the brand, tactics, connections, or structures of a larger international organization.⁴⁴

Actors Reinforcing and Exploiting the Conditions for Extremism

These **conditions that fuel extremism in fragile states are reinforced and exploited by key actors: extremist groups, fragile regimes, and international actors.**

Extremist Groups

Once extremists establish a presence, they reinforce the dynamics that led to their initial emergence. Their presence highlights the state's inability to provide security, their propaganda exposes citizens to extremist ideology, and their activity provokes harsh security responses, all of which stoke perceptions of injustice.⁴⁵ Additionally, extremists resort to intimidation and violence to carve out power and influence; for instance, they may target civil society activists.⁴⁶ And once extremists have established a foothold in one community, they can more easily spread to neighboring communities, regions, and countries.

Once extremists establish a presence, they reinforce the dynamics that led to their initial emergence. Their presence highlights the state's inability to provide security, their propaganda exposes citizens to extremist ideology, and their activity provokes harsh security responses, all of which stoke perceptions of injustice.

Fragile Regimes

Predatory regimes in fragile state put their own survival and enrichment ahead of their people's needs. They cling to power through a combination of patronage, repression, and neglect.

Patronage and corruption buy off the local elites and security forces. Repression helps keep a restive population in check temporarily, but it also fuels the sense of injustice that extremists exploit, particularly among prison inmates.⁴⁷ Moreover, when states criminalize dissent, their first targets are often the moderate religious voices and opposition movements that would otherwise serve as alternatives to extremism.

Predatory regimes in fragile state put their own survival and enrichment ahead of their people's needs. They cling to power through a combination of patronage, repression, and neglect.

Fragile regimes may choose to neglect peripheral regions of the country, creating a void that extremism can fill. Where states fail to provide education, religious institutions, or a sense of shared national identity, extremists have room to spread their ideology.⁴⁸ Where the central government neglects security, extremists easily enter from abroad or emerge organically from within the neglected areas. And sometimes fragile states deliberately tolerate an extremist presence, either to counterbalance some other domestic or foreign threat or to attract international security assistance.⁴⁹ Peripheral, historically marginalized regions, such as northern Mali and Western Yemen, are particularly vulnerable to extremists seeking exploit grievances and broaden conflict.

International Actors

Whether intentionally or inadvertently, both great and regional powers can contribute to the fertile environment for extremism and facilitate those that would exploit the environment. Engaged in strategic competitions, international actors may seek to secure fragile states' support, resources, or territory by offering them aid, investment, or weapons. Even when done for legitimate reasons, such as defeating terrorist networks, unconditional assistance can perpetuate if not bolster predatory regimes. **Too often, international actors pursue their own interests with little regard for the negative impact they have on societies vulnerable to extremism.**

Regional powers can also help spread extremist ideology, either as a means of gaining influence in the societies of fragile states or to accommodate their own internal constituencies. Some Arab states have funded fundamentalist mosques, madrassas, textbooks, or media that reach fragile states. Others turn a blind eye to their own citizens' private contributions to extremist proselytizing and, at times, even to violent extremist groups.

Occasionally, outside powers will back proxies in a fragile state's civil war. This intervention can exacerbate the conflict and create space and time for extremists to enter. It can also lead to foreign weapons making their way into the hands of extremists. The most egregious cases are states that, in pursuit of their political agendas, directly arm violent extremist groups, as Iran has done across the Middle East and into Africa.

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Appendix 3

Principles for Preventing Violent Extremism

Because the drivers of violent extremism are political and context-specific, citizens and their leaders in fragile states are best-positioned to lead efforts to address fragility as an underlying condition. A U.S. preventive strategy should therefore focus on what the United States can do to identify and empower these local and national actors to address the concerns of their citizens in vulnerable communities. The preventive strategy should emphasize *how* to engage fragile states over *what* to do in each country.

Key lessons have emerged from two decades of international experience in supporting national and local actors in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, and elsewhere around the world. Few of these principles are new, although their application by U.S. agencies and international actors in fragile states remains uneven at best. The following eleven principles should be integrated into a new U.S. policy framework to guide U.S. policy and foreign assistance programs and to help integrate U.S. diplomacy, development, and defense efforts into more coherent approaches at the country level in fragile states.

Intervene Early

Timely preventive engagement in fragile states, before extremist violence has spread, is more likely to have a sustained impact and is more cost-effective than downstream counterterrorism efforts. Once grievances have become widely entrenched, it becomes more difficult to find common ground and build consensus for strategies to reduce the risk of violence. Timely action requires a political commitment to prioritizing prevention. It also requires the capacity to closely monitor the specific risks of violence, and to identify responses that are adapted to the local context. Prevention efforts must be directly targeted to regions at highest risk, particularly border and periphery areas where exclusion tends to be more pronounced. An emerging international best practice for international actors and governments in fragile states is to enhance awareness among development, security, and diplomatic communities of the risks and impacts of violence in addition to providing early warning.

Preventing Violence in Niger

Niger's High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace, an early warning office that reports directly to the president, relies on a network of local and community actors who report back to the central government when signs of heightened tension arise in a particular region or community. The office facilitates early action through close coordination with ministries, including security actors. Its capacity for rapid intervention has been key to preventing violence in Niger.

Support Country-Led Solutions

Because the drivers of violent extremism are context-specific, leaders in fragile states—whether at the national or local level, inside or outside government—should take the lead on prevention efforts. Over two decades of international engagement in fragile states demonstrates a hard-earned lesson: externally imposed solutions and timelines do not lead to sustainable progress. Instead, external actors are most likely to be successful when they support the efforts of national and local leaders who are committed to prevention, and when they use their leverage to ensure that all actors adhere to fundamental checks and balances against abuses of power, including human rights violations and endemic corruption. Tools to facilitate international support for country-led solutions include country-led assessments of the risks of violent extremism; inclusively developed plans that form the basis for partnership with international actors; and compact-based agreements between donors and fragile states on the terms of their partnership.

