Thinking Outside the Box

Exploring the Critical Roles of Sports, Arts, and Culture in Preventing Violent Extremism

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Power in a global information age, more than ever, will include a soft dimension of attraction as well as the hard dimensions of coercion and payment. Combining these dimensions effectively is called "smart power." For example, the current struggle against transnational terrorism is a struggle over winning hearts and minds, and over-reliance on hard power alone is not the path to success. Public diplomacy is an important tool in the arsenal of smart power, but smart public diplomacy requires an understanding of credibility, self-criticism, and the role of civil society in generating soft power. If it degenerates into propaganda, public diplomacy not only fails to convince, but can undercut soft power. Instead, it must remain a two-way process, because soft power depends, first and foremost, upon understanding the minds of others.

-Joseph Nye[1]

Introduction

Unlike traditional law-enforcement and military responses to terrorism and conflict, countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts take a preventive approach aimed at reducing the appeal and recruiting potential of extremist groups.[2] Recent attacks across the world, such as those in Ottawa and Sydney, for example, have highlighted concerns about smaller groups and individuals who may be acting with little or no formal association with a terrorist group. Consequently, preventive approaches that serve to enhance early identification and response capacities have gained greater traction. The relative youth of foreign fighters traveling from both Western and non-Western countries to Iraq and Syria has also highlighted the need for creative and innovative interventions.[3] However, despite

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1 Joseph S. Nye, "The New Public Diplomacy," Project Syndicate, 10 February 2010, http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-new-public-diplomacy.

2 Countering violent extremism has been used to describe a broad range of programming which attempts to overcome drivers that may contribute to the radicalization and recruitment of individuals into violent extremist groups.

3 Radicalization to violence is a highly individualized and unpredictable process dependent on the confluence of numerous "push" and "pull" factors that combine with individuals' perceptions, experiences, and physical and mental health. Among the structural "push" factors, or what the United Nations calls the "conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism," are prolonged and unresolved conflicts, underdevelopment, relative deprivation and lack of access to education or employment, and human rights infractions. These are often combined with more proximate "pull" factors such as the material and financial benefits of joining extremist groups, perceived social status, and appealing ideologies and recruiters. These drivers continue to fuel ethnic and sectarian tensions, extremism, terrorism, and conflict across many parts of the globe, as witnessed in Pakistan, Syria, Mali, Somalia, and Iraq, for example.

the increased emphasis on countering violent extremism by governments and international actors like the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF),[4] preventive approaches have continued to focus on measures associated with criminal justice, law enforcement, and legal responses. The use of sports, arts, and culture is sometimes considered by policymakers and practitioners as too peripheral to security issues and yet extremist groups effectively utilize them in their narratives and recruitment strategies. Efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism have sought increasingly to engage youth, communities, and marginalized groups, including women, and sports, arts, and culture offer much underutilized platforms to address the ideologies and root causes of violent extremism. As the 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy notes, in the long term, such efforts "will be more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield."[5]

To foster a more inclusive discourse on multidimensional approaches to preventing and addressing violent extremism, the Global Center on Cooperative Security and Hedayah, the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, have partnered on a series of workshops to bring together governments, practitioners, and experts to share lessons learned and best practices, as well as to inform the development and implementation of CVE policies and programs. One of these workshops, held at Hedayah in Abu Dhabi in May 2014, focused on the role of sports, arts, and culture in CVE efforts, particularly on the ways they might enhance educational initiatives to directly or indirectly contribute to CVE objectives. The workshop drew on, and complemented, other discussions that focused on the role of education and the roles of families and communities in countering violent extremism and enhancing community resilience, and projects focused on counternarratives and strategic communication, among others.[6]

This brief explores the history of cultural diplomacy and use of sports in conflict situations and draws on discussions at the May 2014 workshop, as well as desk research, to examine relevant lessons learned and good practices for integrating sports, arts, and culture into CVE efforts. It concludes with some practical policy and programming recommendations for policymakers and practitioners focusing on countering violent extremism. It is important to note that sports, arts, and cultural interventions for CVE purposes should take into consideration the local push and pull factors leading to radicalization and recruitment into violent extremism as well as the local context where these policies and programs will be carried out. That is, sports, arts, and cultural programming do not necessarily have to be specifically related to countering violent extremism, but this policy brief outlines ways in which sports, arts, and culture could be effectively integrated into CVE programming.

