Why Preventing Violent Extremism Needs Sustaining Peace

Introduction

The dual resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly in April 2016 placed the "sustaining peace" concept at the center of the UN's peacebuilding work. These resolutions recognized sustaining peace as "both a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account."[1]

The contours of what "sustaining peace" means for policymakers and practitioners are still under debate.[2] Though not mentioned in the April 2016 resolutions, there is a clear need to examine responses to violent extremism from this perspective.

This is particularly so given the failure of existing approaches to meaningfully abate the problem. The Institute for Economics and Peace's latest Global Terrorism Index, for example, reports that violent extremism continues to be a major cause of death and instability around the world. Though the total number of deaths caused by such violence dropped from 2015 to 2016, the index's average country score deteriorated by 6 percent during the same period, which was attributed to the expansion of groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State (ISIS) into several new countries.[3]

Moreover, the constantly evolving and multi-faceted nature of contemporary violent extremism underlines the need to address the root causes of this phenomenon rather than its immediate or geographically specific manifestations, analysis of which is often influenced by the agendas of politicians, the media, and other groups.

As examined in this issue brief, the sustaining peace agenda is well-positioned to recalibrate responses to violent extremism. It can help to mobilize the political will—and subsequent resourcing—that will be critical to enact meaningful change. This can be done through actors within the multilateral system, including representatives of UN member states seeking philosophical and structural evolution across the UN and other bodies. This could include encouraging civil society, the private sector, women's and youth groups, and other sectors to be agents for change in their own countries and

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1   Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

2   See, for example, Youssef Mahmoud and Anupah Makoond, "Sustaining Peace: What Does It Mean in Practice?," International Peace Institute, April 2017, available at www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/1704_Sustaining-Peace-final.pdf .

3   Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2016," available at http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/02/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.pdf .

communities.

A sustaining peace approach to addressing violent extremism must definitively break from strategies that rely too heavily on enforcement of law and order, surveillance, and other security-based measures, and that fail to consider other values such as sustainable development and the protection of human rights. Such isolated approaches have often proven ineffective or even counterproductive to the goal of long-term peace.

Sustaining peace is instead inherently aligned with prevention-based, "whole-of-society" approaches such as "countering violent extremism" (CVE), or, as the UN prefers to call it, "preventing violent extremism" (PVE). It not only can provide new incentives to adopt and prioritize these approaches but can also address persistent issues with how they are used in practice—particularly the dominant role of states.

Furthermore, a sustaining peace approach could help to address the wider panoply of factors that contribute to general instability and conflict across the globe and that in turn contribute indirectly to violent extremism.

By ultimately situating peace and peaceful societies rather than conflict and conflict-riven societies as the primary reference point for research, analysis, and subsequent programming and policy-making, the sustaining peace approach could help communities move beyond the need to "counter" or "prevent" violent extremism altogether.

Complex Problems Require Complex Solutions

Violent extremism has been a prominent concern of global policymakers and politicians for decades, yet its continued prevalence attests to the difficulty of adopting or faithfully implementing sustainable solutions. In addition, the problems facing decision makers appear more complex and adaptive with each passing year.

Violent extremism encompasses much more than the killing or physical harming of people or the destruction of property. It includes, among other things, the seizure or destruction of land and other means of economic production, as well as sexual abuse and other human rights violations.

Additionally, new extremist groups and cells are almost continually fragmenting and forming, and their tactics and strategies constantly evolving, as seen in the spate of ISIS-inspired vehicle and knife attacks in Western Europe in 2016 and 2017.