The Funding Facility for Stability in Iraq

At the request of the Iraqi prime minister, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established the Funding Facility for Stabilization in June 2015 to help prevent the resurgence of extremist violence in cities and districts liberated from ISIS. Priorities were set by the Iraqi authorities, which are directly responsible for stabilizing areas. As soon as a newly liberated area is declared safe and local authorities have identified priorities, UNDP uses fast-track procedures to bring local contractors on the ground, usually within weeks. More than 95 percent of all stabilization projects are done through the local private sector employing local labor. The impact has been significant; half of the nearly 6 million Iraqis who were displaced during the fighting have returned to their homes and started to rebuild their lives.

Source: United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), 259.

Promote Inclusive Political Processes and Empower Women and Youth

Numerous studies have shown that political exclusion can fuel grievances and spark conflict and extremist violence. Fostering inclusive political processes and political reforms is essential to preventing extremism. Studies have shown that women's leadership, political representation,⁵⁰ equal treatment, and physical security⁵¹ are likewise crucial to making societies more inclusive, peaceful, and resilient in the face of violent extremism. In addition, half of the global population is under the age of twenty-four and the role of young people as engaged citizens and peacebuilders has increasingly been recognized. According to the 2015 United Nations Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security (SCR 2250), youth represent “a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and prosperity.”

Inclusive Programs to Combat Extremism in Morocco

In Morocco, the government has trained women as “spiritual guides” to lead prayers in mosques. This training is designed to help combat extremist messages, while leveraging the sacred role of women in families and communities.

Source: United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

Integrate Development, Diplomacy, and Defense within a Coherent Approach

Preventing extremist violence is rarely the only objective of U.S. and international actors when they engage with fragile states. But too often, security, political, and development challenges are tackled separately instead of in relation to one another.⁵² Bureaucratic impediments provide disincentives for more effective and coordinated action; government and international agencies are divided into silos and mandates and funding are allotted only for sector specific activities. These disconnected approaches inhibit the ability of actors to address violent extremism’s core drivers through comprehensive approaches that integrate activities on projects such as service delivery, good governance, or security sector reform.

Interagency Coordination in Kunar Province, Afghanistan

According to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, success in reducing the level of violence in Kunar Province can be attributed in large part to “a willingness and commitment from [all] actors to work together in very close collaboration.” The partnership between the military and USAID was described as “unusually close.” As a result of this collaboration, USAID, in coordination with Afghan provincial and district governors, was able to plan projects prior to the operation that were implemented about ten days after clearing, with remarkable speed. USAID staff were described as “repositories of knowledge” by their military counterparts, and that knowledge enabled the U.S. commander in this region to conduct more effective stabilization operations.

Source: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan,” (May 2018), 207, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-18-48-LL.pdf>.

Promote an Efficient International Division of Labor

Coordination among international donors and fragile states is essential to achieving sustained results in those countries. When the United States stands united with like-minded partners in fragile states, we have far more effective leverage over our strategic competitors and over domestic actors in those countries. Coordinated engagement reduces the administrative and

coordination burden on already frail institutions. Pooling donor resources for specific fragile states under an international financing mechanism would help build strong and visible international coalitions for prevention; increase alignment among development actors leading prevention programs; improve coordination among development, humanitarian, security, and diplomacy actors; and promote comprehensive solutions at scale, rather than project-based interventions.⁵³

Preventing a Recurrence of Conflict in Burundi

Following the end of the Burundian Civil War in 2005, the creation of a UN Peacebuilding Commission helped foster coordination between peacekeeping and development actors in Burundi. The Commission helped avert a return to civil war in that country despite violence following a contested presidential election in 2015.

Source: United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

Work for Quick Wins. . . but Commit to Sustained, Realistic Timelines

Addressing the underlying drivers of extremism is a generational task; governance and development challenges tend to be deeply-rooted. Sustained timelines are necessary to achieve durable results that continue beyond the span of donor attention, particularly budget and policymaking processes. Our diplomats and aid workers need the flexibility to undertake longer-term approaches; inconsistent resource flows can cripple effective action but are common across donors. Instead, addressing extremism's root causes should be viewed as a step-by-step process that requires identifying realistic "quick wins" as well as longer-term reforms to strengthen state-society relations. Quick wins can create confidence in fragile states' long-term commitments, by showing citizens and donors that change is possible. Identifying fast, achievable opportunities for progress can buy time for deep-seated changes that can take decades to accomplish.⁵⁴

Plan Colombia

Under Plan Colombia, the U.S. government offered a \$10 billion aid package to Colombia that was successfully sustained over three U.S. administrations. With this continual level of support from the United States, Colombian president Alvaro Uribe had the resources and political capital he needed to launch a new "democratic security" policy that sought to reassert the state's control over large parts of the country that were held by either right-wing paramilitary

forces or left-wing guerrilla groups. This effort included creating effective police forces to hold territorial gains and providing social and economic justice to strengthen the government's legitimacy, particularly in parts of the country that had long been alienated from government authority. As the Fragility Study Group concluded in its 2016 report, "through decades of engagement, the United States created a strategic, systemic, selective, and sustained partnership with Colombia, resulting in a much more stable and prosperous country."

Source: Burns, Michele A. Flournoy, and Nancy E. Lindborg, "U.S. Leadership and the Challenge of State Fragility" (Washington, DC, Fragility Study Group, September 2016), 14, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/US-Leadership-and-the-Challenge-of-State-Fragility.pdf>.

