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Anna Fraher Klingensmith
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The Role of Local Communities in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Jordan:

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Anna Klingensmith

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Abstract

Bordering Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Israel/Palestine, with Lebanon not too far away, Jordan's location makes it at high risk for violent extremism. Although Jordan is considered one of the safest countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the country is known for having one of the highest numbers of foreign fighters in the world, and for being the homeland of the father of ISIS (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi). Also worrisome is the increasing number of desperate people turning to extremist ideologies due to the country's economic crisis and lack of opportunities for political engagement. Jordan could be at a tipping point: as more people turn toward fundamentalist and political Islam, and as the economic crisis worsens, the country could see a large increase in the number of people radicalizing and joining violent extremist groups.

This independent study project examines the reasons people are radicalizing to violent extremism in Jordan, and assesses the Jordanian strategy for P/CVE from the lens of local community participation. The researcher collected data through a combination of primary and secondary sources, including six interviews with experts in Jordanian P/CVE policy. She found that community engagement projects, such as programs run through mosques, schools, and prisons, are more effective in preventing and countering violent extremism than traditional militaristic methods. With this conclusion in mind, the paper ends with policy suggestions for how to further empower local communities and more effectively curb violent extremism in Jordan.

Disciplines: political science, international law and relations, public administration

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Introduction

The purpose of this independent study project is to identify the major factors that are pushing Jordanians to radicalize to violent extremism, to examine the policies that are in place to prevent radicalization, and the policies that are in place to respond to those who have already been radicalized.

At Duke University, where the researcher is currently a student, she is majoring in public policy and Arabic. She chose these disciplines because wants to dedicate her future career to using her knowledge of Arabic language and Arab culture to inform future American counterterrorism efforts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The researcher hopes to create and implement policies that promote community engagement and a sense of belonging amongst radicalized individuals, or individuals at risk of radicalization, as a means of countering violent extremism within MENA.

The researcher has taken several classes on national security and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and has noticed a pattern of misguided policy choices given a lack of American cultural and political understanding about MENA. As such, the researcher came to Jordan to study geopolitics, international relations, and the future of the Middle East; and specifically the country's national and regional security efforts. Jordan is known throughout the world as a leader in countering violent extremism. Given its location in MENA, Jordan has the potential to be a hotbed for radicalization due to its suffering economy, dependency on foreign aid, and the extremist ideologies coming in from its failing neighbor states, such as Syria and Iraq. Despite these disadvantages, Jordan does an excellent job keeping itself and its neighbors secure from terrorism. Therefore, as a future leader in American national security policy, the researcher can learn a lot by observing Jordanian national security efforts. Further, it is important to understand

and examine current Jordanian national security policy so that its weaknesses can be targeted and rectified, and the country can become more secure.

Violent Extremism in Jordan

As stated above, Jordan's geopolitical positioning makes it highly at risk to violent extremism, both in terms of radicalized people coming into the country, and people radicalizing within the country itself. With ISIS in Syria and Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Palestine, Jordan plays a key role in the region's security. Jordan has to have a robust preventing and countering violent extremism strategy to keep itself, its borders, and the greater region safe. Jordan has also suffered from a variety of attacks at the hands of violent extremism, including the 2005 Amman bombings, and the terrorist attacks on the General Intelligence Directorate (GID), and Irbid, Ruwaidshid, and Karak in 2016, which combined killed 35 people and injured countless others. In 2018 six people died in Salt and one in Madaba at the hands of extremists.¹ It is still unclear if the 2019 stabbing in Jerash was an act of violent extremism, but the possibility has not been ruled out.

Unfortunately, Jordan is recognized as the homeland of the infamous Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (from Zarqa) who is considered to be the father of ISIS. Despite being out of the country at the time, Zarqawi plotted several terror attacks within Jordan, including the 2000 millennium attacks in Amman, the 2004 attacks to unleash lethal chemical gas in Amman, and the 2005 hotel suicide bombings (mentioned above) which killed sixty people. Zarqawi was a powerful organizer, and inspired thousands to believe in his extremist ideologies, including many

¹ Sanchez, Victoria. "Lights and Shadows of Jordan's Counterterrorism Strategy." *The Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*, November 29, 2018.

Jordanians, radicalizing them to join violent extremist groups in the region. Although Zarqawi is dead now, his legacy and ideas live on within select communities in Jordan.²

In spite of its relative political stability, Jordan is home to the highest, or second highest, number of foreign fighters per capita in the region, depending on which statistics are used.³ According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a foreign fighter is defined as “an individual who leaves his or her country of origin or habitual residence to join a non-State armed group in an armed conflict abroad and who is primarily motivated by ideology, religion, and/or kinship”.⁴ Therefore, it is clear that there is still a significant portion of the Jordanian population who are radicalizing and joining non state armed groups, most often, violent extremist groups in the region such as ISIS and Al Nusra Front. This number must decrease in order to make Jordan and the region as a whole safer. Accordingly, the reasons people are radicalizing must be identified and targeted, and Jordan’s current P/CVE policies and programs need to be examined and improved.