Furthermore, violent extremism is not, as often portrayed in global media, confined to perpetrators who claim allegiance to Islam. It is far more wide-ranging and multi-faceted, and cuts across many religious, ethnic, political, and other lines. There has, for example, been a marked rise in right-wing extremism in the West in recent years, with some studies suggesting right-wing violence outranks jihadist terrorism in the United States.[4]

Finally, there is currently a looming threat of significant new violence due to increased military activity against a number of extremist groups, primarily in the Middle East, where a coalition of forces is achieving considerable success against ISIS. Interviews with young men who fled Mosul shortly before it fell in June 2017 reveal that, while ISIS may be losing territory, it is rapidly increasing its number of regional sleeper cells.[5]

These setbacks to extremist groups are also producing a large-scale return of foreign fighters to their countries and communities of origin, with more radical views, new capabilities to carry out attacks, and increased grievances following their battlefield defeats. The UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, for instance, estimated in May 2017 that rates of fighters returning to some European countries had increased by a third in the past year.[6]

While combating the direct threat of violent extremists remains critical to preventing widespread death and destruction, responses based on law and order and security are, in isolation, frequently ill-suited to achieving lasting peace in such a dynamic and fragile environment. They can, in fact, even be counterproductive to this aim by exacerbating the grievances that foment extremism in the first place. Kenyan authorities' overzealous

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4   Charles Kurzman and David Schanzer, "The Growing Right-Wing Terror Threat," *New York Times*, June 16, 2015, available at www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/opinion/the-other-terror-threat.html .

5   Interviews conducted by Arsla Jawaid, Iraq, June 2017.

6   Alissa de Carbonnel, "U.N. Counterterror Chief: Europe Faces Return of 'Dangerous' IS Fighters," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 18, 2017, available at www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-05-18/un-counterterror-chief-europe-faces-return-of-dangerous-is-fighters/ .

security crackdowns on the country's ethnic Somali inhabitants, including the inhabitants of refugee camps—a practice that is often labeled as "fighting terror with terror"—is a prime example; these crackdowns have frequently been implicated in increased radicalization and recruitment of these populations by al-Shabaab extremists.[7]

Radicalization provoked by such responses inflicts a double blow, for it removes the potential of those targeted—often young men—to serve as partners in creating peaceful societies. These young people, who could otherwise be highly productive members of society, are particularly susceptible to extremist recruitment, especially where other risk factors such as poor governance and weak political participation are present.[8]

The growing realization of the need to move beyond heavy-handed approaches has been a key factor behind the rise of preventive responses to violent extremism, as represented by the increasing prominence of the CVE/PVE discipline. As Naureen Chowdhury Fink, then of the Global Center on Cooperative Security, explained in 2015, these approaches are "synonymous with a focus on prevention that reflects the need for more nuanced measures and responses than the use of force."[9]

Integrating CVE/PVE with Other Agendas

Growth in CVE/PVE activities is wholly complementary to the sustaining peace agenda, which puts particular attention on "the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes."[10] The emphasis sustaining peace places on the shared responsibility of governments and other national stakeholders to achieve peaceful outcomes is also well-aligned with calls for a "whole-of-society" approach to preventing extremism, as articulated at a landmark CVE summit hosted by US President Barack Obama in 2015 and many CVE/PVE exponents subsequently.[11] As outlined in the 2016 resolutions, sustaining peace similarly encompasses multi-faceted efforts to strengthen the rule of law, promote sustainable development, enhance national reconciliation and unity, enhance access to justice, promote good governance, and protect human rights.

Sustaining peace proponents could thus take a particular interest in the continued integration of preventive practice with other peace-enhancing agendas, at the UN and elsewhere.[12] Prominent among these agendas is sustainable development. As noted by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, "There is now recognition that violent extremism poses a serious threat to development and that effective strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism need to include a development response."[13]

Progress on this front includes explicit normative and programmatic links between development and prevention of extremism in Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals; the World Bank's support for addressing societal exclusion as a driver of radicalization; and new guidelines from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that allow inclusion of CVE/PVE activities in accounting related to development targets. The UN Development Programme—once reluctant to engage with counterterrorism or countering violent extremism—also now considers "violent extremism and the need to govern increasingly diverse and multicultural societies" to be interlinked. Its strategic response includes promoting inclusive development, tolerance, and respect for diversity.[14]

7   Sirkku Hellsten, "Radicalisation and Terrorist Recruitment among Kenya's Youth," Nordic Africa Institute, February 2016, available at www.files.ethz.ch/isn/196275/FULLTEXT01.pdf .