Be Flexible and Adaptive

Not only are the conditions of violent extremism in fragile states context-specific, but progress in tackling those conditions is rarely linear. Extremist groups are increasingly adaptable. Consequently, the United States and other international donors must prioritize and execute programs in these countries with corresponding flexibility. The specific context of each country must therefore drive the course of action for the United States and the international community, who should expect the context to change over time. This does not mean that the U.S. and the international community should abandon efforts to hold themselves accountable or achieve durable results. It does mean, however, that rigid, predetermined, or unrealistic outcomes—such as earmarked requirements—are unlikely to succeed. Simplified financial management and procurement procedures are needed to improve the speed and flexibility of aid delivery in fragile contexts.

Adaptive Management in Tunisia

USAID's Business Reform and Competitiveness Project in Tunisia, a three-year job creation program, initially sought to create jobs in Tunisia by offering pre-employment training to educated graduates who lacked common soft skills. The failure of these efforts to deliver expected results led the team to implement a more adaptive approach by re-assessing local needs, relying more on local actors to facilitate relationships with local enterprises, and integrating monitoring and evaluation teams into the program management structure. The project re-oriented toward an approach that provided technical assistance for employers to access existing market demand through job-fairs, pre-employment screening, and more carefully defined hiring needs. The program generated ten thousand new jobs, 35 percent of which were filled by women.

Source: Jim Defay, "Adaptive Management in the Context of Job Creation, Tunisian Business Reform, and Competitiveness" (case study submitted to the 2016 CLA Case Competition, Washington, DC).

Incentivize Mutual Accountability in Countries That Are Committed to Prevention

Rather than impose predetermined benchmarks and conditions on fragile states from the outside—an approach that has repeatedly failed in the past—a “mutual accountability” framework can allow donors and partners that are committed to long-term reforms to coalesce around a package of shared goals and respective responsibilities for achieving those goals. Through compact-based agreements that reflect this principle of mutual accountability, donors, recipient countries and civil society actors can hold each other accountable for delivering targeted, agreed-on components, be it sustained funding for programs, or policy reforms. This mutual accountability framework underpins Millennium Challenge Corporation compacts and has informed new partnerships with fragile states like Somalia under the 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, a set of internationally agreed-upon best practices on how to engage effectively in these countries. To promote prevention in fragile states, a mutual accountability framework should span multiple years; be adaptable to changing circumstances on the ground; promote risk tolerance; involve an inclusive set of nongovernmental actors, including women and youth; and be premised on a preexisting political commitment to prevention, like some of the steps taken by Indonesia to reduce the risks of conflict in that country, as well as building sufficient capacity in-country to fulfill the terms of the partnership.

A National Commitment to Prevention in Indonesia

Indonesia has experienced cycles of conflict, insurgency, and terrorism over the past two decades and it continues to struggle with internal violence. To address the long-term drivers of violence, the government proactively set in motion processes of political and economic decentralization that resulted in semi-autonomy for the province of Aceh, full secession for East Timor, and that have contributed to stability and peace in the country. In parallel, Indonesia embarked on a major security sector reform effort that established parliamentary oversight over the security forces. This is credited with restoring a more adequate balance between the military and civilian branches of government and disincentivizing the use of force.

Source: United Nations and World Bank, “Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict,” (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), 206, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

Prioritize Justice and Security Sector Reform

An emerging best practice across the UN system is to prioritize security sector reforms as a key aspect of preventive action in fragile states, integrated along with other government planning and reforms and include improvements to accountability, procurement, and payment.⁵⁵ Because poor security sector governance is a key source of grievance often exploited by extremists, increasing accountability of the security sector is a crucial element of reducing support for extremism. As in other domains, reform processes in the security sector should be led by national actors with emphasis given to inclusive community dialogue, civilian oversight, merit-based recruitment and processes that integrate women, youth, and minorities into policing structures.

Supporting Security Sector Reform in Kosovo

Police reform at the community level in post-conflict Kosovo was critical to building trust among ethnic communities and enabling effective policing across the country. Minimum quotas for Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs were instituted, as well as a quota mandating that 20 percent of the force be made up of female officers. By 2005 the share of women in the police force exceeded that of most European forces. These reforms were enabled by sustained international support in the form of both funding and technical assistance. By 2009, public opinion polls showed the police to be more trusted than any other government institution in that country.

Source: United Nations and World Bank, "Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict," (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), 209, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

Promote Transparency and Accountability

Adopting a more rigorous culture of design, monitoring, evaluation, and transparency is critical to learning and achieving impact in fragile states. Transparency in the delivery and use of assistance is an essential precondition for progress, especially in these countries, because it fosters confidence between people, communities, the state and international partners.⁶⁶ Delivering visible results is an effective strategy to strengthen state-society relations in fragile states. The United States and other donors also need a more robust learning agenda in fragile states. The United States should increase its capacity to capture lessons learned from past U.S. engagements to ensure that key findings inform U.S. policy and approaches.

Do No Harm

Above all else, the United States and its allies should ensure that their actions do not undermine the outcomes they seek to achieve. Too much support from too many donors seeking numerous different objectives overwhelms the ability of partner states to set and manage their own priorities. Lax financial oversight can incentivize corruption or fuel political competition, leading to a heightening of tensions and violence. Working with repressive local actors can foster grievances or fuel support for violence among marginalized members of society. Before deciding to engage in any capacity, it is imperative to carefully assess the political environment and consider the political risks of taking action. At times, more limited engagement or no engagement at all may be the best option.