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4 For example, the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2178 and the GCTF's *Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon*, reflects the importance of developing and implementing CVE policies and programming to counter the foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) threat.

5 White House, *National Security Strategy,* February 2015, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf.

6 See Wedad Alhassen, Rafia Barakat, Naureen Chowdhury, Ivo Veenkamp, and Sara Zeiger, "The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism," Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, Hedayah, December, 2013, http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dec13_Education_Expert_Meeting_Note.pdf; and Rafia Barakat Bhulai, Naureen Chowdhury Fink, and Sara Zeiger, "The Roles of Families and Communities in Strengthening Community Resilience Against Violent Extremism," Global Center on Cooperative Security, Hedayah, May 2014, http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/MeetingNote_FamiliesandCommunities_FINAL_May2014.pdf.

Cultural Diplomacy

The use of the arts and culture to further political, ideological, and religious objectives is hardly a recent phenomenon. For example, medieval and renaissance art is replete with examples of political messaging, and Louis XIV of France skilfully utilized arts and culture to assert control over the nobility. During the Second World War, art and culture symbolized both the ideological and real battlefields between the Allies and the Axis powers. The advent of the cold war fostered the development of cultural diplomacy as a more formalized area of practice. Public and cultural diplomacy campaigns that involved exchanges between artists, writers, and athletes emerged as a tool for building bridges and sustaining relationships between diverse communities and states. According to Cynthia Schneider and Kristina Nelson, "artists, actors, musicians and writers in any culture act as the national conscience, reflecting on society's good and bad points and challenging the status quo."[7]

The arts and culture have often been means of communicating across political and social boundaries, and progress in architecture, design, and production has long been held up as a testament to social progress. In the nineteenth century, the increasing popularity of world fairs, for example, encouraged the notion of a shared humanity through the assembly of different objects from a variety of cultures into one space. These values were later reflected in the use of art to help counter negative stereotypes of Muslims and promote cross-cultural understanding after the 9/11 attacks.[8] The arts can also provide important channels for positive and constructive expression of ideas and beliefs. In Jordan, for example, drama therapy is used to help Syrian refugees cope with post-traumatic stress, depression, and mental anxiety. As part of this effort, the women refugees put on a production of Euripides' antiwar tragedy, "The Trojan Women," which was successfully performed in Amman and later in Geneva, and also provided the setting for a film documenting the lives of women refugees in Jordan, which debuted at the Abu Dhabi film festival in October 2014.[9]

Just as the arts and culture can be essential ingredients in strengthening community resilience, they can also be exploited by extremists. For example, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)[10] has built up a massive war chest by selling priceless antiquities[11] from Syria even as they destroyed priceless treasures on entering Mosul.[12] Extremists have demonstrated a keen sense of the power of cultural and artistic traditions, often seeking to destroy them as a means of announcing their consolidation of power.

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7 Cynthia P. Schneider, Kristina Nelson, "Mightier Than the Sword: Arts and Culture in the U.S.-Muslim World Relationship," Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, June 2008, http://www.brookings. edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2008/6/islamic%20world%20schneider/06_islamic_world_schneider.pdf.
8 Examples of these events include: *Alwan* (mix of music, dance, art exhibits, film screenings, etc.), *ArtEast* (Middle Eastern film and visual arts), and *Without Boundary*, which was held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 2006 featuring contemporary artists from the Islamic world.
9 "Syria: The Trojan Women," http://www.syriatrojanwomen.org; and Sophie Spencer, "'Queens of Syria' Documentary Makes Its Debut at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival," iloubnan.info, October 2014, http://www. iloubnan.info/artandculture/84321/Queens-of-Syria-documentary-makes-its-debut-at-the-Abu-Dhabi-film-festival.
10 The group is also called *Daesh*, shorthand for the full Arabic name a*l-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham*.
11 The United Nations Security Council on 12 February 2015 adopted Resolution 2199 to curb ISIL's access to funding, including through the sale of antiquities
12 Christopher Dickey, "ISIS Is About to Destroy Biblical History in Iraq," July 2014, http://www.thedaily-beast.com/articles/2014/07/07/isis-is-about-to-destroy-biblical-history-in-iraq.html.

