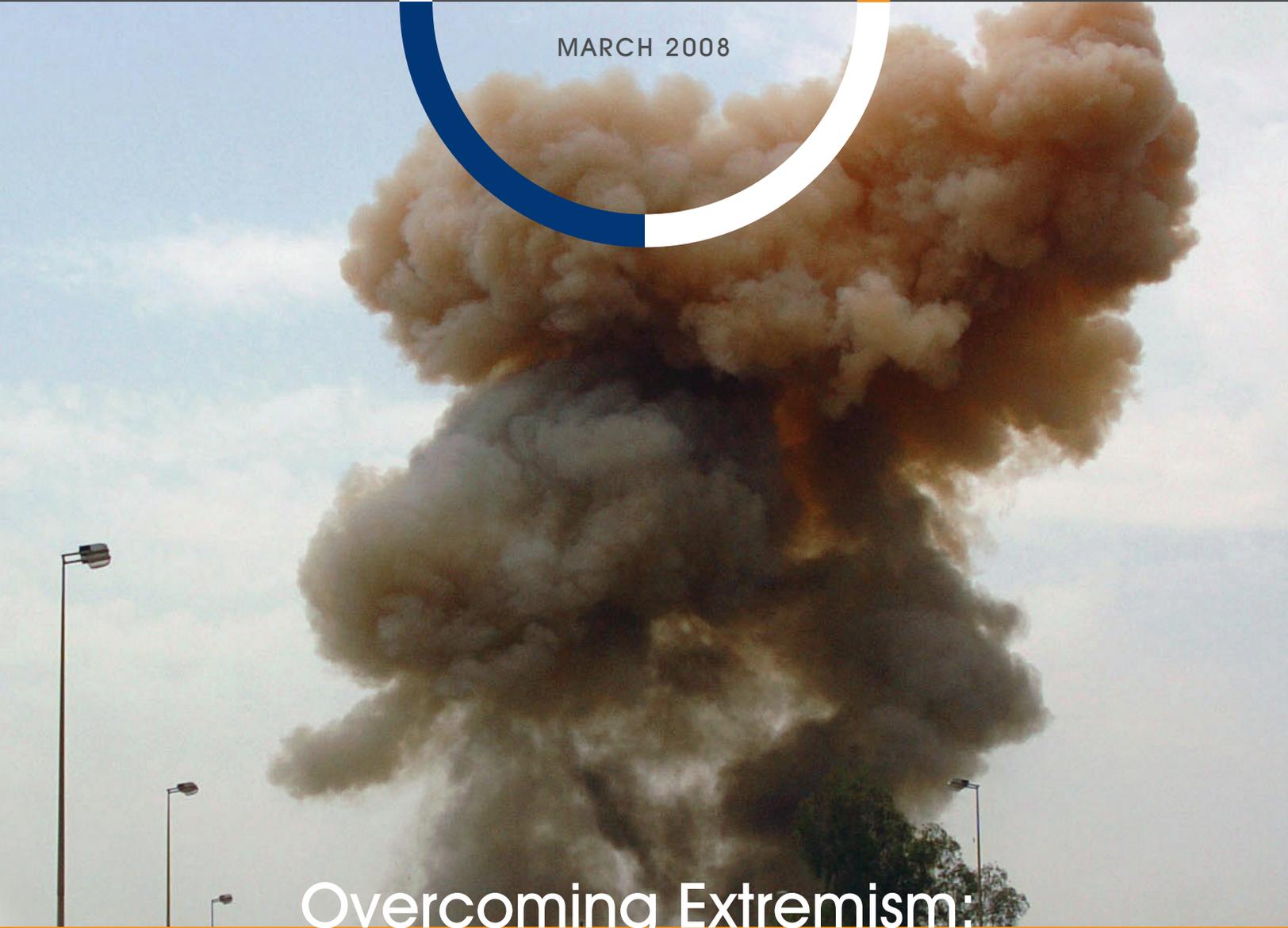


PCR Project  
Conference Report

MARCH 2008



Overcoming Extremism:  
Protecting Civilians from  
Terrorist Violence

## Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence



March 6, 2008

Dear Friend,

The PCR Project is committed to advancing peaceful, democratic change, with an emphasis on locally-led reform. We pursue innovative, practical and prioritized strategies to speed, enhance, and strengthen international conflict response. These include new approaches to conflict management, analytical frameworks, and models for evaluation.



In *Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence*, Shannon Hayden and Mark Irvine discuss key issues emerging from the October 2007 conference in Washington, DC, while co-directors Rick Barton and Karin von Hippel propose practical steps and recommendations for moving forward.

Over 380 participants attended the two day event, and they joined us from 30 countries. The participants and panelists represented the range of expertise required to develop a shared international agenda for protecting civilians from terrorist violence, including world-renowned scholars, civil society leaders, journalists, government and military officials, and legal experts.

Multiple international news sources covered the event, including alternative/new media outlets and prominent bloggers. The internet thus served as both a key administrative tool and an invaluable promotional element to ensure the outcomes from the conference would be widely available. Videos from the entire two day event are now available, in both English and Arabic, on the website [www.overcomingextremism.org](http://www.overcomingextremism.org).

The PCR Project is dedicated to raising the level of international public debate on a range of conflict-related concerns, from early warning and conflict prevention to rebuilding shattered societies. Feedback from the wider community of experts, practitioners, concerned citizens, and creative thinkers is always welcome.

Thank you for the part you play in our community.

Sincerely,

Rick Barton

Karin von Hippel, Ph.D.