8   Lyndsay McLean Hilker and Erika Fraser, "Youth Exclusion, Violence, Conflict and Fragile States," Social Development Direct, April 30, 2009, available at www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/con66.pdf .

9   Naureen Chowdhury Fink, "Countering Violent Extremism: What Are the Key Challenges for UN?" *IPI Global Observatory*, November 3, 2015, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/11/countering-violent-extremism-united-nations-ban-ki-moon/ .

10 Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

11 Eric Rosand and Madeline Rose, "How Close Is 'Whole of Society' Movement Against Violent Extremism?," *IPI Global Observatory*, September 16, 2016, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2016/09/countering-violent-extremism-terrorism-united-nations/ .

12 Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

13 Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, externally distributed memo, June 20, 2017.

14 United Nations Development Programme, "Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity," February 14, 2017, available at www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/discussion-paper---preventing-violent-extremism-through-inclusiv.html .

A major challenge to furthering the evolution of prevention remains the fact that, even with rising commitments, official support to traditional forms of counterterrorism involving policing, surveillance, foreign interventions, and related activities continues to far outweigh that devoted to preventive measures and tackling root causes. To give one illustration, the US is estimated to have spent $6.4 billion on military operations to defeat ISIS between August 2014 and August 2016 alone. This compares with approximately $15 million for the entirety of its PVE activities at home and abroad in 2016.[15]

At a meeting of civil society organizations in New York in June 2017, an attendee noted that proposals for community-based, civil-society-led preventive endeavors often meet with broad agreement from ground-level security actors, who see the value of such efforts in complementing their work.[16] Support for such integration, however, is often lacking from diplomats, politicians, and others who ultimately dictate policy. This imbalance in priorities cannot help but skew the overall response to violent extremism in favor of harder-edge tactics, as well as their unwanted side effects, often nullifying the good work done by proponents of prevention.

This problem is clear not only in individual states, but also within the broader multilateral system, many of whose instruments and decision-making processes remain beholden to a reactive, security-focused approach. The UN, moreover, is not an institution that inherently fosters the sort of inclusiveness needed to take holistic approaches to problems. Surveys in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan have revealed that young people, in particular, feel their voices are not heard in such high offices and massive bureaucratic structures.[17]

Another illustration of the world body's limitations when it comes to prevention can be found in the development of Secretary-General António Guterres's new UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (the preference for that term over CVE or PVE alone is instructive). While Guterres conceived of this as "giving adequate priority to prevention and sustaining peace,"[18] more than forty civil society organizations objected to a lack of consultation in its formulation and the neglect of their concerns in the final product.[19] Though former Secretary-General Ban's 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism took a promising step toward introducing PVE into the UN mainstream, it was also seen as failing to properly include civil society or adequately define what was meant by "violent extremism" and hence as offering rather nebulous policy prescriptions.[20]

Moving Beyond a State-Centric Approach

The reason for Ban's omission is likely a simplistic one: effective prevention and, for that matter, sustaining peace inherently rely on a greater role for, and appreciation of, civil society. Properly defining the problem is thus problematic for the many states that uphold the most constricting conceptions of sovereignty and typically use these to define terrorism and extremism and how they respond to them.

This persistent state domination of prevention is a major challenge for the sustaining peace agenda. Its inevitable end product is that narrow, typically short-term interests tend to inform most related decision making. State-based CVE/PVE programming has, for example, often been seen as unfairly targeting certain communities, primarily Muslim ones, and as treating the entirety of their members with suspicion. Among these efforts are the United Kingdom's long-running Prevent strategy—one of the first national prevention programs—which has been criticized for being obtrusive and alienating

15 Eric Rosand, "Investing in Prevention: An Ounce of CVE or a Pound of Counterterrorism?," Brookings Institution, May 6, 2016, available at www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/05/06/investing-in-prevention-an-ounce-of-cve-or-a-pound-of-counterterrorism/ .

16 Global Center on Cooperative Security, meeting, New York, June 20, 2016.

17 Pew Research Center, "Muslim Publics Share Concerns about Extremist Groups," September 10, 2013, available at www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/10/muslim-publics-share-concerns-about-extremist-groups/ .