Other examples include the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan, the Khmer Rouge's campaign to eliminate of all forms of culture, literacy, and art in Cambodia, and Boko Haram's rejection of Western education. On these principles, extremists tried to remove music and culture from Mali as they took control of territories in the North. On the other hand, arts and culture have also been used by extremists as a method to persuade potential recruits to join their organizations. For example, the Taliban have recorded and distributed cell phone ringtones with songs endorsing their cause in Afghanistan and German rapper Denis Cuspert (also known as "Deso Dog") has reportedly put his communications skills to use to recruit foreign jihadists.[13] It could even be said that symbols such as flags, slogans, and other memorabilia create a "culture" of violent extremism.[14]

There is an opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of violent extremists and counter their narratives by drawing on local cultural and artistic traditions that in many instances reflect a more tolerant and syncretic society. Although the post–cold war era saw a diminution in the resources and funding for such programs, the emergence of countering violent extremism as a field of practice raises questions again about the impact and potential of such programs in addressing contemporary security challenges. However, it is important to emphasize that cultural diplomacy and countering violent extremism are distinct practices with particular objectives, though the former offers a number of important lessons learned for current efforts.

Sports

Like cultural diplomacy, sports have long been considered valuable for fostering communications and building bridges between communities in conflict. For example, an organization called Cross Cultures Project Association uses Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) in the Balkans, Caucusus, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East to bring communities together to play football in an effort to build closer bonds and promote cooperation. At the policy level, the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace argues that sports can overcome conflict and social tension and "promote peace, tolerance and understanding by bringing people together across boundaries, cultures and religions."[15]

Leading sports authorities have also proven to be important advocates for the use of sports to promote social cohesion and violence reduction and to contribute to conflict prevention and mitigation. For example, World Sport Chicago used sports to deliver Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy techniques to youth in an area in Chicago prone to gang violence—a program that resulted in reduced dropout rates and violent-crime arrests in that locale.[16] A Brazilian program, *Luta Pela Paz* (Fight for

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13 "German Rapper is ISIS Propaganda Mastermind Recruiting British Jihadists," RT, 10 November 2014, http://rt.com/uk/203967-isis-cuspert-german-britons.

14 For example, there were reports of ISIL sweatshirts being sold online in June 2014. See http://www.vocativ.com/world/iraq-world/can-now-buy-isis-hoodie-online.

15 United Nations, "Sport for a Better World: Report of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005," http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/resources/20/2066E73C-CFEF-4FA9-9345-C9E6FED8D7D2/Report%20IYSP%202005.pdf

16 Sara Heller, Harold A. Pollack, Roseanna Ander, and Jens Ludwig, "Preventing Youth Violence and Dropout: A Randomized Field Experiment," National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2013, http://www.nber.org/papers/w19014.pdf?new_window=1.

