ZAID HASSAN
MIA EISENSTADT

THE SYSTEMIC EVALUATION OF COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE) AND COUNTER TERRORISM (CT) PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

Current understandings of the causes of CVE *and* CT *contribute to the inadequacy of current evaluation efforts. We present an alternative to the prevalent epistemological approach to understanding the situations that* CVE *and* CT *strategies are concerned with. This involves a phenomenological description of three spaces, pre-event, event (for example, remote detonated bombings, martyrdom operations, hijackings and kidnappings)and post-event spaces. We demonstrate that the processes leading to such events are stochastic in nature and not deliberative. We outline two key distinctions that need to be made prior to attempting the evaluation of* CVE/CT *programmes, Finally, we outline four methodological shifts required in order to undertake the systemic evaluation of* CVE/CT *programmes. We argue that these shifts constitute the basis for the systemic evaluation of* CVE *and* CT *programmes that in turn allow us to design more effective* CVE/CT *strategies.*

1. INTRODUCTION

IN THE MYRIAD capitols of the world, from Riyadh to Washington DC, the events of 9/11 marked a watershed. That September day was perceived to to be heralding a new and unanticipated form of conflict, requiring new counter terrorism (CT) and countering violent extremism (CVE) strategies. There has subsequently been a proliferation of government-led approaches towards countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism worldwide, with a special focus on what is understood as Islamic extremism.

Almost two decades of attacks such as the Bali bombing, "7/7" attacks on the British Transport system in 2005, the train station bombing in Madrid, the murder of film-maker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam in 2004, the Mumbai attacks in India, the Boston bombing,the Anders Breivik attacks and events such as Charlie Hebdo, provide us a rich and tragic field of battle against which to evaluate the success of these strategies.

Current efforts to evaluate CVE and CT programmes are problematic. In many cases there is a lack of actual evaluation data (many programmes are simply not evaluated – either ex-ante or ex-poste) and where evaluations exist, these evaluations are not sufficiently robust. Recent attempts to remedy this situation stipulate that programmes must be evaluated, particularly when publically funded. Improving the robustness of these evaluations typically involves making the case for normalisation of indicators and metrics in order to allow comparative assessments with the goal being to "measure the negative" i.e. attributing causality where the desired outcome is a nonevent.

In this paper, we argue that these attempts are misguided and flawed for three reasons. First, instead of dealing directly with phenomenon on the ground, they start with epistemological challenges, which all too often rest on shaky, sometimes unnamable ideological assumptions. Secondly, they confuse the nature of radicalization through assuming a deliberative process when in fact the process of radicalization is stochastic (random). Finally, they attempt a predictive logic model instead of looking backwards at the failure path leading to an event.

Section I: We review the existing literature to show the current understandings of the causes of CVE and CT and how they contribute

to the inadequacy of current evaluation efforts. We underscore the problems with current evaluation with reference to the literature from several fields. This leads to a discussion on why better evaluation of CVE and CT programmes is urgently needed.

Section II: We then present an alternative to the prevalent epistemological approach to understanding the situations that CVE and CT strategies are concerned with. This involves a phenomenological description of three spaces, pre-event, event and post-event spaces. CVE/CT efforts are concerned with the agency of actors within these three spaces and the probabilities that their movement from one space to another leads to breaches of law, through events such as remote detonated bombings, martyrdom operations, hijackings and kidnappings. We demonstrate that the processes leading to such events are stochastic in nature and not deliberative.

Section III: We outline two key distinctions that need to be made prior to attempting the evaluation of CVE/CT programmes, including a distinction between strategy and programmes, and between "upstream" and "downstream" spaces, ensuring that programmes are sited appropriately. We then outline four methodological shifts required in order to undertake the systemic evaluation of CVE/CT programmes. These four shifts include a shift from monitoring to open archiving, a shift from a peer evaluation to an extended epistemic peer community, a shift from a linear to an iterative approach and a shift from single to multiple narratives. We argue that these shifts constitute the basis for the systemic evaluation of CVE and CT programmes that in turn allow us to design more effective CVE/CT strategies.

Section 1: Situating research on CVE and CT

STUDIES OF COUNTERING Violent Extremism, Counter Terrorism and preventing radicalisation span a range of disciplines. Since the 1960s, research on the topic has been predominantly conducted in the fields of sociology, social psychology and political science, as well as International Relations, often under the rubric of Security Studies. There is no commonly agreed definition of the terms: "terrorism", "extremism" and "radicalisation" amongst either government policy makers or academics. Precise definitions vary from one policy document to another and amongst different scholarly definitions. Nevertheless, the field of study of terrorism and radicalisation has matured in the past 40 years, taking a particular emphasis on understanding radicalisation and various forms of extra-judicial violence, such as remote detonated bombings, martyrdom operations, hijackings, massacres, beheading or kidnappings.

America and European states each have their own "working definitions" for radicalisation, terrorism and extremism. These definitions understand terrorism as a threat to democracy, and the use of violence to achieve a political goal. The U.K.'s Home Office refers to radicalisation as:

> *"The process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, then to join terrorist groups."*

Early approaches towards understanding terrorism and radicalisation saw the factors influencing an individual to turn to join an extremist group as psychological, an act of mental instability; more recent studies have emphasised the role of context and other factors, such as peer networks and ideology in support for, and the joining of terrorist groups.

Whereas previous studies focused on the act of terrorism as an event, this has shifted to a focus on understanding the pathway to radicalisation as a process that can vary from one context to another. How this process occurs, in what ways, and for whom, is still an area understood to be requiring further research, and most scholars suggest how unique the pathway is in different social settings. The concepts of radicalisation and terrorism are interlinked and can be conflated –however there are clear differences. People with radical ideas or justifications for violent actions do not always become violent and likewise those carrying out violent acts do not always have radical ideas or ideologies. Why this is so is not well understood.