History of Jordanian Counterterrorism and P/CVE Policy

As a leader of countering terror and violent extremism in the Middle East and in the world, Jordan has a strong history of laws and initiatives to fight extremism. Jordan’s policy has been closely linked to the development of terrorism in the region, and influenced by events like 9/11, the Iraq War, and the conflict in Syria. The primary piece of Jordan’s counterterrorism

² Weaver, Mary Anne. “The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi.” The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, August 24, 2015

³ Speckhard, Anne (March 25, 2017) e Jihad in Jordan: Drivers of Radicalization into Violent Extremism in Jordan, ICSVE Research Report

⁴ “Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Manual for Judicial Training Institutes Southeastern Europe.” *Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Manual for Judicial Training Institutes Southeastern Europe*. Vienna: United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2017.

policy is the 2014 Anti-Terrorism Law, which amends the 2006 version, defining terrorism and terrorist acts in detail, and listing the punishments for said acts. Jordan also has a cybercrime law, which stipulates the different ways that the internet can be used as a tool for terrorism and the ways that national security can be jeopardized, and sets out the punishments for these crimes. Jordan is known for the “Amman Message” which is a declaration, introduced in 2005. The Amman Message was the work of King Abdullah of Jordan and 300 Islamic scholars, with three main points to explain the true Islamic perspective on modern issues, especially terrorism. The message calls out terrorists as against true Islamic values and seeks to rectify the international community’s view on Islam after 9/11 and the introduction of Al Qaeda onto the international stage.⁵

As of 2016, Jordan has sought to implement the United Nations’ Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism, and composed its own plan based on the U.N.’s entitled the “National Strategy on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Jordan”. However, the tangible specifics of this plan have yet to be released to the public. Jordan has only published a brief summary of its plan, claiming it is a, “comprehensive approach encompassing not only essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures to address the drivers of violent extremism”.⁶ This independent study project examines the National Strategy, especially its efforts to address drivers of extremism through programming at the local level.

Research Framework

⁵ Sanchez, Victoria. “Lights and Shadows of Jordan’s Counterterrorism Strategy.” *The Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*, November 29, 2018.

⁶ “National Strategy on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Jordan (P/CVE).” UNDP in Jordan. United Nations Development Programme, May 17, 2016

The researcher framed her research based on a series of three guiding questions, instead of hypotheses to allow for more flexibility in her findings. Each question focuses on a broader theme that the researcher chose to develop in her research, in order to come to the most comprehensive conclusions about P/CVE policy in Jordan.

The first question the researcher aimed to answer builds on the theme of radicalization in Jordan, specifically, “What factors influence people in Jordan to radicalize and join violent extremist groups, and what are the attributes of the people who are being radicalized?”. Within that question, the researcher gathered information on the sex, age, marital, employment and financial status, location of residence in Jordan, the level of education of those radicalizing in Jordan, and the role of unstable border countries on radicalization in Jordan. Lastly, the researcher considered the religious affiliation of people who radicalize and their relationship with Islam and/ or other religions.

The researcher’s second question was based on local community efforts to counter and prevent violent extremism, more specifically, “What are the current national security efforts at the local level to prevent radicalization in Jordan (ie civil society, municipal efforts, programs run through mosques, schools, prisons, and the internet)”. Under the scope of this question, the researcher looked more closely into programs run through local mosques and in the greater community, and programs to give spouses and family members tools to moderate radicalized individuals, or those on the brink of radicalization. She also looked at how these programs are administered, how many there are, where the funding comes from and how attendance is measured. Lastly, she sought to examine the effectiveness of these programs: how effectiveness is being measured, and if program leaders have seen a clear integration into the community of potential radicalizers and a deradicalization their ideologies.

The third question within the researcher's framework she sought to explore was the role of larger actors such as the government and foreign powers, specifically the United States in P/CVE in Jordan. The researcher's third guiding question for her project was, "Broadly, what is the role of the government in preventing and countering violent extremism- what are they doing on a national level? What is the American role in strengthening the effectiveness of Jordanian national security efforts"? Under the scope of this question, the researcher asked if people were naming the government as a reason for their radicalization, and what the role of non governmental organizations is in P/CVE in Jordan. The researcher also looked closer at the American role in Jordanian P/CVE policy. She inquired about the positive and negative American contributions to Jordanian counterterrorism efforts, and if the Jordanian government is satisfied with these contributions (ie financial support, boots on the ground, training tools etc), if people are naming the United States, or the West, as a reason to radicalize, and if the United States had a role in the creation of ISIS, or the radicalization of Al Zaraqawi and Al Baghdadi.

Language

For a deeper comprehension of this paper, it is important to define a set of frequently used technical terms to the national security field.

Although frequently discussed in academia and the media alike, the term "terrorism" is difficult to precisely define. Bruce Hoffman, a fellow for counterterrorism and homeland security at the Council on Foreign Relations,⁷ defines terrorism as "violence—or equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim" and Louise Richardson, Vice Chancellor at Oxford University, adds that terrorism "deliberately and

⁷ "Bruce Hoffman." Experts, Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations

violently target[s] civilians for political purposes⁸”. Counterterrorism, therefore, for the purpose of this paper, will be defined as the activities or measures taken to prevent or offset terrorism, which are often political and/or militaristic by nature.

Violent extremism, while closely linked to terrorism, is a slightly broader term. According to the UNODC, the definition of “violent extremism” encompasses a wider category of manifestations of violence than terrorism, given its inclusion of forms of ideologically motivated violence that fall short of constituting terrorist acts.⁹ Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) differs from counterterrorism in its more community based resilience building approach, rather than chiefly relying on militaristic solutions. In the aforementioned UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015), the UN aimed at addressing the root causes of radicalization and violent extremism (ie dissatisfaction with governance, financial troubles, discrimination, violent conflict in the area etc),¹⁰ a policy that has been highly influential in the formation of Jordanian P/CVE programs.