Peace), used boxing to channel aggression and provide a safe environment for youth ages seven to 25 to overcome community tension related to drug violence.[17] The use of sports has also been promoted in rehabilitation programs for offenders and as an essential element in many urban regeneration projects aimed at reducing youth crime, which many agree is a cost-effective alternative to prosecution and detention. Studies have found that participating in community-based sports programs helps to reduce antisocial behavior and promotes skills-building.[18]

These elements have been highlighted in the work of some sports figures that have established philanthropic initiatives to promote peace and positive counternarratives. The Sanneh Foundation, established by former football player Tony Sanneh, supports positive activities for urban youths and has operated in affected communities such as Haiti. With the increased recognition of these benefits, "sport, development, and peace" has become an important component of many corporate social responsibility programs, such as those undertaken by Nike and Coca-Cola, for example.[19] Relating these experiences to countering violent extremism, sports offer an opportunity for young people to develop a new lexicon of common objectives, foster cooperation and sportsmanship, promote respectful competition, and learn to confront conflict without aggression.

Sports, Arts, and Culture in CVE Discourse

While CVE measures have to date remained disproportionately focused on law-enforcement and criminal justice measures, the roles of sports, arts, and culture have increasingly been raised as part of a comprehensive approach to preventing and countering violent extremism. For example, the European Commission recommended to the European Parliament in January 2014 that sports be included in broader education efforts to build resilience against violent extremism.[20] Furthermore, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) suggests that the arts and sports can be used as civic or community engagement tools, particularly in terms of community policing to prevent violent extremism[21] and through youth engagement to counter violent extremism that leads to terrorism (VERLT).[22] Additionally, the GCTF highlighted the importance of sports, arts, and cultural approaches in effective CVE programming, particularly when integrated into a broader, comprehensive strategy for education and countering violent extremism. The *Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering*

17 Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, "From the Field: Sport for Development and Peace in Action," 2007, http://assets.sportanddev.org/downloads/from_the_field_full_doc.pdf.
18 Richard Giulianotti, "The Sport, Development and Peace Sector: A Model of Four Social Policy Domains," *Journal of Social Policy* 40 (2011): pp. 757–76. However, it should be noted that the success of these programs may be limited in communities where resistance to such programming runs high, whether due to lack of information, access, or cultural sensitivities.
19 Ibid.
20 European Commission, "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response," January 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation/docs/communication_on_preventing_radicalisation_and_violence_promoting_extremism_201301_en.pdf.
21 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach," February 2014, http://www.osce.org/atu/111438?download=true.
22 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: Report on Findings and Recommendations," October 2012, http://www.osce.org/atu/103352?download=true.

Violent Extremism, adopted at the September 2014 GCTF Ministerial Meeting, suggests that sports, arts, and cultural programs can "build secondary effects of CVE programs, especially in a youth population."[23]

The following sections explore some of the opportunities and challenges for sports, arts, and cultural programming in CVE initiatives, and offers some recommendations for CVE policymakers and practitioners to consider as part of their efforts to strengthen community resilience and engage youths.

What are the potential opportunities for incorporating sports, arts, and culture into CVE programming?

Providing a platform for resonant messaging

Not only do sports, arts, and culture provide compelling alternative narratives themselves, they also offer a creative lexicon that can be used to develop messaging and communications that resonate with local audiences and draw on context-specific histories, stories, arts, or traditions, all while ensuring the message is locally relevant.[24] In many instances, careful use of cultural heritage can itself also provide powerful counternarratives. CVE efforts focused on messaging are more likely to be well received and effective if they develop organically. For example, with support from private funders and international donors, the Malian government is undertaking a Timbuktu Renaissance project that includes the establishment of a university and the revival of its *Festival au Desert*, which celebrates traditional Tuareg music and showcases world music.[25]

Underscoring commonalities rather than differences

Sports, arts, and culture offer a valuable means of talking about differences and diversity, and of underscoring common histories, experiences, and hopes for many people. At the Abu Dhabi meeting, participants agreed that drama and the arts can provoke critical thinking and discourse on shared histories and experiences that may cross political boundaries. They also discussed cases in which sports allowed the children of immigrants to develop positive relationships in schools even when they did not speak the same language as their peers. Sports can also be a powerful uniting force, for example, after the Afghanistan National Football Team's surprise and historic victory in the South Asian Football Federation Championship in 2013, an Afghan journalist reported that "the skyline of Kabul city was lit with gunfire to celebrate the victory. This time, the barrage

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23 Note that the May 2014 workshop held in Abu Dhabi contributed to the drafting and development of the good practices in the *Abu Dhabi Memorandum* framework document. See Global Counterterrorism Forum, "Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism," https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/159880/14Sept19_GCTF+Abu+Dhabi+Memorandum.pdf.