Appendix 4

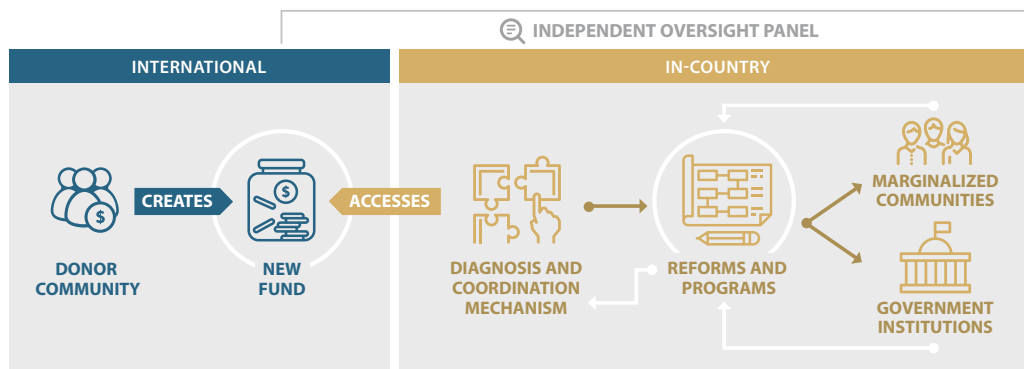
A Global Fund for Prevention

While innovative pooled funds and other international instruments to increase international coordination on conflict management in fragile states exist, most focus overwhelmingly on short-term crisis response, and are, for the most part, not designed to effect enduring change in these countries. New and more nimble financing and international coordination mechanisms—like the World Bank’s State- and Peacebuilding Fund, the UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization in Iraq, and the United Nations’ Peacebuilding Fund and Support Office—reflect lessons learned and principles of effective engagement in contexts of fragility, including the need for agility and flexibility in response to needs on the ground in these countries.⁵⁷ These tools are helping to improve the support that donors provide to countries emerging from conflict, and are delivering results.

Yet, for the most part, these tools are not designed to support preventive efforts to tackle the underlying, long-term conditions of violence, extremism and conflict. Recent exceptions include the World Bank’s 2018 IDA Replenishment, which doubled the amount of financing for fragile states from \$7 billion to \$14 billion over a three-year period, and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, a small fund that provides seed grants to community-based organizations focused on preventing extremism at the local level. These flagship initiatives address different aspects of the challenge of prevention. The World Bank is filling an important financing gap for development in fragile states, where, by definition, the institutional and policy environment does not encourage private investment. The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund was specifically designed to allow resources for countering violent extremism programs to be pooled and quickly disbursed, but it has struggled to raise money, particularly from the private sector, and is focused on the manifestation of extremism, not its underlying drivers.

What is missing, still, is a mechanism to overcome the challenges of fractured and uneven investments in prevention. A new international coordination and financing vehicle for particularly vulnerable but not necessarily conflict-affected countries is needed to help coordinate international support for leaders in fragile states who are committed to addressing the underlying conditions of violence and extremism and building more resilient societies (see figure 11, “Basic Framework for Partnership Development Fund”). The international institutional and financial framework that is needed to catalyze such concerted investments is currently lacking.

Figure 11. Basic Framework for Partnership Development Fund



A new global fund for prevention could fill key gaps in the international architecture for violence and conflict prevention in several ways:

- By catalyzing sustained investments in prevention programs that have a longer time horizon than the typical short-term, one- to three-year budget cycles of most donors
- By supporting inclusive solutions led by committed national or local leaders, including possibly by allocating grants based on compact-based agreements
- By promoting comprehensive, rather than project-based, solutions to addressing fragility through a robust country coordination mechanism
- By incentivizing long-term, and adaptive programs in these countries
- By building strong and visible international coalitions for prevention, while increasing alignment across the development actors that operate in specific countries, and coordination among development, humanitarian, security and diplomacy actors⁵⁸
- By requiring a more rigorous culture of design, monitoring, and evaluation to generate more consistent and evidence-based standards of practice that prove impact

Design and Planning Considerations

The increasing role of major international donors in fragile states, as well as the increasingly complex global strategic environment that impacts those countries, means that coordinated international efforts are more important than ever to effect positive change. The scope of the challenge of preventing extremism in fragile states, together with the long-term commitments, country-led solutions and adaptive approaches that are needed to address its root causes, require a new international financing mechanism. This instrument should be designed to support long-term, coordinated prevention partnerships in fragile states.

Key considerations for the design and structure of this new coordination and financing instrument include the following:

- The mandate could be to promote international coordination and provide grants for multi-year programs in a small number of key countries where investments in prevention could have a catalytic effect on a region or country early on.
- The new instrument could seek to add to and help coordinate and rationalize—but not duplicate—the separate prevention-related activities of bilateral donors, UN agencies, and multilateral development banks in fragile states, and could supplement the existing international security and development architecture.
- An inclusive governance structure or board comprising donors and fragile states could oversee the fund's policy and strategic decisions, with representation from the private sector, civil society, and nongovernmental organizations, as well as representatives from communities in fragile states that are particularly vulnerable to extremism, including women and youth. This structure could include a venue for the fund's voting members to meet with diplomacy, humanitarian, and security actors. For example, if applicable, representatives from defense ministries could be invited to participate in security working groups.

- The establishment of a robust, inclusive and country-led coordination platform in recipient countries could be a condition for allocating grants, and a mechanism for aligning international assistance with country-specific prevention priorities. These in-country platforms could include government ministries, local government leaders, multilateral and bilateral donors, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, vulnerable communities, and private sector actors.
- The coordination platforms could prioritize the analysis and dissemination of learning about effective strategies and programs.
- Grants could also be made contingent on the development of multi-year, compact-based agreements between the fund, other donors, governments in vulnerable countries, and civil society organizations. Those agreements could call for shared assessments of needs, analysis of international activities and gaps at the country level, shared plans for achieving compact objectives, and monitoring and evaluation requirements.⁵⁹
- Such agreements could facilitate the mutually reinforcing, multiyear commitments to resources, policy changes, and projects that are required to achieve prevention outcomes.
- Compact-based agreements could include commitments to other sources of development financing, including domestic resource mobilization, debt relief, and foreign direct investment.
- Broad eligibility criteria could be established by founding members, based on aid effectiveness principles.
- Groups of candidate countries could be encouraged to submit joint proposals through the establishment of regional coordination platforms and compacts.
- The programmatic scope of the fund could be to support programs that focus on strengthening the compact between citizens and the state, ranging from short-term stabilization focused on “quick wins” to programs intended to have more durable impact, and from empowering marginalized groups such as women and youth to promoting inclusive dialogues, justice sector reform, community policing, civilian security, and accountable and fair service delivery. The fund could therefore have a mandate to provide grants for prevention programs across a wide range of sectors, as well as a variety of country and regional settings, depending on the local context and prevention priorities.
- Grant-making parameters could reflect aid effectiveness principles for fragile states, including the need to allow for adaptive implementation and iterative monitoring and evaluation that is responsive to conditions on the ground.
- Grants could be used to support the international coordination platform, as well as mechanisms for scaling effective prevention programs.
- Transparency, learning, and innovation could be high priorities across these processes.