## Five Cross-Cutting Issues



# Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence



## KEY ISSUES AND CONFERENCE SUMMARY

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*By Shannon Hayden and Mark Irvine*

The increased targeting of civilians by terrorist groups is of critical concern, particularly as these groups utilize the latest technologies and tools for carrying out violent attacks. The international community needs new methods to disrupt these attacks and protect civilians in more comprehensive ways, including better partnerships with local actors.

**Overcoming Extremism's** panels were selected in order to cover a broad range of topics and viewpoints, and this resulted in the emergence of five cross-cutting issues during the two day event:

## FIVE CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

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**1. *Universality of the Challenge*** The rejection of all forms of violence against civilians should become an internationally-accepted norm. Countering the threat of extremist violence requires an international debate and consensus to confront it in a comprehensive manner. The final panel, featuring victims of terrorist attacks from Kenya, Jordan, Northern Ireland, and Russia, underscored this theme: no political, religious or other cause can ever justify violence against civilians.

**2. *Innovative Local Responses*** Local groups and individuals with on-the-ground knowledge should serve as the “first line of defense” for countering extremist ideology. For example, local clerics in some situations have had success in using scripture to denounce terrorism, in much the same way as the terrorists themselves seek sanction for their activities in religious texts. Such locally-tailored innovations often have greater legitimacy with communities than top-down approaches or those conceived thousands of miles away.

**3. *Tension Between Freedom and Security*** The tension between protecting fundamental freedoms versus protecting the security of civilians and states is not new, and compromises are often required, but the pursuit of one should not undermine the other.

**4. *The Need for Safe Spaces*** In many societies, the boundaries of acceptable public discourse are very narrow, with many important issues off limits. Safe spaces for open discussion and dissent are necessary if an international consensus is to be reached on the protection of civilians. Forums where fundamental disagreements can be aired are needed in both the virtual and physical worlds, with the goal of broadening the overall discussion to include as many points of view as possible.

**5. *Engagement with Some Radical Groups*** The U.S. government's refusal to engage with all groups labeled as “terrorist” was questioned by a number of panelists and participants. Local actors often have no choice but to cooperate with these groups—in some instances because of the direct threat of violence while in others because these groups have a monopoly on social service provision. U.S. government officials and charitable organizations that receive U.S. funds are thus limited in their ability to assist. The best way to deal with the increasing divide between the United States and most parts of the Muslim world should be through more engagement, not less.

## Event Summary



## Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence



### EVENT SUMMARY

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The two days of the conference were structured so that the morning of the first day would focus on the new developments and challenges presented by terrorist organizations, with panels including:

- The Evolution of Terrorist Tactics
- The Changing Media Landscape
- Community Responses

The afternoon sessions on the first day focused on improving the response, evaluating successes and failures, and highlighting innovative solutions, with respect to:

- Countering the Enabling Environment
- State and International Legal Responses
- Arab and Western Media Perspectives

These breakout groups set the stage for the second day of plenary sessions to develop an integrated response. The conference concluded on a personal note, providing a platform for victims of terrorist attacks. Four survivors of terrorist attacks provided a frank, first-hand account of the devastation and trauma that they, their families, and their communities have suffered. Their courage and resilience were as inspiring as their stories were horrific.

### WELCOME AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS I

- Dr. Karin von Hippel, Senior Fellow and Co-Director, PCR Project, CSIS
- Dr. John J. Hamre, President and CEO, CSIS
- Mr. Thomas Pritzker, Chairman and CEO, Global Hyatt Corporation
- Ms. Irene Khan, Secretary General, Amnesty International
- Chair: Mr. Rick Barton, Senior Adviser and Co-Director, PCR Project, CSIS

CEO of the Global Hyatt Corporation and CSIS Trustee Thomas Pritzker officially opened the conference, noting the urgency of the overall theme. He remarked that the topic of terrorist violence will speak “to the core of ... our existence for the rest of our lives,” and that it must be approached as an international challenge. He added that terrorism achieves global impact because of its psychological power to inflict fear on groups of people, which should never be allowed to dominate the response. The United States and others must do their best not to overreact and lose the proper balance between freedom and security.

Pritzker also stressed the importance of resilience in the face of terrorism. Following the 2005 bombings at three hotels in Amman, Jordan, which killed 60 and injured 115, the Grand Hyatt Hotel re-opened for business only ten days later—an act of symbolic importance and part of the process of returning to normal. *Voices of the Victims* panelist and survivor Ashraf al-Khaled, “the Groom of Jordan,” lost family and friends in the attacks, which occurred during his own wedding at the Radisson SOS Hotel.

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Irene Khan, Secretary-General of Amnesty International and the conference's first keynote speaker, emphasized the important role played by the humanitarian and human rights community in protecting civilians. She discussed the larger theme of the increased vulnerability of civilians to violent conflict, from civil war and ethnic cleansing to suicide bombings.

Khan acknowledged that countering transnational terrorist violence requires a different approach than the traditional role of human rights groups, which are typically focused on “the business of protecting rights, but protecting rights vis-à-vis governments.” Changing the behavior of transnational armed groups poses different challenges and necessitates a different response. It is, nevertheless, a human rights issue.

Part of the answer is pressuring governments to address legitimate grievances that can fuel extremism. She remarked,

While terrorism is always an illegitimate response, it may have its roots in legitimate grievances. And any struggle against terrorism that fails to comprehend and address those grievances is doomed to fail. And, of course, very often, terrorists will exploit situations in which human rights are being violated by governments.