24 A broad range of initiatives have already been undertaken to challenge extremist ideologies and narratives. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue categorized these as 1) Government Strategic Communication (includes messaging about government activities and policies, raising public awareness); 2) Alternative narratives (focus on positive messaging); and 3) Counternarratives (directly challenge or discredit extremist messages). See Rachel Briggs and Sebastien Feve, "Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism: What Works and What Are the Implications for Government?" Institute for Strategic Dialogue, July 2013, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/ISD_Kanishka_Report.pdf.

25 Charlie English, "War-Torn Mali Plans to Build University in Timbuktu," *Guardian*, 21 October 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/21/mali-plans-university-timbuktu-sahara-bono-tuareg.

of bullets that went up in the misty Kabul air conveyed the message of joy and peace, not war and mayhem. It brought the entire country together as they raised the toast for their champion team."[26]

Facilitating a non-securitized discourse

Sports, arts, and culture also offer an entry point into communities, providing a counter- or alternative narrative that is distanced from the traditional securitized discourse of counterterrorism and law enforcement, and can be led by grassroots organizations. For example, a musician at the workshop described how the experience of making and learning about music in Afghanistan helped to build understanding among divided communities and foster an environment in which all participants were equal, with an emphasis on listening and exchanging ideas. Another example from Kenya utilized local song and dance as well as sporting activities as a way to initiate dialogue about challenges like al-Shabaab among community members. Western governments, such the United Kingdom and United States, have employed "hip hop diplomacy" through support to Muslim organizations to produce hip-hop concerts featuring rappers who offer "mainstream interpretations" of Islam, while promoting positive images of the rappers' countries.[27]

Empowering youth, women, and marginalized communities

Sports, arts, and culture provide valuable opportunities to engage youth, women, and communities. They can also help develop alternative, positive means of understanding and addressing grievances and tensions that can contribute to support for violent extremism. Practitioners at the workshop shared stories of youth theater groups in Kenya, for example, which have created spaces for young people to engage in discussions with the police, or to develop activities and skills-building exercises that can engage youths who might otherwise be attracted to joining al-Shabaab. In many instances, such activities also create opportunities for marginalized communities, including girls and women, to participate in community activities, though it was noted that this needs to be done with respect to local traditions. For example, participants shared that in some contexts, although it was difficult to persuade young girls to join sports activities, their participation was helped by the provision of suitable equipment and segregated games.

Empowerment could also come through entrepreneurial opportunities, as is the example of a program in Uganda where women are the primary creators of fashionable jewelry sold in the United States and use their savings to start their own businesses. The women are in many cases former victims of violence and conflict, and participation in the initiative not only offers them a means of accessing social and medical assistance for themselves and their families, but also gives them the skills and opportunities to develop independent businesses and generate their own income. Such programs underscore valuable lessons learned that can inform efforts to rehabilitate extremist fighters or support victims of terrorism and thereby delegitimize extremist groups.

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26 Saer Zaland, "Bend it Like Afghans for Peace," *Afghan Zariza*, http://www.afghanzariza.com/magazine/magazinedetail/bend-it-like-afghans-for-peace#.
27 Hisham Aidi, "Hip-Hop Diplomacy: U.S. Cultural Diplomacy Enters a New Era," Foreign Affairs, April 2014, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141190/hisham-aidi/hip-hop-diplomacy.