18 United Nations, "New Counter-Terrorism Office to Build Partnership with Member States on Countering Transnational Threats, Secretary-General Tells General Assembly," February 22, 2017, available at www.un.org/press/en/2017/sgsm18453.doc.htm .

19 Eric Rosand and Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, "UN Counterterrorism Reform Overlooks Crucial Partner," Just Security, April 24, 2017, available at www.justsecurity.org/40226/counterterrorism-reform-overlooks-important-partner-fight-violence-extremism/ .

20 Naz Modirzadeh, "If It's Broke, Don't Make it Worse: A Critique of the U.N. Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism," Lawfare, January 23, 2016, available at www.lawfareblog.com/if-its-broke-dont-make-it-worse-critique-un-secretary-generals-plan-action-prevent-violent-extremism .

Muslims throughout its entire fifteen-year lifespan.[21]

As Larry Attree, head of policy at the NGO Saferworld, notes, state-based prevention typically focuses almost exclusively on disrupting the recruiting activities of extremist groups. It thus ignores the fact that "instability almost always results from a range of other actors using violence in abhorrent ways."

> Consider Yemen. For years, Western governments and media portrayed Yemen as, above all, a dangerous haven for Al Qaeda. But in fact, the biggest threat to stability in Yemen was the abuse and cynicism of its ruling elites…. Because Western actors saw only the 'violent extremism' issue, they failed to prioritise and nourish social empowerment and constructive reform, and this accelerated Yemen's degeneration into all-out war.[22]

States are thus often unwilling to grapple with the ultimate internal causes of extremism, which frequently include their own policies. In some cases, authorities and leaders are themselves beholden to ideologies that legitimize violence and even propagate it among their own and other populations.

If states are truly looking to tackle violent extremism, they must address their own behavior. This is both a clear expectation of the sustaining peace agenda and borne out by extensive research. The Institute for Economics and Peace, for example, finds that "ninety-three per cent of all terrorist attacks between 1989 and 2014 occurred in countries with high levels of state-sponsored terror—extra-judicial deaths, torture and imprisonment without trial."[23] According to the US State Department:

> State-sponsored violence correlates highly with the emergence of violent extremist organizations. Countries with above-average levels of state-sponsored violence double their risk of a violent

extremism organization emerging. Countries with the highest levels of state-sponsored violence quadruple their risk of a violent extremism organization emerging.[24]

Secretary-General Ban summed up the connection between state behavior and the roots of extremism when reporting to the UN General Assembly in January 2016: "Poisonous ideologies do not emerge from thin air. Oppression, corruption and injustice are greenhouses for resentment. Extremists are adept at cultivating alienation."[25]

Under these circumstances, overcoming the inability to respond to contemporary extremism will involve more than simply recalibrating funding priorities in favor of more prevention. It will instead entail states adopting a major ideological shift and, as sustaining peace advocates, agreeing to a more collaborative project that also takes into account the abilities and priorities of the UN, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, women's and youth groups, the private sector, and a range of other partners. Attendees at a recent IPI event in Chad stressed that it will also be critical to ensure synchronicity of activities among all invested parties, including where issues of violent extremism cross national borders, as in the Lake Chad region.[26]

The enormity of the challenge becomes clearer when we consider the range of factors known to allow extremism to flourish and to which effective and inclusive policies must respond."[27] A recent paper by the European Radicalization Awareness Network identified the "push" factors behind extremism as including "social, political and economic grievances; a sense of injustice and discrimination; personal crisis and tragedies; frustration; alienation; a fascination with violence; searching for answers to the meaning of life; an identity crisis; social exclusion; alienation; margin-

21 Dominic Casciani, "Analysis: The Prevent Strategy and Its Problems," BBC, August 26, 2014, available at www.bbc.com/news/uk-28939555 .

22 Larry Attree, "Shouldn't YOU Be Countering Violent Extremism?," Saferworld, May 14, 2017, available at https://saferworld-indepth.squarespace.com/shouldnt-you-be-countering-violent-extremism .

23 Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2016."

24 David M. Robinson, "Remarks at the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism," April 7 2016, available at https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/cso/releases/remarks/2016/255681.htm .