Somewhat confusingly, “violent extremism” is often used as a synonym for terrorism. Academics prefer to use the term “violent extremism” because its language is more neutral than the highly politicized word “terrorism”. After 9/11 the term “Islamist” or “Islamic” terrorism took root, which was highly problematic given its conflation of Islam and terrorism. It is essential to understand that this form of terrorism is not truly Islamic, rather terrorists are twisting the words of the Koran and its teachings to justify their actions. Nonetheless, although

⁸ Ward, and Antonia. “How Do You Define Terrorism?” RAND Corporation, June 4, 2018

⁹ Katharina.kiener-Manu. “Counter-Terrorism Module 2 Key Issues: Radicalization & Violent Extremism.” The Doha Declaration: Promoting a Culture of Lawfulness. United Nations of Drugs and Crimes

¹⁰ Bak, Mathias, Kristoffer Tarp, and Christina Liang. “Defining the Concept of ‘Violent Extremism!’” Geneva Centre for Security Policy, August 8, 2019

violent extremism and terrorism are often used interchangeably, for the purpose of this paper they are slightly different (see above).

This paper focuses on radicalization as the key issue that needs to be targeted to improve Jordanian P/CVE. The term “radicalization” is a broad term that has a variety of definitions. However, radicalization is most often defined as the process of an individual developing or adopting radical thoughts or behaviors that make them at risk of being recruited to, or joining, extremist groups. Radicalization is usually thought of as a precursor to terrorism as it often involves the adoption of extremist beliefs which justify violence against civilians or other innocent parties for political gain. However, it is important to note here that there is a differentiation between radicalism and violent extremism, sometimes radicalism can be positive in society, such as the radical beliefs held by those who helped abolish slavery.¹¹

Dangerous radicalization can be prevented and combated by informed policies and programs which target the reasons that people are radicalizing. CVE policy can take an international or national form, such as the United States’ President Bush’s “War on Terror” or national programs to counter extremism, such as Jordan’s National Strategy on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. CVE can also be executed at a local level through civil society.¹²

Literature Review

Despite the importance of P/CVE policy in fighting extremism, the concept of “countering violent extremism” as it is known today is relatively new. Initially developed in the United Kingdom from 2005 to 2011 to counter increasing terrorism in Europe, the foundations

¹¹ Frazer, Owen, and Christian Nunlist. “The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism .” *The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism* . Zurich : Centre for Security Studies, 2015

¹² Borum, Randy. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2012) : 7-36.

for P/CVE policy were created, emphasizing the importance of addressing the reasons people turn to terrorism instead of responding to terrorism once it happens, although it wasn't called "CVE" at the time. However, given that the term "preventing/countering violent extremism" was not established into political discourse around 2015,¹³ there is little literature on the subject. Nevertheless, there are a few papers and studies by international organizations that the researcher was able to find that helped inform the ideas presented in this paper.

The Radicalization Awareness Network finds that local communities can be extremely effective in preventing and countering violent extremism for multiple reasons. Firstly, local communities tend to have innovative ideas on preventing radicalization because they are smaller and more able to effectively target individuals who are being radicalized. Additionally, communities are able to give resources to families who have radicalized family members, and given their proximity to those who are radicalized, or at risk of radicalization, communities can provide a wealth of knowledge that the government might not have access to.¹⁴

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) asserts that individuals are more likely to radicalize when they feel disillusioned with or alienated from their communities. If communities can be proactive and work to engage individuals on the outskirts before they radicalize, fewer people will join violent extremist groups.¹⁵

The WANA Institute of Jordan (WANA refers to the same region as MENA but instead is called West Asia and North Africa) has done significant research on violent extremism in the region. They have found that most of the P/CVE programming in the region has been short-term

¹³ Frazer, Owen, and Christian Nunlist. "The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism ." *The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism* . Zurich : Centre for Security Studies, 2015

¹⁴ Radicalisation Awareness Network. Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism. Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism (pp. 1–110).

¹⁵ Neumann, P. R. (n.d.). Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism. Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

and isolated, and as such, has had little impact. Furthermore, there has been little cooperation between governments in the region and intergovernmental agencies, and as such, successes in P/CVE programming have been observed only in specific and smaller geographic locations, as opposed to positive change at a national or regional level. Despite the effectiveness of community based approaches to counter violent extremism, there needs to be a regional or national structure for organizing and elongating the achieved successes.

WANA has also found that there is pushback in Jordan amongst the public to State-Sponsored Security Programs (SSPs). The main grievances that the Jordanians public has with SSPs is that they take away an individual's personal freedoms at the expense of national security, and SSPs can even reinforce violent extremist ideologies and encourage people to radicalize.¹⁶

This ISP's research builds on these findings by specifically examining radicalization and community programming at a local level in Jordan. Given Jordan's effectiveness, the rest of the world can benefit from learning about how Jordan administers its CVE programs.

Methodology

Given the nature of the independent study topic, conducting research and gathering information on Jordanian national security policy was difficult. Understandably, much of Jordan's national security strategy and its programs are classified, and if not classified, very broadly or vaguely explained. However, the researcher had excellent guidance and mentorship through her advisors and was able to reach out to set of Jordanians who had extensive knowledge on Jordanian national security strategies which they were generous in sharing.

¹⁶ "Towards More Effective Human Security Approaches in the Context of the Emerging Threat of Violent Radicalisation in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia.", WANA Institute. 2017.

This independent study used a variety of primary and secondary sources to gather information. The researcher used a combination of interviews, studies, publications, and articles to conduct her research. The primary source of data collection was qualitative and in the form of interviews with experts given the classified nature of quantitative data.

The researcher carried out six personal interviews with a variety of experts in Jordanian P/CVE policy who have different backgrounds to gain a diversity of perspectives. Each of the six interviewees were asked the same set of questions and the researcher wrote down notes. None of the interviews were recorded. Five interviewees were selected through suggestion from a mentor, and all five were contacted initially through a phone call, either administered by the researcher or her research advisor. The sixth interview was impromptu although greatly valued. Each interview lasted from approximately 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the amount of information the interviewee presented.