Beyond repressive governments, economic despair and hopelessness can spur terrorist recruitment, even if it is difficult to link terrorism to poverty directly. Ms. Khan also noted how Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and the war in Iraq have exacerbated old political grievances and created new ones. These issues have been exploited by terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda.

The actions of all governments, including the United States—in the form of torture, indefinite detention without trial, rendition, and suspension of habeas corpus—are also worrying.

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*“The struggle against terrorism is not a military struggle at the end of the day. It is actually a struggle of ideas, of values. It is about what we believe in, about winning the hearts and minds of people. That is why it is important that human lives are not sacrificed in the name of counterterrorism.”*

*—Irene Khan*

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In the long term, investments in democratic institutions, governance, the rule of law, and social services are critical counter-terrorism measures.

### WORKSHOP 1: THE EVOLUTION OF TERRORIST TACTICS

- Dr. William McCants, Fellow, Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy at West Point
- Ms. Nadia Oweidat, Research Associate, RAND Corporation
- Brig. General Mark Schissler, Deputy Director, The War on Terrorism, Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, Joint Staff, the Pentagon
- Moderator: Mr. Daniel Benjamin, Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution; former Director for Transnational Threats, National Security Council

## Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence



While terrorism has existed for centuries, it is only in recent history that technology has allowed armed groups and individuals to exert so much influence on the world stage through violence. Al Qaeda is the most serious and threatening manifestation of this trend, explored in depth by the three experts.

William McCants discussed how Al Qaeda and its offshoots have evolved their tactics in response to specific circumstances. Since September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda has operated as a more diffuse organization and has itself—or through its network—advocated hitting softer targets around the world. Instead of U.S. embassies and military targets or sites on U.S. soil, tourism and oil-related targets have become the focus. McCants referred to an Al Qaeda text, which explains that targeting the U.S. homeland at this time would distract from carrying out more achievable attacks around the world that do not require the involvement of Al Qaeda’s top leadership.

Nadia Oweidat traced the roots of Al Qaeda back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and identified four layers of jihadis. “There are the strategists, who [design] the strategy for Jihad, such as Zawahiri. There are the theologians, who give the theological backing for Jihad ... why it’s a duty, why we should do it as Muslims ... Then there are the operational leaders, who carry out the attacks, and finally, the foot soldiers.” Groups such as Al Qaeda are media-savvy and have been successful portraying themselves as heroic figures or leaders of a resistance. This can be traced back to the war in Afghanistan, where the successful struggle against the Soviet Union was a source of pride in the Arab world, even if bin Laden and others overstated their role. Oweidat argued that the media—notably Al Jazeera—has abetted this narrative through its depiction of terrorist groups.

Brigadier General Mark Schissler discussed the overall U.S. government approach to terrorist violence, and the focus on undermining the ideology that legitimizes and justifies terrorism, difficult as that may be. Subjecting terrorist violence to more scrutiny is therefore critical. Exposing the brutality of the violence erodes popular support for it and challenges romanticized views of terrorism. Schissler noted that the U.S. government cannot play the lead role in these efforts as they must be led locally. The United States should offer support where necessary or appropriate.

### WORKSHOP 2: THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

- Mr. Ammar Abdulhamid, President, Tharwa Foundation
- Mr. Anthony Barnett, Founder, openDemocracy
- Ms. Kathleen Ridolfo, Regional Analyst for Iraq, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
- Moderator: Mr. David Heyman, Director and Senior Fellow, Homeland Security Program, CSIS

Both old and new media tools are critical components of information warfare. David Heyman framed the discussion when he noted that “perception can have greater influence, frankly, than facts on the ground”—and extremists recognize this reality. “It has been equally important to be effective in tactical operations in terms of terrorist attacks as it has been in terms of shaping public opinion.” Indeed, Al Qaeda leaders have acknowledged this in their writings. Extremists have always attempted to use media to influence public opinion, but new technologies have expanded their ability to do so, and the internet gives extremists direct access to the public.

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Kathleen Ridolfo (with Daniel Kimmage) completed a study on Sunni insurgent use of the media in Iraq. A number of Sunni insurgent groups have harnessed “a variety of media products, everything from public statements to press releases, magazines, attack videos and books and films.” The level of sophistication is startling—some groups have comprehensive media operations. Insurgent groups disseminate their messages into more mainstream media outlets and desire to frame the discussion on their own terms. While full-length books and glossy magazines indicate significant resource commitments, insurgent videos, which are probably the most powerful, are relatively easy and inexpensive to make. Once footage of attacks has been introduced online, it is often remixed by individuals not necessarily associated with the insurgency directly. In one case, Ridolfo found a video that spliced together footage shot by U.S. soldiers chatting in a Humvee with separate video of an insurgent attack. She offered one useful point of departure by noting that these groups are mostly disconnected and rarely offer one unified message, so disrupting the different nodes could indeed contribute to undermining their overall impact.

While terrorist violence is powerful because of the spectacle it can create, which is now magnified by the internet, Anthony Barnett, founder of openDemocracy.net, highlighted the potential of the internet as a tool of enlightenment and increased understanding. New media tools should be harnessed more effectively to counter the shortcomings inherent in traditional media. For instance, he explained that the traditional media did not do enough to correct the erroneous belief of many Americans that Saddam Hussein was directly involved in the 9/11 attacks. The internet provides a promising outlet to achieve such influence and connect moderate forces.