25 UN Secretary-General, "Remarks at General Assembly Presentation of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism," January 15, 2016, available at www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2016-01-15/un-secretary-generals-remarks-general-assembly-presentation-plan .

26 International Peace Institute, "Investing in Peace and the Prevention of Violence in the Sahel-Sahara: Second Regional Conversation," August 2017, available at www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IPI-E-RPT-Chad-Meeting-NoteEnglish.pdf .

27 CVE/PVE proponents generally speak in terms of a combination of "push" and "pull" factors that drive people toward violent extremism. The former are structural—largely socioeconomic, political, and cultural—phenomena. The latter work on a more persuasive individual basis and include emotional and ideological motivations.

alization; disappointment with democratic processes; [and] polarization."[28]

The same paper isolated "pull" factors as including "a personal quest, a sense of belonging to a cause, ideology or social network; power and control; a sense of loyalty and commitment; a sense of excitement and adventure; a romanticized view of ideology and cause; the possibility of heroism, [and] personal redemption."[29]

The task is thus to ensure that communities are built on the inverse of these push factors: in place of grievances there must be shared values and a commitment to dispute resolution, in place of injustice there must be justice, in place of alienation there must be inclusion, and so on. Policymakers and practitioners must also ensure that communities develop a range of alternative factors that can pull people away from extremism and toward peace, so that they are not tempted to look to violent means of attaining a sense of belonging, excitement and adventure, and so on.

Eliminating the factors that push individuals or groups into extremism will not be easy but essentially remains a challenge of political will—something that sustaining peace can help to summon. Developing alternative factors that pull people toward peace rather than away from it is arguably a much harder and longer-term task. As the anthropologist Scott Atran has noted, individuals' need to create new meaning principally arises from the fact that "the western nation-state and relatively open markets that dominate the global political and economic order have largely supplanted age-old forms of governance and social life.[30] In the absence of any new alternative sense of purpose, many members of a range of societies around the world have turned to malignant interpretations of religious, cultural, or ethnic identities, typically revived from the distant past.

This, then, suggests the need for a mass recalibration of the global trajectory of recent decades and the consideration of specific national and local contexts. In the case of pluralist European countries, to give but one example, it means forging new societal narratives that can more adequately accommodate traditional ethnic, political, and religious identities, alongside those of newer immigrant and other minority communities.

From Prevention to Positive Peace

Despite the scale and complexity of the challenges involved in removing the roots of extremism, there are countless examples of societies that have managed these challenges well in a range of different cultural, geographical, socioeconomic, and other contexts. The largest contribution of sustaining peace to efforts to respond to extremism and terrorism may be focusing the world's attention more on learning the lessons of these success stories. This would entail a further alignment of the discipline with sociologist Johan Galtung's "positive peace" framework, wherein peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of factors associated with peaceful societies.[31]

In arguing for such an approach to violent extremism, a 2016 report from the US-based National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism recalled the inquiries of criminologist Travis Hirschi in the 1960s, who wrote that his field should expend less energy on asking, "Why do they do it?," and more on, "Why don't we do it?"[32] By following this logic, and using peace and peaceful societies rather than conflict and conflict-riven societies as a reference point for research, analysis, and subsequent policymaking and programming, sustaining peace can put the emphasis on a more holistic and permanent solution to violent extremism.

The positive peace project has already been taken up by bodies such as the Institute for Economics and Peace, which has identified a list of qualities

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28   Magnus Ranstorp, "The Root Causes of Violent Extremism," Radicalization Awareness Network, January 4, 2010, available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf .

29   Ibid.

30   Scott Atran, "Extremism Is Surging. To Beat It, We Need Young Hearts and Minds," *The Guardian*, August 20, 2017, available at www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/20/extremism-is-surging-to-beat-it-we-need-young-hearts-and-minds .

31   Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969).