The first interview was conducted with a former high up official at the General Intelligence Directorate (GID), the Jordanian equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) known as the “mukhabarat” in Arabic. This interviewee was selected with the help of the researcher’s advisor, who also used to work in the intelligence field. The interviewee was selected because the GID has the largest role in thwarting violent extremism in Jordan. Through intelligence collection, the government is able to gather information about who is radicalizing to violent extremism, the number of extremists, and their plots for violence. The GID also has a significant amount of information on the P/CVE programs that exist within the country and their success. The interviewee’s former status at the organization gave the researcher a great depth of knowledge given the amount the interviewee knew and was able to share. The interview was

carried out over a formal dinner with the researcher, her advisor, and the interviewee. A formal dinner was selected due to the interviewee's status as retired and without a current office space.

The second interview was conducted with a professor at the University of Jordan's College of Sharia (Islamic Law), who is a former minister at the Ministry of Awqaf, the ministry in charge of Islamic affairs and holy sites. There is no exact translation for "awqaf" in English but it loosely translates to "endowments". The second interviewee was found with help from the researcher's academic director. He was selected due to his expertise in Islam (which the extremists use to justify their actions), for his scholarly status, and for his knowledge of the inner workings of the Jordanian government. The interview was carried out at the interviewee's office at the University of Jordan with the help of someone translating.

The third person the researcher interviewed is a professor of International Studies at the University of Jordan, and a fellow at the Washington Institute who specializes in the Arab-Israeli conflict, political Islam, and regional politics. The interviewee had previously come to the School for International Training (SIT) to give a lecture to the researcher and her peers on political Islam. The lecture discussed several themes the researcher wanted to explore further in her research project including Salafism, jihad, and terrorism in the region. Given his evident expertise on the researcher's topic she decided to interview him and ask him questions more targeted toward her research questions. The interview was conducted in the interviewee's office at the School for International Studies at the University of Jordan.

Fourth, the researcher interviewed an imam. The imam is also a sheikh and has significant authority and scholarship in Islamic affairs. The imam works at a mosque down the street from SIT where the researcher is a student, and has a history of talking to SIT students. The imam was selected due to his deep understanding of the true teachings of Islam, his

knowledge of the Koranic verses the terrorists use, and for his knowledge of the P/CVE programs the government runs through mosques. The interview was conducted at the SIT building. The researcher also used a translator for this interview.

The fifth interview was conducted with a former head of the State Security Court. The individual was selected with the help of the researcher's advisor. The interviewee was selected because the State Security Court plays a significant role in the Jordanian P/CVE system, as they prosecute terrorists and therefore have a depth of knowledge about the radicalized Jordanian population. The GID and State Security Court in conjunction are the two governmental bodies that most closely interact to fight extremism. The interview was carried out at the interviewee's law firm's office and the researcher's advisor translated to avoid miscommunication.

The sixth and final interview that the researcher had was with a female lawyer at the same law firm where the fifth interview took place. The interviewee has a master's degree in the financing of terrorism and a deep understanding of violent extremism in Jordan. She was interviewed without prior arrangement and by suggestion from the fifth interviewee, her colleague. The researcher chose to interview a sixth interviewee because she wanted a female perspective on her interview questions. Women are significantly underrepresented in the security field, especially in the Middle East, and the female interviewee's perspective was highly appreciated to get a more holistic understanding of national security in Jordan.

Together, the six interviews gave the researcher a profound, and more complex understanding of the governmental role in CVE, the local community role in CVE, and how Islam influences extremism and P/CVE strategies alike.

For the purpose of this paper all six of the interviewees have been kept anonymous given the sensitivity of the topic and the information presented. At the beginning of four of the

interviews, the researcher presented a consent form which she reviewed with the interviewees to make sure they consented to the researcher using the content of the interviews for this paper. Given the formality and setting of two of the interviews the researcher did not present a consent form at the time, but instead asked for verbal consent. The consent form was later signed by her advisor on the interviewee's behalf. This was done with approval from the SIT academic director. Three of the interviewees spoke English and the researcher speaks functional Arabic, enough for both sides to avoid misunderstandings. However, two of the interviewees did not speak English, and although the researcher speaks Arabic, she does not speak enough to have in depth conversations about P/CVE policy in Jordan. Accordingly, the researcher was assisted by someone who fluently speaks both Arabic and English for three interviews to ensure the clarity and integrity of the information she was collecting. Although the people translating were not official translators by profession, they had extensive training in translating.

The researcher also actively worked to confront her own biases as an American studying another country's security system throughout her research process. She tried her best to act ethically, treating people with respect, explaining her purpose in studying national security in Jordan, and ending each interview by asking the interviewee if they had any questions for her, to ensure their comfort and complete understanding of her research process.

The rest of the information the researcher collected came from secondary sources. These secondary sources include publications and studies from think tanks such as the WANA Institute in Jordan, and the Center for Strategic Studies, international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the United Nations, academic institutions such as West Point and Georgetown, and governmental bodies such as the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Research Obstacles

The main obstacle the researcher encountered was the classified nature of the majority of the information she was seeking. The primary goals of Jordanian P/CVE policy are not published online and are only disclosed to certain individuals on a need to know basis within the field. As an American student, the researcher did not qualify as someone who could know the details of Jordanian P/CVE strategy. Therefore, the researcher had to rely on information provided to her from those she interviewed, and did not have a way of fact checking information to confirm the information presented to her was factual. Additionally, given the lack of published information on the topic, the researcher was only able to gather material based on what the interviewees chose to share with her, and did not have the resources available to fill in the gaps in the knowledge she had, such as greater details on tangible Jordanian P/CVE policy administered by local communities.

The researcher also found it difficult to conduct research in a country and culture foreign to her. Jordanians have a different concept of time and have different norms of professional culture than the researcher's American understanding. The researcher had complications organizing interviews due to the likelihood of people canceling interviews or not answering phone calls. On occasion the researcher had to locate interviewee's offices and sit outside of them until the interviewee was available.