Ammar Abdulhamid shared his unique perspective as a former Islamist, a current Syrian dissident, and democracy activist. Extremists take advantage of the internet not only to present a message to the public, but for networking purposes beyond state boundaries. Virtual communities can foster “the expansion of the physical community on the ground.” Abdulhamid warned that extremists will always be able to take advantage of new technologies. The next trend will likely be extremist groups harnessing advances in social networking technology. It is up to moderates to use the same ever-advancing technologies to counter extremists, matching them in both savvy and dedication.

### WORKSHOP 3: COMMUNITY RESPONSES

- Dr. Hany El Banna, OBE, President, Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Mr. Geoff Loane, Head of Regional Delegation of the United States and Canada, International Committee of the Red Cross
- Ms. Irshad Manji, Senior Fellow, European Foundation for Democracy
- Moderator: Dr. Steven Heydemann, Vice President, Grants and Fellows Program, United States Institute of Peace

Grass roots and bottom-up efforts are probably the most important, ultimately, in countering extremism. Nevertheless, as Steven Heydemann explained, these “efforts tend to get overshadowed by what happens at the national and the international level. And as a result, I think we sometimes tend to lose sight of the potential that exists at the community level for addressing problems of extremism.” Communities should share experiences more than they do “for understanding how activities that are developed in one setting might turn out to be productive and of use in other kinds of settings.”

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Hany El Banna focused on the roles various groups should play in countering extremism, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Muslims, non-state actors, and research institutions. He cautioned against the United States taking too active of a role, warning that the application of American military power has had negative repercussions. Muslims instead should take more initiatives to address the sources of extremism in their own communities. Governments also need to provide better environments for their citizens. People are more likely to reject extremism and stand up against it if they have social security and feel a sense of justice and equity in their country. Corrupt regimes provide openings to extremists, because these regimes typically do not provide basic services or good governance for their citizens.

Geoff Loane discussed the evolution of terrorist groups into transnational entities and the inadequate response of the major powers in countering these groups. Even so, overcoming the problem ultimately depends on action at the community-level. There is still no typology for a terrorist. Instead, there is great diversity on a range of factors among people drawn to extremism and who carry out terrorist violence. Communities are often left to grapple with attacks largely on their own and need better tools to respond. This is true both in a practical sense, such as first aid and emergency response, and also in building shared humanitarian values that reject violence by members of the community. He says, “Fear ... drives communities, individuals, and indeed, leaders to acts that can be polarizing.”

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*“What brings us together and what divides us? The strength of the rule of law and the strength of humanitarianism are values that help to bind people together in taking responsibility for the behavior of their communities. People who commit [acts of terrorism] are nevertheless members of communities, thus if communities can develop a sense of common values, this can help promote a more effective response.”*

– Geoff Loane

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Irshad Manji stressed two concepts: interdependence and *ijtihad*, which is “Islam’s own tradition of critical thinking, debate and interpretation, [and] reinterpretation.” Manji’s book, *The Trouble With Islam Today: A Muslim’s Call for Reform in Her Faith*, is banned in large segments of the Muslim world. The inability of many people to discuss the contents of the book publicly, without fear, symbolizes the enormity of the challenges. *Project Ijtihad* is promoting free thinking and discussion within and across Muslim communities, using Web 2.0 and other tools to enhance communication. Manji wants to see greater dialogue between all Muslims, and believes that this may require religious leaders to help convene the various groups.

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*Moderate Muslims absolutely denounce violence that is committed under the banner of Islam ... But they deny that religion plays any role in inciting the very violence that is committed in its name. Reform-minded Muslims equally denounce violence under the banner of Islam, but we acknowledge that our religion is being exploited to incite that violence ... [W]hen moderate Muslims tell you and me that Islam has nothing to do with this, not only is that dishonest ... it is also dangerous. This denial ... abandons the ground of theological interpretation to those with malignant intentions.”*

–Irshad Manji

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### WORKSHOP 4: COUNTERING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- Mr. Oussama Safa, General Director, The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies
- Mr. Kanishk Tharoor, Managing Editor, Terrorism and Democracy, openDemocracy
- Ms. Sarah Leah Whitson, Executive Director, Middle East and North Africa Division, Human Rights Watch
- Moderator: Ambassador Teresita C. Schaffer, Director for South Asia, CSIS

Those inhabiting the enabling environment include potential sympathizers not only in the Arab and Muslim world, but also in Europe and North America. These adherents may not themselves use violence, but they either endorse the arguments and platforms of the terrorists or are intimidated into silence. This wider community needs to be won over so that they oppose terrorism in their neighborhoods, cities, states, and, critically, in the virtual world where many of the battles are taking place. Appealing to the enabling environment may be the only way in the long-term to isolate terrorists and end terrorism.

What causes communities to condone or even support terrorist violence? Oussama Safa argued that non-state militant groups appeal to constituent populations by offering a “more acceptable model of success” in confronting the so-called “enemy.” Four factors have contributed in a negative fashion to this environment in the Middle East. First is the absence of a strong middle class, without which there is no constituency that can provide a counter-narrative to offer “hope, a vision for the future ... and form the backbone of a more open and more liberal society.” Second is the colonial legacy that weighs heavily on the region, and is compounded by continuing violence and occupation. Third is the lack of a democratic values-system that is credible in the region. Fourth is the overriding concern over sovereignty, even when it conflicts with inclusiveness and the rule of law. More generally, the tribal nature of societies has led to clannish-based politics, weak states, and stronger regimes. Safa suggested focusing on preventing conflict, pursuing security sector reform, demobilizing non-state militant groups, and transforming the legal environment to “make it difficult for violence-prone groups to act freely.”

