



# Policy Brief

August 2015

## Policy Brief on Countering Violent Extremism

by Sianna ElManouzi

Military force against violent extremism does not combat the problem at its core. Although preventive and retaliatory approaches to counterterrorism seem promising, they ultimately do not deter future uprisings, as the aim of the terrorist is to wear out its opponent.

It is estimated by the World Bank that between 9 and 10 percent of a nation's GDP goes towards military defense, which a portion contributes to counterterrorism efforts. Instead of fighting the problem with force, foreign capital would be better used in resource scarce communities where values such as free thought, tolerance and peace are absent in school curriculums. Through investing foreign capital in education, communities can be transformed, and violent extremism can be combatted.

Education is vital in accomplishing long-term goals. Through learning, societies can build foundations that are strengthened through continual innovation. When communities fail to thrive, alternative and dangerous ideologies are easily accepted, which can lead to violent extremism. Communities that are isolated are vulnerable to radicalization when positive values.

Scholars around the world are seeking solutions to counter violent extremism. Nations have built coalitions aiming to demolish the problem, but radical militants are hardly weakened. To solve the problem, nations must adopt a transformative approach. Research suggests that communities can be transformed through encouraging peace and instilling positive values.

Members of TICVE recently conducted research in two of Mali's most resource scarce and vulnerable regions: Gao and Timbuktu. In villages that were taken by radical rebels, young populations were introduced to "Living Together" book clubs which sought to stimulate critical thinking skills in the Madrasa schools, where thought has been limited.

By training teachers and working collaboratively to select appropriate texts, children were able to participate in thought provoking discussions from literature. The data suggests that community-building education projects such as "Living Together" could transform the values and ideologies of such communities.

Therefore, investing foreign capital in projects that target youth of isolated communities would be more beneficial than high levels of military force. If the international community reduced spending in military action and invested more in a peaceful, transformative approach, communities would benefit significantly, and the world would see less occurrences of violent extremism.

---

*Sianna Elmanouzi is a fourth year undergraduate student at the University of Colorado Boulder, USA where she studies political science and business. With a certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies in progress, Sianna is interested in finding and implementing innovative solutions to counter international violence and encourage transnational collaboration on such issues. Sianna joined the TICVE team in July 2015 as a trainee to explore new solutions in counter violent extremism.*