Although P/CVE policy is important in Jordan, the researcher found it challenging to find people who had extensive knowledge on her topic, and whom she could interview in depth. Sometimes despite their expertise, the researcher would ask questions people could not answer,

although it is unclear if this is because they did not know the answers to her questions or because they were not at liberty to share the information she was requesting .

The researcher's nationality also posed an obstacle in her research process. Interviewing Jordanians about national security proved difficult because the researcher could be mistrusted, questioned, or even suspected as a spy. The researcher had to explain in her depth her interest in the topic and her status as a student.

Findings

Modeled from the research framework, the findings section is split into three parts to respond to the three research questions that the researcher investigated. The first section explains who is radicalizing in Jordan and why, based on the answers the researcher collected from her six interviews and from sources the researcher found on the internet. The second section elaborates on P/CVE policy in Jordan, especially at the local level. Most of the information in this section comes from interviews, given the lack of published sources on Jordanian national security policy on the internet. The third section expands on the role of larger actors influencing the radicalization process and the Jordanian P/CVE strategy. Data on larger actors was mainly gathered through interviews. Interviews are not cited as footnotes in the section below to uphold the anonymity of the sources the information was collected from.

Radicalization: The Problem

Demographically, the majority of Jordanians who are radicalizing and joining violent extremist groups are male, young (between 14 and 35), come from a low socioeconomic status, have few or no job opportunities, come from urban areas, feel excluded from society, are not

well educated about Islam or in general, and are dissatisfied with the government. Being married does not seem to have a large influence on likelihood to radicalize. However, it is important to understand that wealthy people and well educated people also radicalize, underscoring the difficulty of P/CVE given the randomness of violent extremism.

There are a variety of reasons that the demographic described above is most likely to radicalize. Primarily, they are frustrated with their current status politically, economically, and socially. They feel they are unable to change their situation and have to look to more extreme solutions for change. Extremist groups take advantage of these vulnerable people, promising them a sense of purpose and identity, financial security, and a place in paradise when they die. Extremist groups have been known to give recruits new cars, houses, and wives.

Extremist groups use certain ideologies, platforms, and tactics to entice people to join their cause. The primary narrative that extremists use to attract people and to justify their actions is the idea of jihad against the oppressor. In this case, the West is the oppressor, and a *jihad*, or struggle, against them is needed to return Islam to its golden days, and to give the Muslim people the quality of life that they deserve. It is important to point out that this is a misinterpretation of the true meaning of jihad, which is supposed to be a defensive struggle. Scholars argue the only true jihad existed in the time of the Prophet Mohammed when he was fighting wars to defend and spread Islam, and this holy fight no longer applies to modern day. The fuel extremists use to defend their narrative of a jihad against the oppressor comes from the “clash of civilizations” and an “us versus them” ideology, a trap the West and the United States also fall in to. The extremists blame the majority of the strife the MENA region and Muslims experience on the West, naming the colonization of MENA by Western powers and Western materialism as the two primary evils. Due to the oppression of Muslims and MENA under Western occupation, Western

influence has to be expelled and Islam has to be returned to its glory days, such as it was during the time of the Prophet (hence the emphasis on fundamentalism in extremist teachings).

A movement toward fundamentalist Islam is growing within the MENA region as branches of more conservative Islam grow stronger. Within Jordan, the Salafist movement is gaining followers.¹⁷ Salafism is a reform branch of Islam that seeks to emulate Islam as it was during the years of the first three prophets, and developed in Egypt in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Unfortunately, those who believe in this fundamental branch of Islam are often those who are more likely to radicalize and to join violent extremist groups, due to Salafism's fundamental teachings.

Violent extremists groups are highly successful at using the internet as a tool to recruit. Videos on social media are the most common tool that violent extremists use to recruit and can be found on several platforms including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook etc. These videos rely on manipulating the viewer's emotion to build solidarity for their message. Videos often show Muslims suffering, naming the West as the reason for their struggle, or videos play Islamic songs with potent words which can have a very powerful effect on the viewer, playing to the viewer's pathos.

As stated above, a misunderstanding of the true teachings of Islam are another reason that people radicalize. Misunderstanding Islam can be the fault of several factors, including miseducation in schools about Islamic teachings, non certified imams preaching at mosques, misinformation on the internet, or nonfactual information being spread within communities. These misunderstandings are problematic because they encourage people to join violent

¹⁷ Schenker, David. "Salafi Jihadists on the Rise in Jordan." Salafi Jihadists on the Rise in Jordan - The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. The Washington Institute, May 5, 2015

¹⁸ Wagemakers, Joas. "Salafism." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, June 8, 2017

extremist groups due to extremists' manipulation of the Koran to justify their actions. Violent extremists manipulate the words of the Koran to such an extent that they make their cause seem not only just but holy. When they recruit, they use these manipulations to brainwash people into fighting with enduring commitment to their cause.

Current Jordanian CVE policy: The Solution

Based on the six interviews conducted, there appear to be three main types of P/CVE programs in Jordan. The most common and main effort to counter violent extremism is programs run through mosques. Second, there are several awareness campaigns that are run at the local community level, and on the internet, to explain extremist ideologies and reveal their shortcomings, ignorance about Islam, and the harm they cause. The third main program run is through prisons, where imams and important community members go to prisons where already radicalized individuals are imprisoned to run workshops about the true values of Islam.