Kanishk Tharoor focused on the constituency that does not fully support violence, but is sympathetic to the perpetrators and their aims. In effect, they give passive consent. Economic and ideological factors play some role in shaping this environment, but it is important not to overemphasize these as causes of violence. Tharoor said, “Part of the problem of the ideology approach is that it makes terrorism and the passion that motivates it seem inscrutable and irrational.” In the same way, religious Islam is not the source of terrorism. Rather, political factors, however complicated they may be, should be the focus of inquiry.

Sarah Leah Whitson spoke about the international debate on the acceptability of violence against civilians, which has resonance in the Arab world. She explained, “There are people who are advocating ... rational arguments as to why these attacks are okay. It is a process of rational inquiry and rational debate that we must engage in.” Many people are reluctant to condemn the attacks when they are carried out by groups whose causes they support. At times, when extremist groups rhetorically accept that violence against civilians is wrong, there is a narrowing of the definition of a civilian to exclude collaborators, translators, or even supporters of governments or groups being targeted. In order to challenge the enabling environment more effectively, the focus should be on promoting consistent adherence to international humanitarian law “in a way that doesn’t just target the weak side or the unpopular side.”

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### WORKSHOP 5: STATE AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL RESPONSES

- Professor William Banks, Director, Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, Syracuse University
- Professor Claude Bruderlein, Director, Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, Harvard University
- Colonel William Lietzau, Commanding Officer, Henderson Hall, Judge Advocate, U.S. Marine Corps
- Moderator: Ms. Victoria Holt, Senior Associate, the Henry L. Stimson Center

The central shortcoming of the laws of war, as William Banks explained, is that the laws were developed assuming “relatively symmetric conflicts between states’ armies of roughly equal military strength and comparable organizational structures.” Asymmetric conflicts between states and non-state militant groups or between militant groups do not have clearly established rules and legal guidelines for the status of combatants, sowing the seeds of confusion. One problem in adapting the laws of war to these conflicts is that states themselves would by necessity be the only parties to any agreement. The prototypical terrorist group lacks recognition and legitimacy and, further, rejects important principles such as non-combatant immunity.

Claude Bruderlein argued that there are two ways to protect civilians from conflict. The first is to prevent conflict or bring it to an end. The second is to regulate conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and that other standards are met. Asymmetric conflict challenges many of the assumptions of the laws of war meant to regulate state conflict in three ways. The first, as noted earlier, is symmetry. The second is that traditional conflicts have a beginning and an end, which may not apply in many of the open-ended conflicts driven by non-state actors. The third is reciprocity—it is hard to conceive that a state would consider itself in a reciprocal relationship with a non-state actor. Given these constraints, moving forward requires “a new level of engagement [and] dialogue with non-state actors [to] find ways of recreating a sense of parity, rights and obligations, of privileges and duties where non-state actors can pursue their political goals and engage in hostilities without necessarily attacking innocent people.”

“Modern warfare has pressured the law; and we should be looking for an appropriate way to adapt it so that it can serve its purpose, which is ideally to protect civilians against terrorist violence,” explained William Lietzau. He explored the ways in which the law is relevant to terrorism and the challenges in addressing its shortcomings. First, laws help set the normative framework by proscribing certain things, such as terrorist acts. Second, the law provides the grounds for prosecution when the norms are violated. Finally, the law regulates the response to terrorism. Describing how the law has been impacted in all three areas, he focused on the latter and described how there has been a substantial paradigm shift in the thinking about terrorism and the law since the September 11th attacks. Until then, terrorism was largely thought of as a law enforcement matter falling under the law of peace. Many efforts focused on bolstering the prosecution regime with extradition treaties and other agreements. Now the laws of war are at the center of the discussion, which is an acknowledgment that the law enforcement regime was inadequate to deal with the threat as it had developed. But the laws of war were established with a Westphalian system in mind and the assumption that states would fight wars with each other. Those laws are not well adapted for conflicts with transnational organizations.

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### WORKSHOP 6: ARAB AND WESTERN MEDIA PERSPECTIVES

- Mr. Philip Bennett, Managing Editor, Washington Post
- Ms. Nadia Bilbassy-Charters, Senior Diplomatic Correspondent, Al Arabiya TV
- Mr. Salameh Nematt, Middle East analyst and journalist
- Moderator: Dr. Paul Salem, Director, Carnegie Middle East Center

Phillip Bennett spoke about the importance of focusing on the victims of terrorism. He highlighted the New York Times' effort to publish individual biographies of each of the nearly 3,000 people killed in the attacks—*Portraits of Grief*—as a journalistic innovation. This contrasts with the lack of any similar efforts today to personalize large-scale violence. Bearing witness is one of a journalist's most vital services to the public, and that service is being compromised today by a number of factors. The hazards and expense of reporting have separated reporters from the story and the lack of a deep understanding of Islam and Arab cultures in the United States has led to "a shallow level of identification with civilian victims." Bennett expressed hope to strengthen the mission of journalists "as allies of civilians who are otherwise powerless to have their views heard and experiences shared."

Nadia Bilbassy-Charters discussed the role and responsibility of the Arab media. The existence of satellite television stations such as Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera is itself remarkable after such a long period of government-dominated media and censorship. Bilbassy-Charters highlighted the importance of personalizing stories of violence—both the victims and the perpetrators. For example, Al Arabiya airs a weekly program—*The Death Industry*—which focuses on root causes of terrorism in conflicts all over the world. Despite this attention to tactics and strategies of terrorists, Al Arabiya refuses to give a direct platform to people advocating violence against civilians.