Peter Neumann(2013) has identified a lack of clarity in the concept of radicalization. He argues that there is a difference between extremist beliefs and extremist behavior and that counter terrorism policies and policy discourses conflate the two (Neuman 2010, Neumann 2013). Scholars agree that the sequence of becoming radicalised is a process, and linear and simplistic models have been criticized. While the sophistication of the hypothized "radicalization process" has shifted from overly simplistic models, these processes are still treated as deliberative (as we will discuss further on). Marc Sageman argues that it's not a linear process but one that requires the presence of several factors. Social Psychologists McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) identify ten different social psychological processes that are in operation during radicalisation ranging from personal and political grievances to thrill-seeking behaviour (Clark McCauley 2008).

Within CVE programmes there has been a focus on making a measured reduction in the rate of "recruitment" to so-called "terrorist" organisations. However, amongst academics there is debate as to what exactly recruitment is and whether the process is indeed one of recruitment, or one involving agency on the part of the individual. Marc Sageman (2004, 2006) describes it as "enlistment" recognizing that individuals may want to join and may volunteer to be part of a "terrorist" organization. The labels of "terrorist" and "terrorist organization" have to be treated with extreme caution as they are contextually and ideologically determined.

Discourses on extremism tend to be focused particularly on Islamic extremism above other forms of extremism. The culturalist school of thought sees Islam itself as inherently at odds with Western culture, arguing that a reading of Islamic texts demonstrates the cultural incompatibility of Islam with Western culture.

This "clash of civilisations" view propagated by Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntingdon and Robert Spencerhas gained significant political and media attention and influence. In Robert Spencer's book *Stealth Jihad* (2008)(R 2008), he argues that key Islamic texts and teachings propose subjugation of and warfare against non-Muslims (unbelievers), and advocate *Sharia* law to be globally imposed as the only legitimate source of social and political authority (2008:13). The far-reaching implication for policy is that Muslims as a whole are a "suspect community" requiring intelligence gathering and surveillance both domestically in Western countries and on the battlefield in the Middle East.

The "reformist" view sees ideology as a key source of extremism and the political ideology of *Islamism* as the problem, not Islam itself. Ed Husain's popular biographical book *The Islamist* (Husain 2001) argues that within Islam there was a conflict between extremists and moderates towards the West (It is worth noting that Husain's autobiographical account is far from what would be considered a scholarly position among Islamic jurists, yet have proven a popular source of understanding in the corridors of government). This reformist view ushered in new types of CT and CVE that focuses on countering extremist ideology through encouraging Muslims in the UK and USA to demonstrate their patriotism. The focus became the battle of ideas or, as influential counter terrorism scholar Marc Sageman described it in his book, *Leaderless Jihad* (Sageman 2006), as "a battle for hearts and minds." "Formers" like Husain and his partner, Majid Nawaz, have played a key role in making this case.

In the last ten years, policy towards countering extremism domestically became increasingly (and reluctantly) interlinked with foreign policy. Governments and policy makers recognized the globalized nature of terrorist networks and communications – often because the explicitly stated motives of perpetrators of domestic violence cited foreign policy as part of their justification for acting outside the law. As CT and CVE policy aimed to provide counter narratives to so called "terrorist" propaganda domestically, through disseminating information and building partnerships, foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan took a similar approach trying to moderate extremist views on the battlefield.

Led by General Petraeus, American troops began to fight the "battle of ideas" using classic Counter-Insurgency (COIN) techniques. Ostensibly these approaches tried to develop greater understanding of the Muslim populations in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan for CT purposes. Their adaptation of approaches from the social sciences led to charges of "weaponising anthropology" (Price 2011) and furious responses from the social science community (Anthropologists 2009, Gonzalez 2009). Government policy adopted a combination of hard power and soft power in CT interventions as demonstrated by Obama's Cairo speech, appealing to build relationships with the Muslim world accompanied by aggressive kinetic operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and drone strikes in Yemen.

Arun Kundnani (2014) argues in his book *The Muslims Are Coming* that both the reformist and culturalist perspectives are two sides of the same coin, they both single out Muslim ideology as the root cause of terrorism. Both invalidate political reasons behind radicalisation such as a citizen's opposition to Western powers' foreign policy and instead "collude to sustain a shared discourse of Muslims as the problem" (Kundnani 2014) requiring statutory intervention.

Academic scholarship on CT and CVE has been, from the outset, deeply intertwined with government policy agendas and counter-terrorism agendas. The lines between academic scholarship and policy-making are blurred, with many academics also acting as advisors to Government or chairing think tanks or policy circles. In a review of scholarship on the causes of radicalisation, Randy Borum (Borum 2011) found that the study of radicalisation is informed by three key schools: Social Movement Theory, social psychology and conversion theory from the sociology of religion. He concludes that whilst all three areas of studies have contributed to understanding of radicalisation as an event, not a process, and the group dynamics and the power of ideologies, none give easy answers:

> *"Social Movement Theory has shown how ideologies may develop a life of their own that transcends the boundaries of any particular group. It also has helped to emphasize the importance of process, not just transformation, including critical distinctions that may exist between the processes underlying one's entry into a movement and those driving the nature and level of participation. Social psychology has moved the study of human behavior beyond a preoccupation with individual traits, to emphasize the power of situations and social interaction, influence, and conflict at collective levels. Finally, conversion theory links these concepts together, pointing out the importance of integrating—rather than polarizing—pre- disposing conditions and situational factors in understanding causes of extremism."* **(1)**

1. Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories [http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1139&context=jss]

Whilst the lessons from scholarship have influenced policy and potentially contributed towards more nuanced policy that recognises the specificity of particular groups and the pursuit of a hard and soft power strategy, they have not provided clear guidance for how to do evaluation of programme effectiveness or the best ways to prevent terrorism or violent extremism.

THE URGENT NEED FOR EVALUATION IN CVE/CT

WHILE THERE HAS been an acceleration in the sheer number of CVE and CT programmes initiated by national governments across the globe, evaluation of these programs has not managed to keep apace, resulting in a serious challenge. A study by Cynthia Lum *et.al.* (2006) (Lum 2006) highlights the apparent gap in the literature, noting that only about 3000 (or 1,5 percent) of a total of 20,000 studies on the topic of terrorism discuss the idea of evaluating the effectiveness of counter- terrorist measures in some form, while only seven deal with it specifically.