Engaging the private sector

Private sector actors may be best placed to support and promote sports, arts, and cultural programs and activities and provide the materials and platforms needed for these initiatives to reach broader local audiences. For example, meeting participants shared about production companies that develop television and radio programming for youth and children. While the primary objective is to entertain and capture a market, such programming includes important messages about values, such as tolerance and the respect for the rule of law, and highlights positive aspects of cultural differences, drawing on the success of earlier programs like "Meena," created by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).[28] Additionally, shows like "Burka Avenger" in Pakistan promotes female education and polio vaccinations, for example, while emphasizing the negative effects of extremism on national development.[29] In Jordan, Aranim Media Factory produces comic books and social media games that provide Arab youth with positive role models and messaging.

Corporate entities are also in a position to provide sporting supplies and support the development of venues, teams, and materials to help create sports programs. This is especially important as companies are increasingly interested in corporate social responsibility and in developing and maintaining security in places where they are investing a great deal of resources. Moreover, in many cases, corporate actors have the funds and resources to conduct sophisticated audience analysis, content research and development, and evaluations that shed light on reach and impact, which can better inform policies and practice.

Increasingly the roles of the private sector and corporations are recognized by international actors, for example, through efforts to enhance public-private partnerships in counterterrorism efforts. Another example is the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Business and Human Rights (2005–2011), who focused on developing a framework for engaging corporate actors in enhancing their commitments to human rights and social responsibility.[30] More recently, Google has been helping the Malian government digitize its Timbuktu manuscripts and film the city to create a "Google Street View" where, for a fee, users will be able to see the manuscripts and virtually visit the mosques and monuments in a city that is considered to be the "centre of Islamic learning from the 14th to 16th centuries."[31]

What are the practical challenges of incorporating sports, arts, and culture into CVE programming?

Difficult to evaluate

For many practitioners working in the areas of sports, arts, and, culture, measuring

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28 Meena, a nine-year-old female cartoon character, was created to raise awareness about education, health, and gender equality. See UNICEF, "Meena Communication Initiative," n.d., http://www.unicef.org/rosa/media_2479.htm.
29 See "Burka Avenger," n.d., http://www.burkaavenger.com.
30 Business and Human Rights Resource Center, "UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Business and Human Rights," http://business-humanrights.org/en/un-secretary-generals-special-representative-on-business-human-rights.
31 English, "War-Torn Mali Plans to Build University in Timbuktu."

the impact of their programs has been a difficult issue.[32] This was clear among many government officials and CVE practitioners who expressed concern that the inability to develop clear and quantifiable data about the impact of cultural and sports initiatives on CVE and security issues had a negative impact on the resources and funding available for such projects. These concerns are closely tied to the question of whether cultural diplomacy serves to promote or protect specific national interests, or to facilitate the exchange of culture for its own sake. It was noted that preventive engagement, including countering violent extremism, often took place along a different timeline from law enforcement measures, which were more geared to respond to immediate threats. Law enforcement measures are also evaluable—it is easy to identify whether targets had been captured or impeded. Unlike these tactical interventions, prevention is a strategic process where results are often only visible in the medium to long term, going beyond many funding cycles and government administration tenures, which hinders continuity. Evaluation under these conditions, especially in cases where there are no dedicated funds for monitoring and evaluation, can be particularly elusive and challenging.

Preference for military or law-enforcement initiatives

It was widely acknowledged among officials and practitioners that there is sometimes a disconnect between government policies and actions and the messaging campaigns, and that "hard power" measures sometimes make it difficult to optimize the use of "soft power" approaches. Military interventions, law enforcement measures, or tactics and other actions taken by states can appear contrary to some of the CVE messaging efforts. At the workshop participants shared that audiences in local communities can be sensitive to these gaps between messaging and action—the "say-do gap"—and that while sports, arts, and culture may be used to foster positive impressions, they cannot undo or compensate for some of the negative effects of some security measures or militarized interventions. Moreover, it was noted that military and law-enforcement measures can even contribute to extremist narratives of injustice and persecution, and drum up recruits and sympathy by those who might not be otherwise inclined toward extremist ideologies. What is important in the menu of options for preventing violent extremism is to develop a balanced approach that includes traditional military and law-enforcement responses that are complementary to CVE programs and policies, including those that include sports, arts, and culture.