Salameh Nematt asks, "Why is terrorism thriving in the Middle East?" He distinguishes between the Arab world and the Muslim world, pointing out that countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and India do not have a problem on the same scale, so the Arab world is the appropriate place to focus on. He cites an environment that has made it legitimate for young people to join terrorist groups and carry out violence. This can be blamed on both the democracy deficit and the Arab media, which blurs the lines between legitimate resistance to occupation and acts of murder. Recognized Islamic authorities are weak and lack the credibility to discredit this line of thinking. State governments have too much influence over the Arab media and do not want to see democracy flourish in the region because it is a threat to their power.

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS II

- Mr. Aryeh Neier, President, Open Society Institute
- Chair: Dr. Sarah Mendelson, Director, Human Rights and Security Initiative, CSIS

Aryeh Neier explored the contradiction between the century and a half of gradual development of international laws and institutions that are supposed to prevent harm to civilians, including the Hague Conventions, the Geneva Conventions, and the International Criminal Court, and the worldwide increase in violence against civilians in the

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same period. While these norms and institutions have been insufficient, it is still important to make progress in these areas. The struggle against terrorism is a long-term effort. He noted the advantage terrorists have in pursuing asymmetric tactics and the indiscriminate targeting of civilians.

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*"[T]he question I have is: Does it do any good to adopt all these laws and to create institutions that are supposed to protect civilians from the consequences of conflict when what we see in fact in practice is an ever-increasing number of civilian victims? And my answer ... is yes, I still think it does good to try to adopt norms, to try to adopt laws, to try to create institutions to protect civilians. But clearly it is not enough, clearly ... we need to have consistent moral condemnation of attacks upon civilians."*

—Aryeh Neier

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### PLENARY SESSION: INTEGRATED RESPONSE TO TERRORIST VIOLENCE

- Professor Louise Richardson, Executive Dean, Radcliffe Center for Advanced Study, Harvard University
- Mr. Ken Silverstein, Washington Editor, Harper's Magazine
- Mr. John Zogby, President, Zogby International
- Moderator: Dr. Johanna Mendelson Forman, Senior Associate, CSIS

Louise Richardson, along with several colleagues, conducted a multi-year study of thirteen governments' responses to terrorism, focusing on democracies. She found that successful policies required "a combination of hard and soft approaches" and must be tailored to the specifics of the extremist group. She summarized the general findings:

First ... governments' counterterrorism practices invariably improved with time. The Italian, Peruvian, Indian, and British governments, for example, each learned from their mistakes against the Red Brigades, the Shining Path, Sikh nationalists and the IRA, respectively ... The second, and this is a fairly obvious point, there is simply no silver bullet. There is no single policy prescription that will provide a cure-all for terrorism. Neither military force nor good intelligence nor any other single response has solved the terrorism problem. And third, the most successful cases of counterterrorism were governments that combined an integrated policy of coercive and conciliatory policies in their attempt to combat terrorism.

Professor Richardson, who originally coined the term "the enabling environment," elaborated on how states have fared with coercive and conciliatory measures. Coercion should be used "exclusively against perpetrators of violence" and requires good intelligence to understand what approach will work. Conciliatory measures should be targeted at "the would-be supporters of the extremists." Mobilizing moderates, investing in social reform, and political engagement with extremist groups were part of successful strategies. Coordination within the government is also important.

Ken Silverstein argued for greater U.S. engagement with both moderate and radical Islamic political groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas in Palestine, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The United States cannot talk about democracy in the Middle East without talking to these movements. The groups have substantial legitimacy

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and popular support that cannot be ignored. Silverstein distinguished between groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah and even more radical groups such as Al Qaeda. The former focus on local grievances, while the latter is an international movement seeking to destroy the international system. Hamas and Hezbollah, like the Muslim Brotherhood, want to be part of the system. He argues that by rejecting dialogue with these groups, it strengthens Al Qaeda by bolstering their argument that democracy is a sham. He closed by suggesting a counterpoint to the common question, “Is the Islamic world ready for democracy” by asking the question, “Is the West ready for Islamic democracy?”

John Zogby discussed polling data in the Arab world and perceptions of U.S. policies. A great deal of complexity exists in people’s attitudes towards the United States when you break the question down into specifics, such as American science and technology or U.S. policy towards Israel. Despite the unpopularity of the United States generally and U.S. policies, there is admiration and positive attitudes towards many things about the United States. Science and technology and U.S. universities all rate highly. Another area of hope is the increase in the number of Americans who are globally aware and have traveled abroad. Mr. Zogby referred to this group of 18 to 30-year-olds as America’s first *global citizens*. Connections and discussions between this group and the “first globals” in the Arab world offer greater hope for the future.

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS III

- Sir David Veness, former head of counter-terrorism at Scotland Yard, UN Undersecretary for Safety and Security
- Chair: Ms. Christine Wormuth, Senior Fellow, International Security Program, CSIS

Cautioning that violence against civilians cannot be completely eliminated, David Veness suggested what is achievable is the reduction of “the likelihood of the most serious menace of international terrorism; that is, attacks conducted with global reach, almost invariably with no warning, intended to cause mass casualties and often carried out in a series of simultaneous events.” Now that the world is confronted with “a new dimension of threat,” it must develop “a new construction of counterterrorism.” He relayed a quote from an intelligence official, “They have gone global; we have not,” suggesting counterterrorism efforts need to become international both geographically and conceptually. There is a gap between sound analysis and balanced and effective counter-terrorist measures. Perceived injustices, especially in the Middle East, should be addressed through economic and social progress. Four elements of national counterterrorism strategies include “first, general prevention or diversion from terrorism; second, pursuit of terrorists; third, protection of targets; and fourth, preparation of response and recovery.”