The absence of evaluation and reliable evidence to inform policy is becoming more widely understood and acknowledged. In a recent BBC NEWS article covering the results of a poll of a 1000 Muslims in Bradford and their attitudes towards the Charlie Hebdo attacks, Former Foreign Office minister Baroness Warsi said the poll highlighted her view that the government's terrorism policy was not based enough on evidence. Speaking on Radio 4's Today programme she was quoted to have said: "What is the evidence that shows us *how* people are being radicalised? "What is the evidence that shows us the route to someone becoming a terrorist? We just don't have this. We don't have definitive data that we work to and that is why I think we get much of our policy wrong." **(2)**

2. Most British Muslims' Oppose Muhammad Cartoons Reprisals, BBC NEWS, 25th January 2015 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31293196]

Some policy and academic research does point to evidence of cases where CVE and CT efforts may have the unintended consequence of encouraging the possibility for radicalisation rather than preventing it. In the realm of policy the UK Government's "first generation" PREVENT policy is now well understood to have alienated Muslim communities and created suspicion by planting informants amongst communities, Thomas (2010) described it as "failed and friendless"(Paul 2010).

The evaluation of the PREVENT programme occurred when damage had already done: the programme began in 2007. Part of the PREVENT strategy, the Channel Programme, required teachers to scout for signs of extremism or extremist ideology in their students. Teachers were not given training or funding to perform this role. Professor Ted Cantle who leads the community cohesion review team was reported in a Guardian article to have said:

"There will be a separation between counter-terrorist work and the efforts of schools to integrate communities. I hope the present government doesn't make

the same mistakes, which have alienated communities," he said, "I don't think the identification of children at risk of terrorism will continue. It has caused an awful lot of trouble. Most teachers don't have an in-depth understanding of Muslim communities." **(3)**

From a theoretical perspective, Beatrice de Graaf (2011) **(4)** conducted a historical survey of the communicative aspects of counter terrorism that shows how ineffective CVE and CT policy can unwittingly be counterproductive. She defines the performative power of counter terrorism as *"the extent to which national government, by means of its official counterterrorism policy and corresponding discourse aims to mobilise public and political support and in the last instance, wittingly or unwittingly, assists the terrorists in creating social drama. (Ibid, p12)"*

She concludes that a low-key approach to counter terrorism that plays down the perception of injustice and oppression in the population being targeted for recruitment is most likely to reduce the risk of people joining a so called "terrorist" movement or group. In contrast to such low-key approaches are approaches that target an entire demographic without discernment.

We can therefore identify clear dangers with an absence of meaningful evaluation of CVE and CT efforts in addition to the fact that without clear understanding of what works in preventing terrorism, it is unclear where policies to prevent terrorism should focus.

This paper takes current research into the causes of radicalisation, current CVE and CT programmes and the well-noted absence of evaluation of CVE and CT studies as its starting point to make the case for a systemic approach towards evaluation.

3. Schools' counter terrorism project reviewed 18th February, 2011, The Guardian › Politics › Counter-terrorism policy [http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/feb/18/schools-counter-terrorism-project-review]

4. de Graaf, B (2011) Terrorists on Trial: A Performative Perspective, *International Centre for Counter Terrorism Expert Meeting Paper*

Section II. Towards a Phenomenology of CVE and CT

ALL EFFORTS AT countering violent extremism must confront two fundamental challenges: that of prevention and that of complexity. The challenge of prevention is that by its nature the task concerns prevention of actions that may occur in the future. This problem can be thought of as the problem of negative action. The nature of evidence that proves a violent act may be undertaken can range from the circumstantial, such as statements of intent and ideology, through to actual evidence of planning a violent act.

In the absence of such actual evidence, we are operating in the murky-space of what can be called a "thought crime." [5] Does an individual thinking about a violent act constitute a threat? Does an individual who expresses sympathy for a so called "terrorist" group constitute a threat? Monitoring this "thought space" is, of course, not only impractical but also fraught with political risks, such as infringement of rights and privacy, as well as the alienation of entire communities, especially those that fit a particular identified group. [6] In other words, programmes focused on countering violent extremism operate at an ethereal realm of thought and, at best, contingency planning. They must thus demonstrate their effectiveness at certain actions not happening, at deterrence.

5. The term was coined by George Orwell in his dystopian novel 1984.

6. This scenario has been the subject of countless dystopian science-fiction novels and films, starting with Orwell's 1984. The strapline for the (2002) Tom Cruise film Minority Report, based on the (1956) story by Phillip K. Dick summarizes the risk perfectly "The Future Can Be Seen. Murder Can be Prevented. The Guilty Punished Before the Crime is Committed. The System is Perfect. It's Never Wrong. Until It Comes After You."

The second challenge is that of the nature of complexity, which manifests as a problem of *complex causality*. What causes an individual or a group of individual to engage in violent extremism? How are we to address the causal factors? We will address this specific aspect in more detail below, drawing from the framework of technical and adaptive challenges by Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow from the Kennedy School at Harvard.

The terrain of Countering Violent Extremism and Counter Terrorism is both *complex and adaptive* according to this framework. A complex challenge is one that is characterized by emergent phenomena, new information and adaptive behaviour. The task of countering violent extremism is radically different from a purely technical challenge, where both the problem space and the solution space are well defined.

Kind of work	*Problem definition*	*Solution definition*	*Locus of work*
Technical	*Clear*	*Clear*	*Authority*
Technical & Adaptive	*Clear*	*Requires learning*	*Authority & Stakeholders*
Adaptive	*Requires learning*	*Requires learning*	*Stakeholders*

FIG 1. Distinction between Adaptive versus Technical Challenges (Hiefitz *et. al* 2009)

CVE and CT is largely an adaptive challenge. Adaptive challenges are characterized by a lack of both problem definition and solution definition (Ronald A. Heifetz 2009). In other words, not only do we not know what the solutions are, we struggle to define the problem. Critically, the locus of work with adaptive challenges is not experts but stakeholders. The locus of the work being a diverse group of stakeholders raises a number of challenges, including one of language.