The security-development-culture divide

Countering violent extremism differs from more traditional counterterrorism strategies not only in its preventive nature but also in working with a broad spectrum of practitioners from fields not usually associated with security as part of an effort to address the underlying drivers of violent extremism. Although positive strides have been

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32 Ditchley Foundation, "Cultural Diplomacy: Does it Work?" March 2012, http://www.ditchley.co.uk/conferences/past-programme/2010-2019/2012/cultural-diplomacy. According to the conference report, "Government willingness to fund cultural diplomacy was, unfortunately, closely linked to the fraught issue of measuring its impact. Cultural diplomacy was inherently a messy business, with uncertain outcomes. Reliable numbers could not be put on such intangibles, and the effort was doomed to fail. Even when using public opinion surveys, with a baseline established before a particular event or campaign, it was impossible to be sure of causal links, given the myriad of influences which operated on people. Qualitative assessment and analysis was the best that could be hoped for, for all the weaknesses of such essentially subjective judg-ments."

made in recent years by focusing on areas of convergence between experts focused on security, development, humanitarian engagement, and culture, there remain tensions between these communities that limit the scope for interaction. In some part, this has been attributed to bureaucratic inertia and interdepartmental silos. In other cases, there is wariness that association with security objectives will endanger programs and personnel associated with countering violent extremism, and on the other side, that such initiatives dilute the security imperative.

Protecting the credibility of interlocutors

Resonant and effective CVE messaging depends largely on having credible interlocutors who are closely associated with the community or region, such as teachers, religious counselors, community leaders, or cultural figures. There has been widespread agreement that in most cases, governments are not the most effective or credible voices when it comes to counter- or alternative messaging (unless governments are taking on the role of explicitly explaining government policy). Many governments recognize these challenges and discreetly support CVE initiatives to avoid compromising the credibility of interlocutors. This is particularly important as extremists often take advantage of instances where interlocutors are perceived to be promoting a certain agenda or acting on behalf of the government to promote their own agenda and narratives. When sports, arts, and cultural programs for CVE purposes are heavily based in community organizations, protecting the credibility of the actors on the ground becomes exceedingly important.

At the same time, it is important that civil society actors and others working at the community level have enough trust in local authorities to discuss their concerns and seek assistance on matters related to their security. Building that trust would enable citizens to feel more comfortable alerting authorities about possible threats to the security of their own community from extremists. It will require a concerted effort from governments to develop community outreach by police and other frontline officials to establish and reinforce ethical policies, procedures, and conduct to demonstrate acknowledgment of their duty to serve and protect the public.

Soft targets

Although sports, arts, and culture can be a uniting force, it was also acknowledged that in some cases they may contribute to divisiveness and tensions, and that they might also provide soft targets for extremist groups, especially if they are seen to symbolize what the groups oppose. The examples of attacks on schoolgirls in Nigeria, the destruction of schools and markets in Pakistan, attacks on World Cup audiences in Kenya and Uganda and on NGO activities and festivals in Bangladesh, for example, highlight the vulnerability of these events and groups.

Recommendations

The recommendations below reflect the research for this brief and the discussions in Abu Dhabi and elsewhere, and include a number of key ideas for national, regional, and international actors on incorporating sports, arts, and culture into efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism.

1. Increase support for civil society actors in sports, arts, and cultural programming for countering violent extremism.
The global scope of CVE engagement would benefit from a multilateral diplomacy fund that would engage civil society actors who play an important role in sports, arts, and culture, including educators, athletes, foundations, nongovernmental organizations, and cultural organizations. The recently launched GCTF initiative, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), may be one mechanism for increasing support for civil society groups to undertake CVE engagement using sports, arts, and culture.

2. Increase support for initiatives to make sports and arts facilities safe and build trust.
This support should focus on improving the professionalization of frontline officials and provide continual training and education on how to foster and build trust with communities so that officials gauge and improve public perceptions, and ensuring the safety of sports and arts facilities could be important confidence-building measures. Education and support for regular community outreach and undertaking programs to ensure that sports facilities are safe should be an integral part of this support.