32   Pete Simi, Steven Windisch, and Karyn Sporer, "Recruitment and Radicalization among US Far-Right Terrorists," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, November 2016, available at www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_RecruitmentRadicalizationAmongUSFarRightTerrorists_Nov2016.pdf .

that define peaceful societies: a well-functioning government, a sound business environment, equitable distribution of resources, acceptance of the rights of others, good relations with neighbors, free flow of information, high levels of human capital, and low levels of corruption.[33] These are factors whose breakdown is also often implicated in rising levels of extremist violence. They could thus serve as the basis for communities developing their own locally tailored plans for inoculating against such violence.

As another example, proponents of sustaining peace could look to countries such as Senegal, which, though predominantly Muslim and located in a region with a considerable extremist threat, has experienced comparatively little extremist violence. Past analyses of the country, including that of University of Wisconsin–Madison Professor Scott Strauss, have isolated its reservoir of religious tolerance, inclusion, pluralism, and accommodation as critical to its relative avoidance of conflict.[34]

At the most granular level, a focus on inbuilt capacities for peace would involve working as closely with individuals who have succumbed to extremism as with those who have chosen other pathways. This approach would help determine the factors driving decisions that support peace, not only those responsible for conflict.

While the factors that societies identify as enhancing their resilience to violent extremism will depend on a range of context-specific conditions, they might include things such as the provision of civic education. UNESCO has identified civic education as vital to engendering critical thinking and debating contentious ideas; it is also a factor often absent from formal state-run education systems.[35]

Another factor could be social entrepreneurship, which offers youth an alternative to violent extremism. As a recent IPI paper notes, "As a class, entrepreneurs display remarkable resilience, enduring and flourishing even in difficult environments, and in turn making their communities, societies, and countries more resilient as well."[36]

Public-private partnerships could also help to build resilience in many communities. Partnerships between governments and digital companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google have already focused on developing "counternarratives" and other safeguards against extremist recruitment online.[37] They could go beyond this, however, so that the corporate sector develops stronger partnerships with communities to create jobs and deliver healthcare, humanitarian aid, and education.

Locally tailored and inclusive responses are likewise critical in rehabilitating and reintegrating former extremists into societies. As Arsla Jawaid argues in a recent article on returnees, "Rehabilitation programming should be one-on-one, tailor made for each returnee in addressing the specific motivating factors that drove that person to leave the country in the first place."[38] Perhaps the most celebrated response to this issue has been Denmark's "Aarhus model," a largely community-led approach with a one-on-one method in which a range of individuals, from psychologists to faith and community leaders and families, works to address the factors that propel individuals toward extremism, as well as peace.[39]

Ensuring Continual Engagement

To ensure societies foster the conditions for self-sustaining peace, it will be imperative for policymakers and practitioners to regularly engage in and with communities to enhance the local factors that are found to best strengthen their immune systems. This engagement needs to extend not only to those

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33 Institute for Economics and Peace, "Positive Peace Report 2016."

34 Scott Strauss, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

35 UNESCO, "Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy-Makers," 2017, available at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002477/247764e.pdf .

36 Youssef Mahmoud, Anupah Makoond, and Ameya Naik, "Entrepreneurship for Sustaining Peace," International Peace Institute, June 2017, available at www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/1706_Entrepreneurship-for-Sustaining-Peace4print.pdf .

37 See, for example, Julia Harte, Dustin Volz, "U.S. looks to Facebook, private groups to battle online extremism," Reuters, February 24, 2016, available at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-internet-militants-countermessaging/u-s-looks-to-facebook-private-groups-to-battle-online-extremism-idUSKCN0VY01O .

38 Arsla Jawaid, "From Foreign Fighters to Returnees: The Challenges of Rehabilitation and Reintegration Policies," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 12, no. 2 (2017).

39 Preben Bertelsen, "Danish Preventive Measures and De-radicalization Strategies: The Aarhus Model," *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs*, January 2015, available at http://psy.au.dk/fileadmin/Psykologi/Forskning/Preben_Bertelsen/Avisartikler_radikalisering/Panorama.pdf .

communities currently beset by violent extremism but also to those that might be at risk at some point in the future. Owing to the complicated nature of extremism, with its range of ideological motivations and structural causes, this will be a large group.