Currently a wide range of definitions for CVE and CT are in common use, each reflecting the particular needs of the discourse they sit within. Discussions on CVE and CT programming tend to either skirt or attempt to address directly what could be called "the definition problem" which underpins a tacit position that this definitional pluralism is a problem to be resolved through the normalization of terminology. **(7)** A lack of normalization risks strategic paralysis due to a lack of agreement. Recommendations for improving CVE evaluations therefore attempt to normalize indicators and definitions as a way of breaking out of strategic paralysis.

7. *Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism Programming: Practice and Progress*, by Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Peter Romaniuk and Rafia Barakat, September 2013, Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation. [https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10295/40299/FINAL+REPORT+-+March+2013+Symposium+Evaluating+CVE+Programming+-+10+Oct+2013.pdf]

The "definitional problem" however, reflects a dominant policy-orientated and epistemologically biased approach to the issue of CVE and CT. Definitions are required in order to categorize efforts. What is and isn't a governmental CVE effort? Does a particular programme qualify for funding that may be marked as CVE? In a recent conference, one official pointed out that if you look at it one way, "75% of USAID funding could be construed as CVE funding, but then others will argue that this is not directly addressing the issue of CVE." **(8)**

8. Zaid Hassan, unpublished personal journal, CVE Conference (*Sharing Lessons Learned and Good Practices in Counterterrorism-Related International, Regional, and National Training, Centers, Academies, and other Institutions,* Conference Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, National Defence University, Washington, DC, January 25-26, 2012)

The fact is, where diverse demographics are concerned, multiple definitions are the norm. It is a given that an activist in Dhaka will look quizzically at definitions proposed by bureaucrats in Brussels. Taking a phenomenological approach, as opposed to an abstract epistemological

approach avoids the trap of this "definitional problem" while keeping us grounded in the real world (as opposed to an abstracted world of PowerPoint (Tufte 2006) and reports).

Taking observation as its starting point, a phenomenological approach would view the phenomenon of a plurality of definitions as essentially a part of the socio-political landscape, as something to be navigated and addressed strategically and contextually.

A phenomenological description of CVE and CT can be described by examining three spaces: *pre-event*, *event* and *post-event*. An event can be defined as "something that disrupts the current situation," [9] for example an act of violence against civilians.

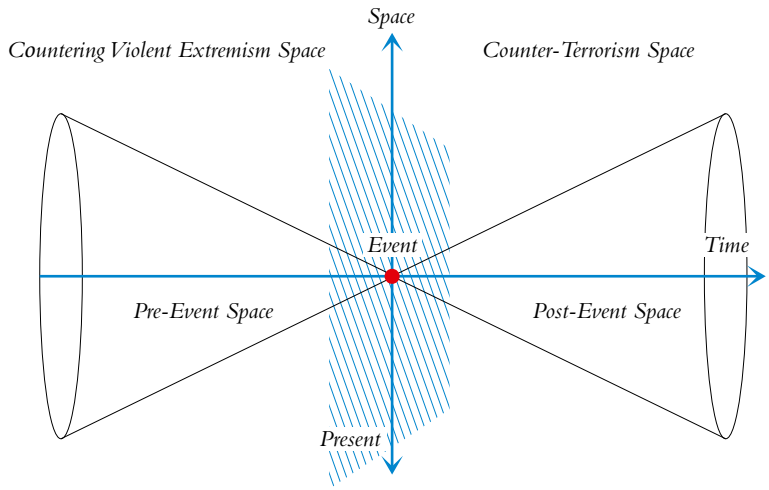

FIG 2. Three Spaces of CVE & CT

An event, such as a remote detonated bombings, martyrdom operations, hijackings, beheading or kidnappings, marks a clear distinction between a pre-event space, the event itself, and a post-event space. Once such an event has occurred then we are in a post-event space where a different set of strategies is required. One way of understanding an "event" is to see the event as the product of a process.

Drawing from risk literature [10], a phenomenological view of this event is to not simply see a simple point (a moment or incident) in the plane of the present, but a "failure path" from the event to the past, leading through the event. The pre-event space can be thought of in terms of probabilities – what are the probabilities that a "failure path" occurs, leading to the "event"? What can be done to understand

9. The idea of the "event" comes from the work of French philosopher Alain Badiou. An "event" for Badiou is something that falls outside of what we currently know and it disrupts the current situation. This idea is also consummate with the idea of a "trauma event" which for a victim cleaves past and future. See "The Event as Trans-Being," *Theoretical Writings* by Alain Badiou. Continuum.

10. Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies Charles Perrow, Princeton University Press, September 27, 1999; The Logic Of Failure: Recognizing And Avoiding Error In Complex Situations, Dietrich Dorner, Basic Books; 1 edition, August 4, 1997; The Grown Ups' Book of Risk: Why **it Happens, Omar Malik, New Insight Press, September 2008

this failure path? The failure path has to be understood as a process unfolding over time and as that process unfolds, the probability of an event gets higher and higher, culminating in the event itself.

The process does not unfold cleanly and clearly over time, but rather through a series of smaller, seemingly unconnected sub-events in the pre-event space. In most cases these unconnected sub-events remain exactly that, unconnected sub-events that do not form a failure path. From time to time, however, they align. How often do they align? To take just one example, that of the UK, the figures for a decade of arrests and convictions are as follows.

"Between September 2001 and the end of August 2012, 2,297 people were subject to terrorism-related arrest in Great Britain. Of these, 838 were charged with either a terrorism-related or a non-terrorism-related offence." **(11)**

Of the 64.1 million population of the UK, the 36% of 2,297 arrested that were actually charged, translates into a 0.0013% chance *over a decade* that an individual in the UK will actually be charged with a terrorist-related crime. (A similar analysis can be done in most other countries, where the relative probability of an individual, compared to the overall population, is relatively low).

In other words, the relatively low probability of such events occurring (resulting in such a small sample size) coupled with the geographic distribution of perpetrators means that there can be no meaningful statistical correlation and therefore a statistical determination of causal factors is impossible. The implication of this in the design of CVE and CT strategies is significant.