The P/CVE programs run through the mosques are conducted by imams, who are trained to preach the true values of Islam. Initially, after violent extremism rose in the Middle East around the September 11th attacks in the United States, imams were actually causing people to radicalize to violent extremism instead of deradicalizing the individuals at their mosques. This problem was the fault of two primary causes. Firstly, as mentioned above, some mosques don't have certified imams and anyone can come preach, including those with radical and harmful beliefs. On a similar vein, not all imams had had proper training in Islam about how to talk about its values or teachings, especially those that terrorists use as ammunition for their cause, such as what the Koran says about jihad, killing, and non believers. Now, the government has training for imams and gives them sets of talking points for their khutbahs (sermons).

Awareness campaigns can take several forms and are the most visible of the three main methods of P/CVE in Jordan. P/CVE through the internet includes deactivating terrorist sites, deleting content that promotes violent extremist ideologies, and creating social media campaigns with accurate information about Islam or social media campaigns to dispel terrorist ideologies. Awareness campaigns also exist at the local community level, including campaigns run through schools, neighborhoods, sports organizations etc. Figure 1 is a poster found at the University of Jordan School for International Studies, for a “Together Against Extremism Initiative” administered through the University of Jordan. These campaigns are more on the preventative



side of P/CVE because they assume that the majority of people have not been radicalized, and use populations of non radicalized individuals within communities to stand against the few individuals who are radicalized, not to join them. Interestingly, these campaigns use a similar rhetoric to that of the violent extremist groups as they emphasize a sense of purpose.

Figure 1

The third type of program, run

through the prisons, is focused more on countering violent extremism, as opposed to a preventative program, and it involves attempts to deradicalize individuals who are serving time for their harmful ideologies. The imam interviewed, in addition to other interviewees, explained

that special trained imams and other admirable community leaders enter prisons where radicalized violent extremists are kept and give lectures followed by conversation groups to explain the true teachings of Islam and to point out to violent extremists the flaws in their beliefs. The goal of these programs is to deradicalize individuals while they are still in a controlled environment so that when they are released they are no longer a threat to society. The conversations stimulate people to rethink their extremist ideologies and actually understand the values behind the religion they have dedicated their lives to defending.

All six interviewees agreed that the three aforementioned P/CVE strategies seem to be successful, however, also agreed that there is no accurate method of determining how successful. The issue that arises with measuring the success of P/CVE programs is that radicalization is a mental state and is therefore hard to tangibly measure since it's impossible to truly understand someone else's thoughts, especially if the person is uncooperative. Secondly, radicalized individuals can behave differently after participating in programming, appearing to have become deradicalized, but not actually changing their values. For example, the man who just carried out the stabbing on London Bridge had previously been in prison for terrorism charges and had gone through a deradicalization program during his time in prison, but still carried out a terrorist attack in the name of ISIS upon release.

Another issue that arises in executing P/CVE programming in Jordan today is disinterest from Jordanians in P/CVE. The majority of Jordanians do not find violent extremism to be an especially pressing problem, naming the economic crisis and the political situation as much more important issues that have a greater effect on their daily lives. They also name gun violence in the United States and violent extremism in Europe as more dangerous to people than the violent extremism that exists in the MENA region. As such, it is difficult to get communities to

effectively participate in P/CVE programming. They do not see violent extremism as an issue unique to Jordan or especially bad in Jordan, and naturally do not feel a strong pull to concentrate a lot of time or effort into working with P/CVE programs at the local level.

There is also a distrust of the state within local communities. Sometimes the authority exercised by the national government at the local level to counter violent extremism can be counterproductive and actually encourage more people to radicalize. People feel that the government exerts too much control over citizens trying to filter out violent extremism and people feel their civil liberties are lost at the expense of keeping the general population safer. Accordingly, they feel a need to rebel against the government to change their situation, and these thoughts can often stem into radical ones, sending people into the grasp of violent extremist groups.

All P/CVE programs are funded and executed by the Jordanian government. There does not appear to be a high level of cooperation with non governmental organizations but there is a high level of cooperation within governmental organizations such as the United Nations, other Middle Eastern states, the European Union, and the United States. In coalition with these bodies, Jordan works to coordinate P/CVE strategies and to implement international P/CVE strategy framework. However, there are problems with the allocation of funds and cooperation amongst branches of the Jordanian government to execute comprehensive P/CVE strategy using those funds.

Larger Actors: Who's Contributing and How?

In conjunction with identifying the factors that push people to radicalize to violent extremism, and examining the current policies and programs in place to prevent and counter

violent extremism, it is also important to consider who is contributing to these P/CVE efforts, the form of contribution, and the effectiveness of that contribution. The researcher chose to focus on the two largest actors in Jordanian P/CVE efforts: the Jordanian government and the American government. The researcher chose these two governments because they have the largest influence over Jordanian P/CVE policy and are both known worldwide for their highly effective P/CVE contributions to international counterterrorism strategy.

The Jordanian and American governments work closely to coordinate P/CVE efforts in Jordan, in the MENA region, and worldwide. The two countries' intelligence agencies have a long history of partnership. The Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.) has been known to send agents to train in Jordan, and the General Intelligence Directorate (Jordan) has been known to send agents to train in the United States. As of 2017, there were over 2800 U.S. soldiers in Jordan.

Due to their close partnership and alliance on counterterrorism and P/CVE efforts dating back to the 1950s, the American government donates significant funds for Jordanian security. The United States and Jordan signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015 that stated the United States would give Jordan \$300 million a year in security assistance although in actuality this number is much higher. The table below (Figure 2), taken from a study done by the Center for American Progress outlines American aid for security.¹⁹

¹⁹ Lang, Hardin, William Wechsler, and Alia Awadallah. "The Future of U.S.-Jordanian Counterterrorism Cooperation." Center for American Progress, November 30, 2017.