Appendix 5

Prevention Program and Policy Priorities

Although the local conditions that fuel extremism vary widely by place and over time, a core pattern is evident across communities where extremism has taken hold: those places tend to become vulnerable where the compact between society and the state has broken down. Programs across a wide variety of sectors—from justice sector reforms to job creation and youth empowerment—that effectively empower local and national actors to strengthen state-society relations and to become more responsive to their citizens are best suited to mitigating the underlying conditions for extremism in fragile states.

The United States should ensure that the programs, capabilities and strategies that are necessary to promote prevention, including in the areas listed below, are adequately funded and consistently implemented. Although the list is by no means exhaustive, these are the kinds of programs and policies that should be supported by the Strategic Prevention Initiative or Partnership Development Fund.

Programmatic Priorities

Promote Inclusion. The U.S. government supports a wide range of programs to promote inclusion in fragile states, while also contributing to relevant multilateral instruments, like the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.⁶⁰ These investments promote government accountability, civil society organizations, anticorruption, access to justice, community engagement, and civic participation. They directly strengthen local sources of resilience—for instance by facilitating community dialogues with security forces—and build relationships with political leaders that can open opportunities for deeper engagement in fragile states. These programs would benefit from more consistent funding to sustain progress with greater flexibility to better adapt to local contexts, experiment, and reorient activities as needed.

Support Locally Led Solutions to Reinforce the Social Contract. Unlike traditional development and stabilization programs, country-led programs that focus not only on development needs but simultaneously on strengthening the compact between citizens and the state, such as the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan (NSP), should be prioritized. The key features of that program included a high level of Afghan government ownership, as well as an in-depth community engagement process, both of which took time to achieve, but produced the necessary level of buy-in to increase legitimacy and trust in government across two-thirds of the country.⁶¹ Sierra Leone’s Fambul Tok community-led reconciliation process, which received support from USAID, also succeeded in promoting intercommunity reconciliation, while building trust in government from the bottom up.

Empower Women. Women’s empowerment is critical to enhance community resilience against extremist threats and to heal communities afflicted by violence. States where women serve as chief executives and are strongly represented in government are less likely to abuse their citizens than are states run largely or exclusively by men.⁶² Societies where women are treated more equally and are more physically secure are less likely to suffer from internal conflict.⁶³ Peace agreements are more likely to endure when women are included in the peace process.⁶⁴

The United States should promote women’s participation to help reduce extremism and build more peaceful, inclusive societies. It should fully implement and fund the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security⁶⁵ and the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017.⁶⁶ It should also incentivize fragile states to incorporate women’s participation in prevention-related programs and to adopt and implement their own National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security in line with UN guidance.⁶⁷

Provide Opportunities for Youth. Providing political and economic opportunities for youth is crucial for strengthening resilience against extremism. Across the Middle East and Africa, youth under the age of thirty make up nearly 70 percent of the population but represent a disproportionate share of the unemployed, economically marginalized, and politically disenfranchised.⁶⁸ Exclusion is most acute in places where extremists recruit. For example, in Kasserine, Tunisia, where there is strong support for jihadist militancy, youth unemployment reaches 50 percent, three times the national average.⁶⁹

Youth seek opportunities to build their future, particularly to become educated, gain employment, advocate peacefully for change, and participate in the leadership of their community. Programs that provide a combination of secondary education, vocational training, opportunities for employment, civic engagement, or leadership—programs such as the National Resources Counterinsurgency Cell in Afghanistan and the Somali Youth Learners Initiative⁷⁰—have shown promise in reducing support for extremism. Youth also have a strong role to play in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The United States should scale up support for youth programs, particularly multidimensional programs that address the range of factors driving youth to support and join extremist organizations in vulnerable communities.

Provide Democracy and Governance Assistance. Funding levels for democracy, human rights, and governance programs have decreased substantially over the past two decades. These programs have an important role to play in advancing freedom and democracy.⁷¹ Democratic backsliding in fragile states and around the world over recent years, the resurgence of authoritarianism, and the role that fragility can play as an underlying cause of extremism all require that the United States redouble its investments and diplomatic efforts to promote democratic governance.

Improve Security and Justice Sector Governance. U.S. security cooperation and assistance should to the extent possible be reoriented to ensure it contributes to making communities safer and security forces more responsible, to avoid exacerbating the conditions that fuel extremism. Civilian security forces tend to increase resilience against extremism when they establish trust with citizens and, conversely, make communities more vulnerable when they abuse citizens, violate human rights, or exacerbate social, religious, or ethnic divisions. The United States needs greater expertise and capacity to manage programs that reduce security force abuse and restore trust in societies marred by abuse and conflict by fostering dialogue between security actors and communities.⁷²

Respond to Extremist Ideology. Building resilience to extremism’s corrosive ideology may be the best that the United States can do in some places. Building resilience requires moving beyond “countering” extremist propaganda and actively working to support universal and local values, including a strong, positive sense of local and national identity. This may include measures designed to promote democracy and personal freedom as antidotes to the totalitarian, repressive orders established by extremists. It also may mean providing vulnerable communities with meaningful choices and a voice in shaping their future. The United States supports a range of programs to counter extremist ideology, particularly to curb radicalization,

elevate Islamic voices opposed to violence, promote alternative narratives, counter extremist propaganda and recruitment, and refute extremist ideas. These programs are managed by USAID and the State Department, and by international platforms such as Hedayah, Etidal, and the Sawab Center. Efforts to counter extremist ideology are insufficient but still necessary to stem the spread of extremism.