The number of so-called "radicalized individuals" who are moved to commit a crime, is so low that it should be clear that we are dealing instead with a *stochastic process*, that is a collection of random variables coming together resulting in an event. These events are *black swans* and they are not predictable. (The only way these events could be non-stochastic is if we narrowed down the pool of potential suspects we're looking at so that numbers in the low hundreds over a decade represents a sizable sample. This would be true for example, if all convictions for terrorism related crimes in the UK originated in say, the one square mile of the City. But this is not the case). **(12)**

11. Counter terrorism statistics, Crime statistics, Policing statistics and Terrorism arrests - analysis of charging and sentencing outcomes by religion: data tables, Home Office, 12 September 2013 [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-arrests-analysis-of-charging-and-sentencing-outcomes-by-religion/terrorism-arrests-analysis-of-charging-and-sentencing-outcomes-by-religion]

12. For a geographical distribution of terrorist attacks see The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2014 (with annual updates planned for the future). Unlike many other event databases, the GTD includes systematic data on domestic as well as international terrorist incidents that have occurred during this time period and now includes more than 140,000 cases. See http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=bar&chart=regions& casualties_type=&casualties_max=&country=216 for a database of all terrorism related events in the UK

The core assumption underpinning many CVE & CT programmes is that events such as martyrdom operations, or Lee Rigby style attacks, are the results of a *deterministic process* (often referred to as "phase models" [13]), labeled "radicalization" [14] The shift in understanding that has occurred in the CVE/CT field, that these events are the product of a process therefore presents a misleading conclusion.

Attempts to predict this failure path in advance are futile because we are dealing with random variables, with an infinite number of pathways to the event. For example, examining the failure path that led three young British girls to fly to Syria to join Daesh might lead us to several points in their biographies that culminated in their decision. These points, however, are random in that their impact on the psychology of the three girls is impossible to predict, *even though we believe we can generalize*. This belief makes little sense, because doing so would mean that a statistically significant number of young girls exposed to the same (generalized) process would end up going to Syria and this is clearly not the case. This is because we are dealing with stochastic processes.

While there is some understanding of the stochastic nature of the radicalization process in the literature [15] (even though the literature stops short of naming radicalization processes as stochastic in nature), the impact of this understanding on practitioners, those who are actually designing strategies and programmes on the ground is questionable.

In order to understand the failure path, we can examine the nature of the event-spaces involved in such events. Examining the three spaces in Fig 2., for a given event E, the set of events that lie on or inside the pre-event space of E would also be the set of all events that could influence E in some way. Incidents outside this pre-event space would by definition not be able to have a causal impact on E. Likewise, the set of events that lie on or inside the future post-event space of E would also be the set of events that contains all the events that could potentially be causally influenced by E. So how do we define what set of events lie within the pre-event cone? This question has to be answered specifically for each failure path and cannot meaningfully be answered independently of a failure path.

At the moment, the answer to the question of what set of events lie within the pre-event cone is too often determined politically and not through a phenomenological lens [16]. This is akin to deciding

13. For one critique of phase models see Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model, Tinka Veldhuis & JørgenStaun, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, October 2009

14. See for example, The PIE Model, Muslim Public Affairs Council [http://www.mpac.org/safespaces/files/MPAC-Safe-Spaces.pdf]

15. See Theoretical Frames on Pathways to Violent Radicalization Understanding the Evolution of Ideas and Behaviors, How They Interact and How They Describe Pathways to Violence in Marginalized Diaspora (2009) http://artisresearch.com/articles/ARTIS_Theoretical_Frames_August_2009.pdf

16. There are some notable efforts to categorize classes of causal factors, see Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model, TinkaVeldhuis&JørgenStaun, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, October 2009. These categories can be best understood as heuristics or rules-of-thumb that are contextually determined.

on political grounds what data from a flight recorder to include or exclude when investigating an accident. So for example, in the case of say a Lee Rigby or Boston Marathon situation, a phenomenological approach would need to take into account the testimony of the surviving perpetrators and examine their self-confessed motivations as a point within the pre-event cone in order to understand what events had a causal impact on the event E. This would lead to a necessary consideration of foreign policy, the conduct of security services, rendition, torture, and other such factors within the pre-event cone if necessary.

This leads us to what has been called the "Swiss cheese" theory of accident causation (Safbuild 2006), depicted in hundreds of works by showing several separated pieces, adjusted so that some of their random holes align with an arrow through them, the point being that when these holes (in other words, events) align," [17] to generate an event.

A parallel would be the failure path that leads to an industrial accident, such as the Fukushima disaster in Japan, where a cascade of improbable events resulting in a chain causes an accident that cannot be predicted in advance. Of-course, those advocating a "logic model" will argue that they are attempting to analyze the failure path, but they are not. They are attempting to generalize from random variables in order to predict the failure path. In other words, they are attempting to treat stochastic processes as deterministic. This error lies at the heart of the challenge of evaluating CVE/CT approaches.

17. Risk Savvy: How To Make Good Decisions, by Gerd Gigerenzer, May 1, 2014, Times Higher Education [http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/books/risk-savvy-how-to-make-good-decisions-by-gerd-gigerenzer/2012906.article]

WHAT IS EFFECTIVENESS IN CVE AND CT?

THE PARTICULAR NATURE of the CVE and CT challenges mean that defining programmatic effectiveness is not trivial. Effectiveness is, however, of particular concern to policy-makers and donors. The archetypical question is then, "What evidence do you have that tell us that your programme is effective?"

This question, however, should be unpacked.

The real challenge lies more in the political domain than that of rationality. The notion of "evidence" in the political space is a complex construct located in a particular culture of evidence that has its own rules. It could be argued that any response to the question of "is your programme effective?" constructed according to the rules of this culture will be accepted as constituting valid evidence, regardless of the on-the-ground reality of "effectiveness." What does this mean in practice?