3. Engage the private sector and foundations.
Deepen dialogue and increase collaboration with private sector actors in the fields of sports, arts, and culture. This could be done, for example, through the convening of multi-stakeholder events that bring together government, civil society, and private sector actors to generate CVE programming ideas that incorporate sports, arts, and culture.

4. Provide funding for deliberate sports, arts, and cultural programming.
For sports, arts, and culture to have a visible impact on social cohesion, they need to be strategically implemented with a deliberate focus on CVE-related outcomes. That is, the benefits of sports would not be optimized simply by gathering people to play, but by crafting a program that fosters a collaborative team spirit, promotes dialogue, and provides individual support. Likewise, simply making the arts or cultural programs accessible may be insufficient and would need a deliberate effort to link them to messaging about diversity, critical thinking, shared histories, or demystifying extremist narratives—"myth busting." To that end, it would be useful to conduct a study identifying and analyzing extremist usage of sports, arts, and culture, and narratives that can be targeted through efforts to challenge them.

5. Broaden the scope of CVE practice using sports, arts, and culture.
Increase outreach to critical actors like sports foundations, museums, cultural associations, private sector firms, and others who are not considered "traditional" security actors and inviting them to participate in CVE discussions. There are many existing programs that are not deliberately designed for countering violent extremism but have been

identified as having attendant CVE benefits. Deepening engagement with these organizations and actors would help them to conceptualize and implement CVE initiatives that will be more acceptable to local communities and resonate with their culture and traditions. Sports, arts, and cultural programs for CVE purposes can also potentially expand and enhance existing CVE programs, or reinforce values learned, for example, in an educational setting.

6. *Ensure quality and sustainability of sports, arts, and cultural programming.*

Invest more resources in developing tailored needs assessments and in monitoring and evaluations to measure the impact of such programming. There should be frank discussions on lessons learned, particularly with local implementing partners. Engagement with local partners is crucial to ensuring that initiatives resonate with the needs, traditions, and cultures of local communities and that efforts to counter or challenge extremist narratives draw on extant resources that are more familiar to local audiences. Enhancing the cultural competency of CVE experts and deepening the cross-fertilization between regional and thematic expertise is important to the development of sustainable programs. In addition, regional and thematic expertise is vital to the development of sustainable programs. Finally, sports, arts, and cultural programs should be produced in accordance with professional and quality control standards.

7. *Support robust evaluations of sports, arts, and cultural programming.*

Programming for sports, arts, and culture needs to be supported by resources to undertake evaluations to better understand the CVE potential and impact of such initiatives. Implementers may be matched with external evaluators or funding grants must include provisions for an evaluator's time and analysis. While larger private sector sports, arts, and cultural actors may have such resources, smaller civil society groups often struggle to communicate the potential and impact of their efforts, or offer their lessons learned to inform future programming in a supportive environment.

Authors

This policy brief was prepared on behalf of the Global Center and Hedayah by Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Rafia Bhulai, Wedad Alhassen, and Sara Zeiger. The views expressed in this policy brief are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organizations or their advisory boards.

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About the Global Center

The Global Center works with governments, international organizations, and civil society to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to complex international security challenges through collaborative policy research, context-sensitive programming, and capacity development. In collaboration with a global network of expert practitioners and partner organizations, the Global Center fosters stronger multilateral partnerships and convenes key stakeholders to support integrated and inclusive security policies across national, regional, and global levels.

About Hedayah

Hedayah is the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, and was established in Abu Dhabi in December 2012 at the Third Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Ministerial Meeting. Hedayah's mission is to serve as the premier international institution for training and capacity building, dialogue and collaboration, and research and analysis to counter violent extremism in all of its forms. Hedayah focuses on the preventive, proactive approaches that support of long-term, global efforts to build community resilience to violent extremism.