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### FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION WITH **MR. ARI SANDEL, ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING FILMMAKER**

- *West Bank Story* (21 minutes), a musical comedy set in the fast-paced, fast-food world of competing falafel stands in the West Bank
- Chair: Dr. Jon Alterman, Director and Senior Fellow, Middle East Program, CSIS

Following the screening of *West Bank Story*, Ari Sandel discussed his experiences making the film and showing it before different audiences around the world. Sandel originally made the film for his master's degree at the University of Southern California Film School. He wanted to create a film that was pro-peace with a positive message. During the project, many warned that the subject matter was too controversial, yet nevertheless, the response by both Arab and Israeli audiences has been positive.

### PLENARY SESSION: VOICES OF THE VICTIMS

- Mr. Michael Gallagher, Ireland, 1998 Omagh bombing
- Mr. Ashraf al-Khaled, "The Groom of Jordan", 2005 Amman hotel bombings
- Mr. Sammy Nganga Ngatiri, Kenya, 1998 U.S. embassy bombings
- Mr. Azamat Sabanov, Russia, 2004 Beslan school siege
- Moderator: Mr. Jerry White, Executive Director, Landmine Survivors Network

*Overcoming Extremism's* final session made a lasting impact on the audience, and brought to life Phil Bennett's recommendation of focusing on the victims and survivors. Four survivors of terrorist violence from around the world shared their horrific personal experiences. Aably guided by moderator Jerry White, himself a landmine survivor, Sammy Nganga Ngatiri, Michael Gallagher, Ashraf al-Khaled, and Azamat Sabanov described their experiences in the 1998 Kenya attacks, the 1998 Omagh bombing, the 2005 Amman hotel bombings, and the 2004 Beslan school siege and the impact on their lives as well as their families and communities. Each speaker was able to turn a personal tragedy into a greater lesson on what can be done to protect civilians. Though they did not all agree on what steps should be taken to move this agenda forward, the panel displayed a moving message of solidarity in the face of terrorist attacks.

Sammy Nganga Ngatiri was trapped in the rubble of the U.S. embassy bombing in Nairobi in 1998 for several days. Along with messages of hope, he advocated more dialogue and debate across the spectrum of political opinion, ethnicity, and religion. Michael Gallagher lost his son in the Omagh bombing. His message of peace and working together to move forward also included a plea for direct, non-violent confrontation with the terrorists to ensure legal redress for wrongs committed. He also applauded the "safe space" created at the conference. Azamat Sabanov, who lost his father in the Beslan school massacre, has focused his energies on distribution of emergency assistance and evaluating the Russian government's response, which he believed was overly focused on killing the terrorists, rather than protecting the hostages. Finally, Ashraf al-Khaled's wedding day turned into a nightmare during the Amman hotel bombings, and he has subsequently committed himself to advocate for victims of violence. He stressed that individuals should help prevent these attacks as much as possible, with citizens being the first line of defense.

## Recommendations and Next Steps: Integrating the Response



## Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence



### RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS: INTEGRATING THE RESPONSE

*By Karin von Hippel and Rick Barton*

Multilateral institutions, states, and local communities all need new tools to protect civilians. *Overcoming Extremism* was structured to contribute to the development of a shared international agenda, fresh approaches and more integrated strategies. Critically, this agenda should ensure that a “victims first” approach is adopted.

This final section outlines two main recommendations and five actions steps that would help to realize the conference goals.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

**1. Forge Innovative Alliances** Al Qaeda and its affiliates have been effective in the “battle of ideas” and therefore in growing the movement (as demonstrated in numerous public opinion polls around the world) precisely because they are better at targeting the enabling environment. As noted earlier, this wider community needs to be won over so that local actors and communities oppose terrorism in neighborhoods, cities, states, and, critically, in the virtual world.

Given that this threat is transnational and multi-faceted, the response needs also to be transnational and multi-faceted. This does not necessarily imply state-to-state partnerships, but rather unusual and new alliances between local, national, and international; between government and non-government; between public and private; and between and across communities. This may—at times—mean making difficult choices, such as direct contact with terrorists, or working with non-violent fundamentalists. Rather than focus exclusively on the moderates, the goal should also be winning over those who have opposing views.

New partnerships can be strengthened by ensuring that the values promoted are publicly recognized as global and not exclusive to the western world. Justice, diversity, tolerance, transparency, democracy, freedom of speech, charity, community, and human rights are *global values* and need to be publicly defined and recognized as such. Governments, non-governmental organizations, communities, and global citizens should all play a role in advocating, promoting, respecting, and practicing these principles.

The challenge is to defeat the terrorists using the same networking and information tools they use, but to do it better. As Ammar Abdulhamid remarked, “We will create our own sleeper cells using the same technologies that Al Qaeda and others have been using—and we will create sleeper cells for moderation and tolerance.”

**2. Use a Mix of Tools** Flexible and innovative alliances “by definition” require the full range of tools to ensure the widest possible dissemination. This means using revolutionary communications concepts, as well as low-tech and no-tech options, to improve information sharing and best practices—on the ground and in the virtual world: Web 2.0 open-source technologies, social networking tools, cell phones, radios, and even the tea house.

## Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence



This also means creating a “safe space” for debate when it may not be possible in the affected communities. That safe space can be virtual or it can be physically located in a third country. The critical thing is to provide the opportunity for sharing experiences and information across and between communities. Just as the Washington venue offered an open environment for debate, which was not possible in many of the participants’ home countries, there are other places in the Arab and Muslim world where future events and debates can take place.

### ACTION STEPS:

**1. Enlarge the debate** Hold small and large meetings in cyber and real-space, with diverse participation. These can be on-line global “jam sessions,” (e-brainstorming or e-discussions) with participation from the public in the United States as well as in the Muslim world. The debates should also focus on youth as much as possible, given that youth bulges in many developing states form the backbone of the enabling environment. School “twinning” and mentoring between students in the United States and developing states should also be promoted, utilizing Web 2.0 tools and e-competitions/debates/discussions for students across the digital divide. The PCR Project will also continue to integrate these ideas during its outreach for the CSIS Smart Power Project.

**2. Inspire others** Sponsor competitions. Possibilities include: the best video on YouTube for a new campaign against terrorism, or a new global motto, in line with the successful Lebanese ad campaign, “I Love Life,” or the Spanish “Basta Ya,” after the Madrid attacks. Partnerships on traditional media outlets, such as MTV, can also be developed.

**3. Improve information flows** Utilize wikis, blogs, mash-ups, and social-networking sites to investigate and fact-check, especially after an attack. How many were killed and injured? Who were the victims? Who are the survivors? Who carried out the atrocity? Who is taking credit for it? How can we galvanize the community? Citizens may be better fact-checkers and should be the first line of defense, not only to ensure their own governments respond appropriately, but also to generate outrage at international levels.

**4. Focus on network effect benefits** Each of us has our own complex networks that we can use to link with other networks and disseminate the message as widely and creatively as possible.

**5. Make a long term commitment** The strategy needs to be long term, not only to demonstrate that we can deliver on promises, but also to impact several generations. If governments and institutions do not adapt, they simply will not be able to compete with the Al Qaeda movement, which has taken a long-term view, encompassing many generations through its indoctrination strategies (e.g., madrasas and other charitable work).

During *Overcoming Extremism*, Philip Bennett, Managing Editor of the *Washington Post*, appealed to the media to assume greater responsibility in this campaign. He said, “Journalism should be an act against forgetting, and no place more than where violence tries to erase the lives of innocent people.” An integrated strategy, one that puts the victims first, should ensure that all communities take that lesson to heart and join forces against forgetting.

## PCR Project Biographies



## Overcoming Extremism: Protecting Civilians from Terrorist Violence



### PCR PROJECT BIOGRAPHIES

**FREDERICK BARTON** is a senior adviser in the CSIS International Security Program and codirector of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project. A member of the CSIS Commission on Smart Power and a supporting expert to the Iraq Study Group and the Task Force on the United Nations, Barton is a regular writer, commentator, and contributor to global public discussions. For the past five years, he was also a visiting lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University, where he was the Frederick H. Schultz Professor of Economic Policy and lecturer on public and international affairs. His work is informed by 12 years of experience in nearly 30 global hot spots, including serving as UN deputy high commissioner for refugees in Geneva (1999–2001) and as the first director of the Office of Transition Initiatives at the U.S. Agency for International Development (1994–1999). A graduate of Harvard College (1971), Barton earned his M.B.A. from Boston University (1982), with an emphasis on public management, and received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Wheaton College of Massachusetts (2001).

**SHANNON HAYDEN** is a research associate and project coordinator for the Post-Conflict Reconstruction (PCR) Project at CSIS. Before joining CSIS, she worked in the Community Stabilization/USAID Liaison Unit at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), focusing on emergency and post-conflict programming in Iraq, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Haiti, and Sudan as well as on transnational issues, including disaster assistance, trafficking in persons, elections, and enfranchisement of internally displaced persons (IDPs). She received an M.A. in international affairs from the George Washington University, with a concentration in international law and organizations, and a B.A. in international relations and art history from the University of Georgia.

**MARK IRVINE** is a research assistant with the CSIS Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project. He has worked on a study evaluating the U.S.-Pakistan relationship with a focus on the role aid plays in addressing conflict, instability, and extremism, and is an author of *A Steep Hill: Congress and U.S. Efforts to Strengthen Fragile States* (CSIS, 2008). Mr. Irvine received a B.A. from Boston College in International Studies with a focus on security studies and economic relations. Further research interests include terrorism, deterrence, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**KARIN VON HIPPEL** is a senior fellow in the CSIS International Security Program and codirector of the CSIS Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project. Previously, she was a senior research fellow at the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London, and spent several years working for the United Nations and the European Union in Somalia and Kosovo. In 2004 and 2005, she participated in two major studies for the UN—one on UN peacekeeping and the second on the UN humanitarian system. Also in 2004, she was part of a small team funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development to investigate the development potential of Somali remittances. In 2002, she advised the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on the role of development cooperation in discovering the root causes of terrorism. Since then, she has participated in numerous conferences and working groups on the subject in Africa, Europe, and North America. She also directed a project on European counterterrorist reforms funded by the MacArthur Foundation and edited the volume *Europe Confronts Terrorism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). She was a member of Project Unicorn, a counterterrorism police advisory panel in London. She received her Ph.D. in international relations from the London School of Economics, her M.St. from Oxford University, and her B.A. from Yale University.



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