In the instance of activities that fall under the legal jurisdiction of "anti-terrorism" laws, the prevalence of even a single event demands a political response. Part of the reason for this is that such events are big news. The challenge, of course, is that because of the stochastic nature of such events, politicians cannot shrug and say "look these are highly random and improbable events, there's very little that can actually be done to prevent them." This means that there is a risk that strategic responses to such events risk being what have been called, "the fantasy document," where,

> *"…organizations and experts use plans as forms of rhetoric, tools designed to convince audiences that they ought to believe what an organization says. In particular, some plans have so little instrumental utility in them that they warrant the label "fantasy document." (Clarke 2001)*

In the instance of situations of high uncertainty, such as the situation with CVE and CT strategies, it is worth examining the logic of the "fantasy document" in more detail,

> *"Under conditions of high uncertainty, however, the nature of planning changes in major ways. Under highly uncertain conditions rational planning becomes more difficult. Planning becomes more difficult because the vision of the future that it entails will likely be distorted by inadequate or corrupt*

data, and because the conceptual scheme brought to bear on those data is poor. When important aspects of the future are not or can not be known, planning is shorn of its most functional aspects (knowing what "important" means is part of effective planning). This is not to say that planning under high uncertainty can't in principle be effective. It is to say that the ability to know what constitutes effectiveness is terribly low or nonexistent. The importance of planning's symbolism then increases, relative to a plan's likelihood of being realized. In fact, under conditions of high uncertainty the promise and apparatus of rational planning itself becomes mainly rhetorical, becomes a means by which plans—independently of their functional relevance to the task—can be justified as reasonable promises that exigencies can be controlled. When uncertainty about key aspects of a task is high, rationalistic plans and rational-looking planning processes become rationality badges, labels proclaiming that organizations and experts can control things that are, most likely, without the range of their expertise. Planning then becomes a sign that organizations hang on themselves advertising their competence and forethought, announcing to all who would listen, "We know what this problem is and we know how to solve it. Trust us." Thus do organizations try to control the uncontrollable" (Clarke 2001).

Such a perspective raises a number of questions for those interested in evaluating the efficacy of CVE and CT programmes. In the context where we are dealing with such "symbolic planning," the question of effectiveness of CVE/CT programmes cannot really be answered through purely programmatic evaluations, rather a broader and more systemic evaluation is called for. This is one possible reason why traditional monitoring and evaluation approaches fail for CVE/CT programmes.

Section III A Systemic Approach to Evaluation

FIRST DISTINCTION: PROGRAMME VS STRATEGY EVALUATION

THE FIRST DISTINCTION that needs to be made in approaching the evaluation of CVE/CT programmes is the distinction between the evaluation of a programme and the evaluation of a strategy. In a military context, this would mean a distinction between reviewing an entire war-fighting strategy, versus a single tactical operational undertaken in a specific theatre. **(18)**

18. See General Sir Rupert Smith's The Utility of Force for more.

All too often, the effectiveness of a programme is a function of the effectiveness of the overall strategy, yet the evaluator is all too often not asked to review the strategy but only a programme. Anything more than a tactical evaluation (that is, an evaluation of inputs, such as was it on time, on budget and were the activities outlined in the programme completed) requires a critical examination of the strategy that a programme is being driven by.

A systemic approach towards CVE/CT and evaluation of CVE/CT programmes would draw on the insights of systems thinking and apply it to the subject of countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism. Systems thinking refers to an approach that shows there are multiple levels of explanation for any complex situation (Senge 2006) requiring examination of interacting activities. Burns (Burns 2006) argues this is crucial because "outcomes (positive or negative) will often have been to do with the interrelationship between interacting interventions than the effect of any individual action (2006, p22)."

By way of contrast, a non-systemic approach would therefore be tactically orientated, dismissing the challenges of complex causality, stochastic processes and the very nature of the phenomenon that strategies aim to address.

Non-systemic approaches can have an impact on the causes of extremist violence that reduce the rate of radicalisation, but as scholars and practitioners have both demonstrated, they can also inadvertently strengthen the rate of radicalisation and recruitment to extremist movements and can inadvertently increase the rate of growth of right wing extremist movements and acts of violence from these groups (Rimington, Stella 2010 MI6 Police State Personal testimony).

SECOND DISTINCTION: THE CONTEXT OF CVE VS CT SPACE

THE PRE-EVENT SPACE is best thought of as the space where CVE strategies are relevant. In other words CVE strategies must squarely confront the issue of negative action, preventing an event. In contrast, the role of Counter-Terrorism strategies can be thought of as operating in a context where an event falling under counter-terror law has occurred.

While there remains a CVE task (preventing future incidents) it could be argued that the task of CT strategies narrows down quite dramatically on the immediate kinetic aftermath and the question of recidivism on the part of any surviving individuals found guilty of terrorist-activities. In practice however strategies do not clearly sit in these spaces (the extra-judicial detainment and torture of actors is a case in point). However for those designing either CVE or CT strategies this demarcation of space is a critical strategic distinction. The probabilities in each space are very different (see for example the Saudi case [19]).

By widening the frame of inquiry, a systemic approach would make a deliberate choice of locating a strategy or programme focus. This would be either by focusing on the "downstream" pre-event space leading up to potentially violent actions and on various forms of deterrence, either positive (for example addressing grievances) or the "upstream" post-event space, focusing on an environment following an event. The context for evaluation would therefore be cited in these spaces. Obviously in instances where events have occurred, there may be pressure to respond in both spaces, but the distinction should be made on the basis of what the purpose of a programme is, if it is prevention of violent extremism then the foreground must be downstream.

19. Saudi terrorism programs have been considered a success story amidst national terrorism strategies. Saudi government has employed a mixture of hard and soft measures. Amongst the hard CT methods it has had some success in preventing acts of terrorism by dismantling Al Qaida and making it difficult for them to operate. Saudi Arabia has a well funded intelligence agency and established the Financial Crimes Unit in 2003 to uncover links between money laundering and the funding of terrorism. In terms of soft methods Saudi has been recognised for its rehabilitation methods. The Saudi program called the Advisory Committee Counseling Program is coordinated through the Ministry of the Interior and overseen by Prince Muhammed bin Nayef. The Prince is responsible for family and logistical care whilst participants are detained. The goal is to reintroduce former terrorists into society after they have given up their ideas and beliefs about violent terrorism. There are several subcommittees that bring together religious and psychology experts and work on different aspects of the counseling program. Participants cover in a workshop topics such as loyalty, terrorism and the state sanctioned rules of jihad. Boucek has argued that Saudi authorities report that the rate of successful rehabilitation is 80-90%. There is not a clear evidence base of how the interventions former terrorists received changed their behaviour, however, the example from Saudi has been widely showcased. Particularly as the Prince argues that from the entire program no more than 35 individuals have fallen into recidivism. (Horgan and Braddock 2010 p279)

FOUR METHODOLOGICAL SHIFTS

FOUR METHODOLOGICAL SHIFTS must be made in order to approach evaluation sistematically.