The United States also needs to stem external support for extremist ideas. U.S. pressure on Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to stop funding radical mosques, madrassas, and media should be maintained. In addition, various types of programs may provide effective alternatives to extremist ideology. UNESCO, for instance, has published guides for teachers and policymakers on how to discuss extremism, identify signs of radicalization, and create inclusive classroom environments. To take another example, America Abroad Media brings Hollywood producers and storytellers together with visual media creators in Arab countries to produce compelling content that promotes tolerance and respect for diversity.

Strategies and Capabilities

Strive for Quick Wins. Where political leaders are committed to building legitimacy and addressing the underlying drivers of extremism, the United States should support them by pursuing “quick wins”—modest policy changes or investments that have high prospects of success to inspire confidence in the government. In Tunisia, for example, a program to clean up mosques across the country helped to build trust in the new secularist government following the 2014 parliamentary election. The United States should support such programs.

Mitigate Negative Effects of Regional and Great Power Competition. As global and regional powers expand their influence in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel, they at times act in ways that increase state fragility and complicate and even undermine efforts to curb extremism. The United States and its partners need to mitigate such international spoilers—including those that support, or fail to curtail, the export of extremist ideology—by making clear that their actions will have consequences for their relationship with the United States. As discussed in the body of this report, the United States can, and should seek to, limit the potential for strategic competition to ignite or fuel conflict, and should capitalize on opportunities to work with other major powers to ensure that violent extremist groups do not become a major territorial threat or secure weapons of mass destruction. The greatest U.S. leverage, however, will come from offering positive alternatives to what such spoilers can provide fragile states. A sustained commitment both to support country-led compacts and provide investments from the U.S. private sector will make the United States a more appealing partner than its authoritarian adversaries.

Improve Political and Conflict Analysis. The United States should improve its analysis of local power dynamics in fragile states, particularly in subnational regions vulnerable to extremism, and share evaluations of program results across U.S. agencies. Similar coordination within the U.S. government would strengthen prevention-related policies and programs. The State Department, USAID, and the Defense Department should produce shared diagnostics on the constraints to resilience against extremism and coordinate the evaluations of their respective programs to identify adverse consequences from any individual intervention on other U.S. government programs.

Undertake Adaptive Programs. U.S. government-funded programs to enhance resilience against extremism should be treated as high-risk/high-payoff, and shown the same latitude afforded to programs of the U.S. Global Development Lab and the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity. Rather than discourage experimentation, the U.S. government should allow programs to learn from setbacks and failures, reorient accordingly, and reallocate their budget to pursue a different approach.⁷³ Follow the example of the U.S. military, which rigorously monitors and evaluates its operations and produces an after-action report after each program failure. Relevant congressional staff should receive regular briefings on prevention-related programs, particularly on the risks involved, the lessons drawn from failures, and the use of these lessons in advancing innovation and improving program performance.

Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation—related activities should be prioritized and fully funded.

Increase U.S. Government Learning and Knowledge Management. Despite efforts by the State Department and USAID to improve knowledge management and learning systems, institutional knowledge concerning U.S. programs and activities in fragile states not being systematically captured, and little is being shared across agencies or even bureaus. More needs to be done to harness and aggregate learning across sectors, and shared knowledge management tools should be widely adopted across agencies.

Appendix 6

Aligning Security Sector Cooperation with Prevention

The Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States consulted extensively with senior advisors, government officials, and outside experts on how to better align security sector cooperation with efforts to prevent the spread of extremism. To better improve resilience to extremism in fragile states, the United States needs to mitigate the risk that U.S. security cooperation and assistance will provoke recruitment into extremist organizations, empower repressive governments, fail to improve operational capabilities of fragile state partners, or prove destabilizing. The United States also wants to be sure that the equipment it provides does not wind up in the hands of extremists. In addition to preventing extremism, such reforms would have the added benefits of better enabling the United States to successfully execute military objectives by, with, and through its partners in fragile states.

This appendix expands on the recommendations in the main body of this report regarding the Strategic Prevention Initiative, which recommends that the State Department and the Department of Defense develop a plan to mitigate the political risks posed by security sector cooperation and assistance and to improve U.S. capabilities to foster better security sector governance in fragile states. The recommendation includes:

- five- to ten-year security cooperation and assistance compacts with fragile states, modeled on the Security Governance Initiative;
- a policy of graduated security cooperation and assistance to fragile states that restricts the type of cooperation and assistance programs available to fragile states with poor security sector governance, subject to exemption from senior officials;
- a security sector reform endowment to provide dedicated funding for partner states to propose and implement institutional capacity building and security sector reform efforts with the support of the United States; and
- an expansion of existing efforts to improve the oversight, transparency, accountability, and performance of security sector cooperation and assistance.

Security Cooperation Compacts

To mitigate the risks that U.S. security cooperation or assistance fails to improve operational capabilities of partners or undermines democratic institutions, the State and Defense Departments could enter into five- to ten-year security cooperation and assistance compacts with select fragile states. These compacts would scale up and build on lessons learned under the Security Governance Initiative, including the practice of conducting joint diagnosis and whole-of-government consultative processes.⁷⁴ Key elements of such compacts could include:

- bilateral U.S.-partner planning with senior-level consultations and joint diagnosis of the strengths and challenges of the partner's security institutions
- joint development of a bilateral security assistance and cooperation plan, including a common strategy to improve the governance and capacity of the partner's security institutions

- a predictable, transparent package of assistance, over a period of at least five or ten years, to catalyze longer-term improvements in security sector governance and institutional professionalism and
- consultations with the national parliament and civil society groups on the compact's design, as well as the compact's oversight and evaluation

Graduated Security Sector Cooperation

Activities specified in the compacts, as well as U.S. security assistance and cooperation with fragile states writ large, should be grounded in a graduated security cooperation and assistance policy. A policy of graduated assistance would involve pegging the types of security sector support and programming available for fragile states to the quality of security sector governance. Providing increasingly sophisticated and lethal capabilities and equipment could be contingent on sustained improvements in security sector governance.