TABLE 1

Jordanian security aid, 2014–2018

U.S. programs providing funding

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Direct to Jordan					
Aviation Leadership Program	\$92,147	\$9,585	– **	–	–
Coalition Support Funds	–	\$147,269,700	–	–	–
Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program	\$941,334	\$797,191	–	–	–
Cooperative Threat Reduction Program	\$30,861,159	\$14,667,701	–	–	–
Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF)	–	\$150,000,000	\$200,000,000	–	–
Defense Institute of International Legal Studies	\$11,000	–	–	–	–
Developing Countries Combined Exercise Program	\$2,377,396	\$2,440,264	–	–	–
Foreign Military Financing	\$300,000,000	\$385,000,000	\$450,000,000	\$450,000,000	\$350,000,000
International Military Education and Training	\$3,588,000	\$3,787,000	\$3,733,000	\$4,000,000	\$3,800,000
Jordan Border Security Program	\$147,000,000	–	–	–	–
Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR)	\$6,700,000	\$7,200,000	\$8,850,000	\$13,600,000	\$10,400,000
Regional Centers for Security Studies	\$14,069	\$50,475	–	–	–
Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority	–	\$26,762,000	–	–	–
Security Cooperation Programs	–	–	–	\$500,000,000	–
Service academies	\$603,011	\$227,182	–	–	–
State Partnership Program	–	\$347,215	–	–	–
Total	\$492,188,116	\$738,558,313	\$662,583,000	\$967,600,000	\$364,200,000

Figure 2

Observed in the table above, the majority of American funding for Jordanian counterterrorism and P/CVE is militaristic in nature and therefore more centered on counterterrorism instead of preventing and countering violent extremism efforts, as the majority of the money is going to countering existing terrorism instead of preventing it by targeting the reasons that people are radicalizing and joining violent extremist groups. However, interviewees agreed that the United States government is also funding P/CVE programs such as those run through mosques, schools and prisons.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, many violent extremists name the Jordanian government as a reason to radicalize. They name them as influences to radicalize because they

believe the Jordanian government is too cooperative with American political and economic interests in the region and invite too much American influence into the region, even prioritizing American interests over those of the Jordanian people. The Jordanian government defends itself by pledging its loyalty to the Jordanian people, but it must be highlighted that the Jordanian government depends on the United States for millions (even a billion) of dollars in aid, and are therefore somewhat under American pressure to use that money as the United States wants.

The United States government and its foreign policy in the MENA region is one of the most common reasons people name for radicalizing and joining violent extremist groups and executing terrorist acts. People have several grievances with the United States, namely unwavering American support for Israel, the Iraq War, American troops stationed in the Middle East, especially in holy sites in Saudi Arabia, and general American imperialism in the region, especially regarding oil. Some scholars, and several of those interviewed, even go as far to say as the United States is at fault for the creation of the Islamic State (IS) and the radicalization of violent extremists including Osama bin Laden, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi because of their blatant imperialism in the MENA region rallying large numbers of people to fight against the United States.

Conclusion

Although only six interviews were conducted, a very small sample size, the information that the researcher collected was in line with the information presented in her literature review. P/CVE programs run through the local community, such as through mosques, schools, and even in prisons can be highly effective in reducing the number of people radicalizing, or in increasing the number of those deradicalized. Despite it being hard to measure the number of people

deradicalizing, the Jordanian government and scholars alike have observed that community based programs are successful, and are often more successful than militaristic strategies to reduce violent extremism. The researcher found the same thing that the WANA institute did: the militaristic tactics to reduce extremism, that are primarily government based instead of community based, can even be counterproductive and radicalize people further.

However, Jordanian P/CVE is in jeopardy given American foreign policy in the region. As American foreign policy gets more overtly pro-Israel, more people are radicalizing and joining extremist groups. Violent extremism is ideological and no amount of money invested in militaristic strength can squash an ideology. American financial contributions will be pointless if more people are radicalizing because of American actions in the region.

The Jordanian and American governments should cooperate to shift Jordanian counterterrorism efforts more toward countering violent extremism efforts given their broader all encompassing nature, and emphasis on building community resilience to reduce the number of people radicalizing instead of responding to already existent extremism through militaristic action. There should also be a framework created to make sure branches of government are held more accountable for the allocation of funds for P/CVE efforts so that these efforts can be as effective as possible.

Based on the findings of this independent study project, the researcher recommends a revamping of the Jordanian P/CVE strategy. Although strategies exist and in theory and there is a framework to implement them through training imams, creating awareness campaigns, and administering deradicalization lectures and conversation groups in prisons, these programs aren't given enough of a chance to be truly successful in Jordan. More focus should be given to non military tactics such as the above CVE efforts due to their proven successes and the fact that they

are more popular amongst the Jordanian people. Not only do Jordanians disfavor high government involvement in their lives to prevent violent extremism, these government efforts infringe on people's civil liberties and can even cause them to radicalize, the exact opposite effect the government intends to have in local communities. The American government should also reevaluate where their funding for Jordanian security aid are going, because the American government is enabling non effective, militaristic tactics in Jordan, which is in turn earning them a poor reputation and enticing people to radicalize.

Study Limitations

As previously stated, the main limitation in this independent study project is the extremely small sample size of six interviews and the homogeneity of the interviewees. All of those interviewed are men, with the exception of one woman, who currently hold, or held, high level jobs at government, religious, or academic institutions. Ideally, this study would have had more female perspectives. As mentioned above, women are highly underrepresented in the national security field, although they are half the population and equally affected, if not more, by violent extremism. Therefore, more female perspectives could have highly benefited this study and could have pointed out conclusions on the subject that are absent in this paper. A perspective from someone of a lower socioeconomic status, such as someone who lives in a community with a lot of radicalized individuals, could have also been helpful, because they would have been closer to the radicalization process and would have observed it in actuality, not just theoretically. Lastly, ideally this study would have interviewed radicalized individuals themselves about their radicalization process, and their perspective on the attempts to deradicalize them by the

government. However, these people are very difficult to locate, and also would have posed a risk to the safety of the researcher.