The number of affected societies becomes larger still when considering the return of foreign fighters. Here the discourse must change to reflect that the responsibility for responding to violent extremism cannot be passed off to others. Extremists now returning to Western countries, for instance, are not created in a vacuum in a particular Middle Eastern or sub-Saharan battleground to which they traveled; they are as much a product of endogenous factors in the communities in which they were raised.

Community engagement should of course seek to avoid being intrusive and poorly targeted, like much past preventive work. Thankfully, the sustaining peace approach helps guard against this. Its sense of universal responsibility compels all communities to constantly contribute to sustaining peace and thus precludes targeted stigmatization.

Responses to violent extremism could ultimately be incorporated into what Youssef Mahmoud and Anupah Makoond call a national "meta-policy" for sustaining peace.[40] This meta-policy could be overseen, for example, by an overarching, whole-of-government mechanism that monitors national policies to ensure they explicitly nurture the factors associated with peacefulness rather than conflict and do not unwittingly do harm.

Conclusion

There are major challenges associated with the sustaining peace agenda—principally its ability to attract adequate and sustainable funding. These must be managed if it is to be successfully implemented across the UN system and within its member states all the way down to the individual level. The ability of sustaining peace to improve responses to violent extremism will ultimately depend on how well these challenges are overcome.

Nonetheless, the above analysis suggests that sustaining peace could play an important role in responding to contemporary violent extremism—a

complex phenomenon that continues to command much of the world's attention.

First, proponents of sustaining peace could advocate for the UN system, its member states, and various other institutions to move away from reflexively adopting reactive, security-focused responses to violent extremism in isolation, acknowledging that these have short-term and often counterproductive effects.

Second, in acknowledging that CVE/PVE activities are broadly compatible with sustaining peace, sustaining peace proponents could work to enhance political will and institutional support for further implementation of their associated efforts. They could also cooperate by connecting preventive action to other work streams such as peacebuilding, sustainable development, and human rights.

Third, sustaining peace proponents should work to increase awareness of the state-centric nature of much CVE/PVE and to make it more inclusive of the needs and abilities of all actors in society. When preventive activities are state-centric, they tend to overlook the potential for state action itself to exacerbate violent extremism. The focus of sustaining peace on governments working more closely and cooperatively with partners such as the UN, regional institutions, civil society, and women's and youth organizations is a great asset here.

Fourth, sustaining peace proponents could compel policymakers and practitioners to move beyond the current somewhat isolated conception of violent extremism to consider the broader range of causes of instability and conflict globally and develop appropriate responses. This would involve seeking a more fundamental, long-term solution to the phenomenon of violent extremism, rather than merely addressing its periodic manifestations around the world.

Fifth, and finally, sustaining peace proponents could encourage actors within the UN system and its member states—and their myriad institutions and individuals—to focus more research, analysis, policymaking, and programming on isolating and enhancing those factors that contribute to peaceful societies than on those that contribute to conflict-

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40   Mahmoud and Makoond, "Sustaining Peace: What Does It Mean in Practice?"

prone ones. Recalling that sustaining peace aims to "build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account,"[41] peaceful and inclusive countries and communities should become the primary reference point for action on ending violent extremism.

The challenge of achieving these outcomes is obviously significant. Yet so is the expediency of finding a more effective and sustainable solution to violent extremism. And, indeed, so is the scale of ambition of the sustaining peace agenda. It is, as the Advisory Group of Experts that birthed the concept contends, "truly a systemic challenge," and one that spans the UN's intergovernmental organs, Secretariat, programs, specialized agencies, and ground-level operations.[42] From there, sustaining

peace extends to the world body's member states and the diverse range of communities, organizations, and individuals within them. It thus has great capacity to influence the future direction of these parties and their interactions with one another.

Ultimately, action through the sustaining peace agenda will rely on promoting the agency of each and every member of society and a process of continual engagement between parties. Action by states and multilateral organizations will be critical, though approaches should also come from the bottom up and involve a myriad of actors, each with clearly demarcated roles in defeating the proximate and structural causes of violent extremism while laying the foundations for building and maintaining peace.

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41 Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

42 United Nations, *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*, June 29, 2015.

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