



## **SUMMARY OF FACTORS AFFECTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

### **I. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FACTORS**

- A. Weak states with ineffective security services
- B. Poorly governed or ungoverned areas
- C. State support of Violent Extremist groups
- D. Pro-active religious agendas

### **II. PULL FACTORS**

- A. Existence of Violent Extremist groups with a compelling narrative & attractive objectives
- B. Existence of radical institutions or venues (mosques, madrasas)
- C. Social networks and group dynamics
- D. Provision of services (responding to unmet expectations and needs)
- E. Greed or the proliferation of illegal economic activities

### **III. PUSH FACTORS**

- A. **Socioeconomic Drivers**
  - a. Social exclusion and marginality
  - b. Societal discrimination
  - c. Frustrated expectations and relative deprivation
- B. **Political Drivers**
  - a. Denial of political rights and civil liberties
  - b. Harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights
  - c. Foreign occupation
  - d. Political and/or military encroachment
  - e. Endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites
  - f. Local conflicts
  - g. Discredited governments and missing or co-opted legal oppositions
  - h. Intimidation or coercion by Violent Extremist groups
  - i. Perception that the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies and peoples
- C. **Cultural Drivers**
  - a. Islam under siege
  - b. Broader cultural threats



## I. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FACTORS

- A. **Weak states with ineffective security services:** The lack of rule of law allows corrupt practices, which can enable Violent Extremism (VE) groups to operate with ease – moving money and arms, bribing officials to look the other way, etc.
- B. **Poorly governed or ungoverned areas:** These areas into which the writ of government hardly extends. They may be isolated, low population density regions in difficult terrain or crowded, peri-urban slums. They constitute safe havens where VE organizations can establish themselves with little hindrance, and garner support from communities ignored by the government. VE groups may gravitate by preference toward states of limited strength - as opposed to failed or even failing states - in order to access the infrastructure necessary to develop their network and carry out operations.
- C. **State support of VE groups:** When governments permit or support extremist groups as a counterweight to domestic opposition or to pursue covert foreign policies, VE groups are likely to flourish. Foreign governments – or groups/individuals within – have often supported VE movements, only to later lose control over them.
- D. **Pro-active religious agendas:** The extent to which radical (non-violent) religious agendas have penetrated society they may establish an atmosphere conducive to support for violent groups espousing many of the same goals. “Pro-active,” refers to groups that are pressing cultural demands on others. They seek to restructure the cultural territory of others so as to make it conform to their vision of how society ought to be organized and run its affairs.

## II. PULL FACTORS

- A. **Existence of VE groups with a compelling narrative and attractive objectives:** An enabling environment and popular grievances will not lead to anything more than random, disorganized violence in the absence of mobilizing groups.
- B. **Existence of radical institutions or venues (mosques, madrasas):** These institutions help facilitate radicalization and the entry to extremist groups; they serve as recruiting grounds.
- C. **Social networks and group dynamics:** These factors play a critical role in radicalization and recruitment. Individuals may drift into VE groups with friends or as a result of the influence of relatives, neighbors or a charismatic local preacher.
- D. **Provision of services (responding to unmet expectations and needs):** Deprivation of socioeconomic needs – especially when combined with other factors such as widespread corruption, lack of security and justice and social exclusion by the government – may be exploited by VE groups, who may attract community support and recruits as well as obtain political cover by providing services.
- E. **Greed or the proliferation of illegal economic activities:** VE organizations’ illegal activities offer lucrative economic opportunities for those who seek a ready income. Networks operating VE and illegal economic activities have a mutually beneficial relationship and provide each other with revenue, experience in concealment, and an ideology to legitimize illegal behavior. Prisons are also a popular venue for VE recruitment.



### III. PUSH FACTORS

#### A. Socioeconomic Drivers

- a. **Social exclusion and marginality:** Particularly true of peri-urban/slum youth; when family structures erode; and normal social controls no longer check behavior; deviancy, anomie, and isolation may result. VE groups exploit this isolation by offering an escape, a sense of purpose, and inclusion in a collective movement.
- b. **Societal discrimination:** Real or perceived discrimination towards an individual or community (or both) in a broad sense can be a driver for VE. In places where Muslims are a small minority, soci-economic and/or political discrimination may be perceived as linked to disrespect for Islam and Muslims, provoking radicalization.
- c. **Frustrated expectations and relative deprivation:** Relative deprivation and frustrated expectations are powerful drivers towards VE activity given increased schooling and in some countries significant improvements in social mobility in the 70s and 80s. This is especially true with a massive expansion of secondary and higher education.

#### B. Political Drivers

- a. **Denial of political rights and civil liberties:** The lack of political rights and civil liberties, as well as closed, unresponsive political systems, can instill a belief that violence is the only means for political change. Civil liberties and political rights also may represent a critical - but not representative - link between economic development and vulnerability to VE.
- b. **Harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights:** Justice is a critical value in Islam. Cruel, degrading treatment (including torture) to an individual at the hands of the police or security forces can lead to a desire for revenge. The harsher and more widespread the brutality, the greater the spur to VE activities, and the more support VE may garner from the local communities.
- c. **Foreign occupation:** Countries subject to foreign military occupation are at risk of insurgency and rights abuses. Individuals seeking to obtain redress for humiliation caused to their person or community may support VE groups/activities
- d. **Political and/or military encroachment:** Large-scale political or military intrusion into internal affairs can act as a unifying element, with the community resorting to violence to redeem individual and collective honor. In communities with a historically high degree of autonomy and self-regulation, strong resistance is likely.
- e. **Endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites:** At the least, this driver prompts civic disengagement and political apathy. In addition it can foster a profound sense of moral outrage as is the case in Afghanistan. The more corrupt the environment, the easier it is for VE groups to establish themselves as a righteous alternative and to lash out at immoral governing elites.
- f. **Local conflicts:** Local conflicts of sufficient scale can create chaos, incapacitate government institutions, and result in a power vacuum to be exploited by VE organizations. VE groups will try to co-opt one side in a conflict and will try to impose their transnational agenda on purely local dynamics. One example: the Afghan Taliban now call for an Islamic Caliphate.
- g. **Discredited governments and missing or co-opted legal oppositions:** When a regime is entirely discredited and there is no viable opposition, those who wish to oppose the government and bring about reform, will be pushed outside normal political channels and may support VE groups.



- h. Intimidation or coercion by VE groups:** Where governments cannot provide security and protection for its citizens, VE groups use intimidation and coercion to force support for or limit opposition to their movement.
- i. Perception that the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies and peoples:** Populations may accept VE propaganda that the global political and economic system discriminates against the Muslim world, which can mesh with personal or communal feelings of discrimination.

### C. Cultural Drivers

- a. Islam under siege:** A strong correlation exists between VE success and the perception that the West is attacking Islam and Muslims. Religious solidarity may be more powerful than (though not independent of) political and socioeconomic variables. This overlaps political driver #9 (above); they are mutually reinforcing.
- b. Broader cultural threats:** Population may perceive a broader cultural threat – to traditions, customs, values and sense of collective/individual honor & dignity.

Adapted from *Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming*

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