A graduated scale would allow the United States to prioritize security sector cooperation and assistance where it is most likely to show results in increasing security, to reduce costs and limit spending, and to reduce the risks to the United States in situations where conditions make it more likely that its support could exacerbate the conditions of extremism and insecurity.

On the most restrictive end of the spectrum, U.S. partners would be eligible only for programs meant to introduce basic institutional professionalism, transparency, and accountability into the defense sector, such as International Military Education and Training. At the midway point on the spectrum, partners could receive training on intelligence gathering and specialized capacity building training the latter of which might involve the creation of transportation or maintenance units or the establishment of an operational coordination center. Only strong-performing partners on indices of security sector governance would be eligible to receive equipment or engage in foreign internal defense and other joint operations. Eligibility criteria would be determined on the basis of an index of publicly accessible security sector governance indicators⁷⁵ (see figure 12, “Graduated Security Cooperation”). Senior officials could be granted the authority to exempt long-standing, regionally significant, or strategically important military partners from such a requirement on national security grounds.

Figure 12. Graduated Security Cooperation

PARTNER'S SCORE ON INDEX OF SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE	VERY POOR	POOR	WEAK	MID-RANGE
SECURITY SECTOR ASSISTANCE OFFERED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional professionalization • Defense institution building • Ministry of defense advisors • International military education and training • No equipment • Other educational, classroom-based training • Human rights training 	Previous, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military and intelligence capabilities advising • Tailored capacity building, e.g. riot control, specialized training, mobility/resupply, maritime patrol • Nonlethal equipment necessary to training mission • Internal Defense and Development Programs (IDAD) 	Previous, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonlethal equipment • Limited joint operations, Security Forces Assistance (SFA) 	Previous, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lethal equipment • Joint operations • Foreign Internal Defense (FID)

* Partners spend three years at each stage before progressing to the next level. Stagnation or backsliding on the governance index pushes partner back to previous stage.

* Partners revert to basic stage if any of the following occur: a coup, human rights abuses, high-level corruption, U.S. weapons end up in the hands of extremists.

Security Sector Reform Endowment

To better support our partners in fragile states, the United States could also establish a Security Reform Endowment that would have a mandate to provide additional funding for partner-led-and-managed security sector reform and institutional capacity building programs. In contrast to current capacity building efforts that are designed, initiated, and implemented by the United States, this Endowment would be designed specifically to support partner-solicited efforts or initiatives to undertake security sector reforms, improve security sector governance, or build basic, nonlethal institutional capabilities. By providing a permanent and reliable source of funding for security sector reform and institutional professionalization, the Endowment could strengthen efforts by local leaders in fragile states to undertake difficult reforms.

The Endowment could be housed at and managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) at the Department of the Defense. Partner proposals could be evaluated based on their promise in reducing human rights abuses, corruption, and other sources of citizen grievance against security forces in fragile states. Revitalizing the U.S. government's capacity to target an important source of grievances in fragile states would help mitigate the long-term risks of more tactical, counterterrorism-focused cooperation and assistance with fragile states, while improving the ability of U.S. forces to operate by, with, and through partner militaries. Congress could provide an initial appropriation and new account to fund the Endowment. Subsequently, the Endowment could be funded through a small fee to be levied on all security sector assistance disbursed by DSCA.

Improved Analysis, Transparency, and Oversight of Security Cooperation and Assistance

To more accurately assess the impacts of U.S. security sector assistance and cooperation in fragile states and to design appropriate programs, the United States could take steps to make its current approach more evidence-based, transparent, and accountable, including:

- Increase funding for assessments, monitoring, and evaluation (AM&E). The congressionally mandated implementation of AM&E for Defense Department—managed security cooperation activities shows early momentum but remains underfunded.⁷⁶ Congress should mandate similar AM&E for State Department—managed security assistance. AM&E for both departments should explicitly address risks of U.S. security assistance feeding into corruption and repressive governance.
- Create, or encourage the creation of, a new index to assess country performance on security sector governance, using indicators derived from transparently-collected, publicly available sources, to promote transparency across this sector, provide an independent rating of defense institutions, facilitate assessments of institutional challenges, and track progress and setbacks over time. This index could include indicators such as civilian oversight, military involvement in politics, human rights abuses, corruption, the military's commercial holdings, ethnic imbalances in security forces, and merit-based promotions. The index could be compiled by the U.S. government from such sources, or, if developed privately or by multilateral institutions, used by the United States to design, monitor, assess, and evaluate the impact of security sector cooperation and assistance given to fragile states.

- Improve partner forces' accountability to civilian authorities by increasing the transparency of security sector assistance to fragile states. The Defense and State Departments could be required by Congress to compile and post on a single public website the unclassified details of all equipment, materiel, and training provided to foreign security forces, as well as the unclassified congressional notifications of equipment transfers and training programs, perhaps building on the useful ForeignAssistance.gov.⁷⁷ This new website could present an integrated database of security assistance programs that are overseen by both the State and the Defense Departments. In addition, Congress could close the loophole that exempts from disclosure and evaluation requirements certain unclassified Special Operations forces engagements that are, in essence, training and capacity building missions.⁷⁸
- Direct the Department of Defense to invest in developing a doctrine and providing training to security cooperation officers on how to assess and address institutional needs of partner countries, promote professionalism in partner military forces, and improve accountability in defense institutions.
- Create or designate a single office in the State Department with clear responsibility for policy planning and coordination of all security assistance managed through State Department appropriations and authorities. This office would have oversight of all military and nonmilitary security sector assistance provided by the State Department, and could coordinate with all bureaus with equities in or authorities over how security sector assistance is spent. In addition, this office could be empowered to lead an interagency country-level security assistance planning process, to include diagnosis, assessment, and policy development modeled on elements of the Security Governance Initiative.⁷⁹
- Strengthen oversight of Defense Department–managed security cooperation by creating or assigning an Assistant Secretary-level position to supervise the Defense Security Cooperation Agency and adding staff to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Cooperation to increase scrutiny of security cooperation programs for fragile states and its attendant risks.