FIRST SHIFT: FROM MONITORING TO OPEN ARCHIVING

Firstly, a distinction must be made between monitoring and evaluation. In a traditional M&E framework, the two are intimately linked because the approach involves the evaluation of what is being monitored. The purpose of monitoring is to assemble an evidence-base of data, which can then be evaluated. The action of collecting data and evaluating it is a very human activity. We gather data through our senses, evaluate it and then make decisions accordingly. The loop is usually completed immediately, is intuitive and usually we do not pay attention to this process in itself, mainly because we do it instinctively, thousands of times a day. The feedback cycle is immediate.

In an M&E context, the cycle of monitoring and evaluation can be vastly different. On extremely large programmes, data is typically provided by field-workers, which is collated and then evaluated. The people doing the data-collection are not normally the analysts who evaluate the data. Traditional M&E will rely on both quantitative and qualitative tools such as questionnaires, surveys and sometimes interviews, in order to collect the volumes of data required to assemble a data-set over a period of time. There may be two or more collection sets providing data for quantitative analysis. This dataset will be crunched and typically a report of findings will be published.

One approach to dealing with the expense and high-volumes of information emerging from complex situation is to take an archival approach. This would involve ensuring that a rigorous evidence base is constructed over the duration of a programme. This could involve baselines, public surveys, interviews, process documentation, minutes and other programme material. The creation of such archives open up a number of options for how the evidence-base is evaluated. So for example, an extended peer-review group could be formed to examine the data-set, or more ambitiously, open-source approaches could be pursued to make the data-sets available to open peer review processes. However, the absence of such archives precludes such possibilities.

SECOND SHIFT: BUILD EXTENDED PEER-COMMUNITIES

In academia, research efforts are traditionally peer-reviewed. This epistemic approach underpins all gatherings of experts. The nature of complexity however means that the exclusive hold of "peers" as sole assessors of research efforts has changed. Millions of people now regularly invigilate research efforts because they believe themselves to be stakeholders in research outcomes. Climate change and medical research are two examples.

Taking a third pathway between completely closed epistemic communities and totally open communities is possible. In other words, we can construct extended peer-communities where stakeholders are invited, in a more structured manner, to help invigilate research efforts. In terms of evaluation, this would mean bringing more "eyes" to bear on programmatic efforts in the interests of more rapidly advancing the evolution of programming.

One core challenge in the construction of such communities is the issue of quality. The more diverse a community of actors, the greater the challenges of both communication and quality. One approach to these challenges is offered through the distinction between "facts" and "evidence" and the procedure of negotiation:

Specifically, the scientific material that is introduced in such dialogues is not presented as hard facts, but as evidence. It is admitted to be uncertain to some significant degree; its relevance to the case might be contested; and it is also subject to various legitimate interpretations (each side may present its materials as if they are hard facts, but the subsequent discussions will presuppose the looser interpretation that I have outlined here.) Given all the complexities and value commitments in the situation, the "science" cannot realistically or reasonably expected to be trivially conclusive for the "policy". In any event, the discussion is not about the science, but about the policy. Hence the dialogue is not so much one of scientific demonstration, but rather of negotiation, where the science is one element among several. Here we refer to the need to be aware that all analyses will have some level of presumptions of the world that structure how all analyses occur and particularly when there is a political dimension. William Connolly (1992:144-5) has argued that we can't escape an ontological dimension to analysis and that analysis will involve an aspect of "projectional interpretation" (Connolly 1992).

THIRD SHIFT: TAKE AN ITERATIVE APPROACH

The determination of effectiveness in situations of complexity is not a one-time act, but requires constant feedback from multiple sources. In other words, we need to encourage a culture of feedback, where programmes are iterative in nature, as opposed to taking a pure planning-implementation-evaluation based approach. This would require programmes to build in learning and feedback into their project design. Referring to the UK Government's Prevent strategy example given earlier, rather than discovering that the programme alienated communities as was discovered 5 years after implementation, data of this sort needs to be fed back and incorporated into project design and implementation early on, through feedback loops between programme designers and strategic leads, and those on the ground doing implementation, and those recipients/beneficiaries and target populations of the programme. The risk is that if programmes increase alienation of communities and drive articulation of "terrorist" ideologies underground, the late evaluation of programmes can mean that over the programme's implementation it has contributed to further radicalisation and people joining extremist groups, the opposite of its intended programmatic aim.

FOURTH SHIFT: LISTEN TO MULTIPLE NARRATIVES

Examining multiple narratives would mean engagement with the narratives that the terrorists or extremist groups use themselves to explain their behavior, as well as the narratives of other relevant stakeholders. After the Boston attack, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, one of the bombers, was found wounded by the Police. He had inscribed on the inside of the boat that he was hiding in: " The US Government is killing our innocent civilians, I can't stand to see such evil unpunished… We Muslims are one body, you hurt one, you hurt us all. Now I don't like killing innocent people it is forbidden in Islam but due to said (unintelligible) it is allowed. Stop killing innocent people and we will stop." (Quoted in Kundnani 2014 p18) (Kundnani 2014).

Whilst there is sometimes a taboo in understanding the perspective of the perpetrators themselves in CVE and CT discourse, it is difficult for motivations for violent actions to be understood when externally attributed motivations take priority in analyses of perpetrators and would-be perpetrators' actions.