Another limitation of this study was the time frame. The independent study period was four weeks, which is a short time to conduct a full research project. The researcher had originally wanted to conduct on a questionnaire to distribute to scholars asking them their perspective on her research questions (see above) but did not have time to do so in four weeks. The researcher also had wanted to translate her paper into Arabic, but did not have time, given the complexity of the Arabic language, and especially formal Arabic writing. It is also difficult to find translation for national security jargon in Arabic, especially the term, “P/CVE”. Additionally, Arabic also does not distinguish between the words radicalism and extremism, they are both “التطرف”, transliterated to *al taTaruf*. This paper distinguishes between radicalism and extremism, which would have further complicated an Arabic translation.

Recommendations for Future Studies

There are several ways future studies on the role of the local community in countering violent extremism in Jordan could build on the findings of this paper. Firstly, the researcher recommends looking into the role of family empowerment: how to give families of radicalized individuals the tools to deradicalize them. On a similar vein, the role of women in the (de)radicalization process. Mothers and wives can be highly influential in swaying their sons’ and husbands’ perspectives. Most of the time the female influence is grounding and works to deradicalize men, but sometimes women can be the deciding factor for men in the radicalization process. A study like this should interview women, a perspective this paper failed to include.

The researcher also recommends a comparative study of P/CVE efforts in the region. Another study could look at what other countries in the region are doing well in their P/CVE efforts, and how they could improve and learn from Jordan. A study such as this could be beneficial in that it could lay the foundation for a more cohesive P/CVE effort in the region and build more cooperation among countries to make the region safer as a whole.

Lastly, a study that builds on the information of this study should be longer and done with the cooperation of the Jordanian government if possible so that its findings can be directly communicated to the government, and therefore positive changes can occur based on the study's findings. Jordan's P/CVE policy is working, but there are clear improvements they could implement to make their policy stronger and the country (and greater region) safer.

Ideally, someone conducting a study to build on this one would be Jordanian, or at least from a Jordanian or Middle Eastern ancestry, to avoid American bias.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Consent Form English



Title: The Role of Local Community Engagement Projects in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Jordan

Your Name/Homeschool: Duke University

School for International Training—Jordan: Modernization and Social Change

1. The purpose of this study is to ...identify the major factors that are pushing Jordanians to radicalize, and to examine the policies that are in place to prevent radicalization to violent extremism, and the policies in place to respond to those who have already been radicalized.
2. **Rights Notice**
If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.
 - a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
 - b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
 - c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

3. Instructions:

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Signing below indicates your agreement with all statements and your voluntary participation in the study. Signing below while failing to mark a preference where indicated will be interpreted as an affirmative preference. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.

I am aware that this interview is conducted by an independent undergraduate researcher with the goal of producing a descriptive case study on radicalization and countering violent extremism in Jordan

I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.

I am aware that I have the right to full anonymity upon request, and that upon request the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts.

I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and to terminate my participation at any time, and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.

I am aware of and take full responsibility for any risk, physical, psychological, legal, or social, associated with participation in this study.

I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my name and position in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use this interview in future research.

Date:

Participant's Signature:

Participant's Printed Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Thank you for participating!

Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to:

Dr. Raed Altabini, SIT Jordan Academic Director

Email: raed.altabini@sit.edu

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Radicalization

Why are people radicalizing (factors that contribute to radicalization)

- a. lack of job prospects/ economy
 - b. anger at foreign powers (USA or Israel etc)
 - c. disillusionment from community
 - d. familial conflicts
 - e. How is influx of refugees influencing radicalization in Jordan
 - f. other
- 2. Who is radicalizing**
- a. gender
 - b. age
 - c. nationality and ethnicity
 - d. Which areas in Jordan
 - e. if they are married
 - f. if they are employed
 - g. their level of education
 - h. religious affiliation
 - i. Financial situation
- 3. Interaction with Islam**
- a. Are they educated about Islam and how much so
 - b. What is their interpretation of Islam
 - c. What is their perspective of other religions
- 4. Role of unstable border countries in terms of radicalization**
- 5. What is the role of women in preventing or countering violent extremism**
- a. Raising children, mother's influence, wife's influence (or lack of)

The role of the local community in preventing radicalization

- 1. What strategies or programs are in place at the community level in order to prevent radicalization**
 - a. programs run through local mosque
 - b. greater community,
 - c. training spouses and family members etc,
 - d. how they're administered,
 - e. what attendance looks like
- 2. How successful are these strategies or programs**
 - a. effectiveness of these programs and how that's being measured
 - b. Who is funding them
 - c. How many are there
 - d. have they seen a clear integration into the community of potential radicalizers and a deradicalization their ideologies

- e. Are they partnering with other communities to admin them

The role of larger actors in P/CVE

1. How is the government contributing to P/CVE efforts

- a. how do national programs compare to local programs?
- b. Which seem to be more effective?
- c. Are people naming the government as a reason to radicalize?
- d. How are NGOs contributing to P/CVE efforts?

2. How is the United States and United States foreign policy either helping or hurting Jordanian P/CVE efforts?

- a. How is the US helping Jordanian P/CVE efforts
- b. How is the US hurting Jordanian P/CVE efforts
- c. Are people naming the United States as a reason to radicalize?
- d. Is the Jordanian government satisfied with American support for their P/CVE policy?
- e. What are the American contributions (in terms of finance, boots on the ground etc) to Jordanian P/CVE policy?
- f. Why was ISIS formed?
- g. Who is responsible for the creation of Al Zarqawi and Al Baghdadi