Appendix 7

Consultations

The Task Force consulted with individual representatives of the following U.S. government agencies, international and regional organizations, foreign governments, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and private sector entities:

U.S. Government Agencies

Millennium Challenge Corporation
National Security Council
Office of Management and Budget
U.S. Agency for International Development
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning
Bureau for Africa
Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs
U.S. Department of Defense
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs
Defense Security Cooperation Agency
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Security Cooperation
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations
Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources
Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
Bureau of African Affairs
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan
Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS

Congressional Research Service
National Counterterrorism Center

Foreign Governments

Canada, Department of Global Affairs
Embassy of Burkina Faso in Washington, DC
Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon in Washington, DC

Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Washington, DC
Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Washington, DC
Embassy of the Republic of Mali in Washington, DC
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Washington, DC
Embassy of Norway in Washington, DC
Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia in Washington, DC
Embassy of Qatar in Washington, DC
Federal Republic of Germany, Federal Foreign Office
Federal Republic of Somalia, Senate Foreign Affairs Committee
Federal Republic of Somalia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Norway, Special Representative to Somalia
Republic of Haiti, Office of the Prime Minister
Sierra Leone, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
U.K., Department for International Development
U.K., Foreign and Commonwealth Office

International and Regional Organizations

International Network on Conflict and Fragility Secretariat
International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Secretariat
The g7+ Secretariat
United Nations Development Programme
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
World Bank Group
European External Action Service
Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund Secretariat

Nongovernmental Organizations

Alliance for Peacebuilding
America Abroad Media
American Enterprise Institute
Aspen Ministers Forum
The Atlantic
Bipartisan Policy Center
Brookings Institution
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Center for Global Development
Center for International Development and Conflict Management
Center for Strategic and International Studies
Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation
Coexist Foundation
Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development
Council on Foreign Relations
East-West Center
Eurasia Group
Foundation for Defense of Democracies
Foundation for Inclusion
Frontier Design
German Marshall Fund of the United States
Global Engagement Center
Hudson Institute
International Alert
Institute for Global Change
International Republican Institute
Institute for the Study of War
InterAction
International Crisis Group
International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
International Youth Foundation
Jewish Policy Center
Mercy Corps International
Middle East Institute
Muflehun
National Counterterrorism Center
National Democratic Institute
Norwegian Defense Research Establishment

Nuru International
ONE Campaign
Peace Direct
Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism
Saferworld
Security Assistance Monitor
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
Stimson Center
Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy
Tony Blair Institute for Global Change
Washington Institute for Near East Policy
Wilson Center
World Organization for Resource Development and Education
World Peace Foundation

Academia

American University
Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University
Columbia University
Combating Terrorism Center, West Point
ETH Zurich
Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme
Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University
George Washington University
Georgetown University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University
Princeton University

Private Sector

BAE Systems, Inc.
Beacon Global Strategies, LLC
Chertoff Group
Citibank
Ethan Allen, Inc.
GE Power
MSNBC Cable L.L.C.
Team 3i LLC

Listening Session Titles and Participants

Listening Session 1: Curbing the Appeal of Extremist Ideology

*Mr. Reuel Marc Gerecht, Senior Fellow,
Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*

*Mr. Bo Sim, Foreign Service Officer, State
Department and Sawab Center*

*Dr. Barbara Walter, Professor of Political
Science, School of Global Policy and
Strategy, University of California—San Diego*

*Dr. David Pollock, Berstein Fellow,
Washington Institute for Near East Policy*

*Ms. Katherine Zimmerman, Research Fellow,
American Enterprise Institute*

*Mr. Oliver Wilcox, Deputy Director, Bureau of
Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State*

U.S. Intelligence Community

Listening Session 3: Empowering Local Voices and Actors to Prevent Extremism

*Ms. Omezzine Khélifa, Chief Executive
Officer, Modbiun Tunisia*

*Sh. Khadijah Hawajah, Chair, Plateau
State Women's Peace Forum*

*Mr. Ahmed Albibas, Chief Executive
Officer, Moomken*

*Ms. Esra El Bakoush, Project Officer,
U.S. Institute of Peace Libya Office*

*Ms. Salma Hemed, Program Officer,
HAKI Africa*

*Dr. Emad Bouzo, Syrian-American Physician,
Kingswood Research Institute*

Listening Session 2: What Works in Preventing Extremism in Fragile States

*Dr. Lauren Van Metre, Senior Advisor,
National Democratic Institute*

*Dr. Stephen Watts, Senior Political Scientist
and Associate Program Director, RAND
Arroyo Center Program on Strategy,
Doctrine, and Resources*

*Dr. Lise Howard, Professor of Government,
Georgetown University*

*Dr. Renard Sexton, Post-doctoral Fellow,
Princeton University*

Notes

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- 79 Since 9/11, as the allocation of funding for military assistance has shifted dramatically from the State Department to the Defense Department and train-and-equip programs have expanded, security assistance has increasingly become detached from broader political assessments and U.S. government strategies. The Defense Department is under pressure to quickly disburse security cooperation funds, and while the State Department and U.S. ambassadors have concurrence authority, it is in practice often reduced to a last-minute yes-or-no determination.



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