Conclusion: The Efficacy of CVE & CT Programmes

IN THE LAST few years the rise of Daesh (The Islamic State) and the steady flow of Western volunteers East, have raised the stakes around CVE and CT in an unimaginable way from when the dramatic death of Osama Bin Laden was announced. A recent assessment by a former CIA official states, "We thought and told policy-makers that this outburst of popular revolt would damage al-Qaeda by undermining the group's narrative," instead, "the Arab Spring was a boon to Islamic extremists across both the Middle East and North Africa," he said. "From a counterterrorism perspective, the Arab Spring had turned to winter." (20)

20. Former CIA official cites agency's failure to see al-Qaeda's rebound, By Greg Miller May 3, 2015, Washington Post [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/former-cia-official-cites-agencys-failure-to-see-al-qaedas-rebound/2015/05/03/d68e7292-f028-11e4-8abc-d6aa3bad79dd_story.html]

If the product of two decades of CT and CVE strategies is a resurgent Islamic extremism in the form of a "charismatic" quasi-State such as Daesh, then arguably current strategies have failed to grasp the nature of the challenge, raising the sobering question of efficacy.

The evaluation of CVE and CT programmes raises the question of what an effective strategic response to these challenges look like. In this paper we have reviewed the existing literature demonstrating that the current state of the art with regards to evaluation is not sufficiently robust given the seriousness of the issue and the size of investments being made.

We demonstrate an alternative, phenomenological path leading away from futile, abstract epistemological debates around the normalization of definitions and indicators. This leads us to acknowledging the stochastic nature of the radicalization programmes, which in turn provides a phenomenological basis for evaluating the effectiveness of CVE/CT programming. We believe that failure path analysis of stochastic processes grounds the study of CVE/CT in a more rigorous and robust set of data than that current approaches.

From this basis we make the case that the successful evaluation of CVE/CT programmes requires making two key distinctions, between strategy and programming and between strategies designed to address "downstream" CVE challenges versus "upstream" post-event CT challenges.

We argue that four key methodological shifts are required in taking a systemic approach to evaluation. The first is a shift from monitoring to open archiving, where programme data is widely shared. The second

shift is towards building extended epistemic peer communities that are consciously cultivated to avoid the trap of expert group think, providing a wider framing for expertise with regards to CVE/CT strategy and programmes. Thirdly, we recommend shifting to shorter, tighter and iterative evaluation cycles that are better suited to the fast-moving context that CVE/CT programmes operate within. Finally, we argue that a shift towards incorporating multiple narratives is required. These two distinctions and four methodological shifts are requirements for a systemic evaluation of CVE/CT programmes leading to greater efficacy.

One of the challenges most frequently cited with evaluation, especially in the context of complexity, is that it is deemed to be an expensive overhead. If we however examine the overall investments, much of it made from the public purse, then effectiveness of both strategy and programming has to provide a sufficient return-on-investment. Not investing in systemic evaluation in practice means that we have little idea of the returns we are achieving.

While it behooves us to introduce an idea as transactional as an ROI into the discussion, we believe that the sensitivity of CVE/CT issues requires a more holistic integrated reporting response. We have to move beyond a simple consideration of ROI in terms of financial capital, but to also examine investments of other forms of capital, such as human and social, that are required by CVE/CT strategies and programming. Just as we ask about effective use of financial capital, we must ask hard questions about human and social capital and if programmes are simply degrading multiple capitals or actually generating them.

Although systemic evaluation has many components and produces more data that simple "tactical" evaluations, it is particularly important in the field of CVE where there is an absence of knowledge on what constitutes effective CVE and CT initiatives. It is understood here that putting systemic evaluation into practice is human resource intensive and requires specific capacities and experience of multi-stakeholder systemic projects and their evaluation to put the insights of systemic evaluation into practice. Teams may be required to develop particular skill sets to deliver systemic evaluation that would go beyond mainstream approaches to evaluation and require capacities around managing diverse teams, stakeholder groups, and multiple narratives.

The opportunity and need, as we see it, is to rapidly evolve into a new paradigm for how we respond to the challenges of violent extremism. The reality of a complex world means that the very nature of problem solving has changed and patterns of incorrectly defining the parameters of the problem in simplistic terms can cost lives. Whilst understanding the narratives of would-be perpetrators is sometimes taboo due to the political stakes, there is a value in understanding their version of "why", "for what" and "against what" to understand radicalisation. Instead of relying on polarities, a systemic approach can aid understanding of the spectrum of experiences between the "us" and "them" poles of the "terrorism" discourse that policy makers can fall privy to.

Cold War paradigms of security (Tabrizi 2005) and "need to know" cultures prevent the formation of cultures of social learning, whereas systemic evaluation enables diverse stakeholders to look at programmes and help evolve them quickly to be suited to purpose. A significant shift is needed for evaluation of programmes to look at the ways in which CVE and CT can contribute to peace and security or unintentionally undermine it.

Zaid Hassan is a strategist, writer and facilitator with over fifteen years experience in developing strategic responses to complex social challenges. Zaid Hassan has guest lectured at The University of Oxford, The University of Bergen & The New School in New York. He is a Senior Fellow in Social Innovation at the Lewis Institute, Babson College and an Associate Fellow at the Said Business School over 2009/10. He is author of "The Social Labs Revolution: A New Approach to Solving Our Most Complex Challenges" (2014). Mr. Hassan grew up in Bombay, New Delhi, Abu Dhabi and London. He currently lives in Oxford. Mr. Hassan can be contacted via email at zaid@roller.sg

Mia Eisenstadt is a researcher, strategist, facilitator and Director of Reos Partners Europe. She co-founded Reos Partners in 2007. Mia Eisenstadt has particular experience in the areas of innovation and change processes within the fields of Futures, Peace and Reconciliation, Counter Terrorism Education, Climate Change and Development, Child Malnutrition, Food and Sustainable Supply Chains. Currently, she is working on the evaluation of Big Lottery's HeadStart Fund that provides preventative mental health services for Britishchildren. Ms. Eisenstadt holds a BSc in Human Sciences from University of Sussex and a Masters in Medical Anthropology from SOAS. Mia is currently co-authoring the Social Labs Field Book. Ms. Eisenstadt can be contacted via email at Eisenstadt@reospartners.com

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