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SPECIAL REPORT

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CONTENTS

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Atrocity Prevention through Dialogue
Challenges in Dealing with Violent Extremist Organizations

Summary

- Various forms of dialogue have traditionally been a central mechanism in the toolbox for atrocity prevention. The utility of this noncoercive peacebuilding practice merits reconsideration as violent extremist organizations (VEOs) increasingly embrace mass violence as a means to advance their objectives.

- If atrocities are imminent or ongoing, dialogue may serve as a crisis-mitigation instrument, with the potential of offering short-term humanitarian relief and civilian protection. When the risk of atrocities is remote, political dialogue can be used for structural or upstream prevention aimed at conflict resolution or addressing community grievances.

- Despite the broadening recognition of the need to engage extremist groups through dialogue when possible, controversy continues to surround this practice.

- The conditions for successful atrocity prevention through dialogue with VEOs are rarely in place. Those pursuing dialogue need to gradually build trust, conduct a thorough actor mapping, and reflect on their own role and preparedness to engage. Engaging extremists presents significant risks as well, including extremists' manipulation of the dialogue to buy time for planning atrocity campaigns.

- Efforts to engage VEOs directly through dialogue have been inconsistent and are handled with the utmost discretion. Restrictive legislative frameworks may limit the ability to exploit opportunities for atrocity prevention through dialogue with these groups.

Introduction

On March 17, 2016, U.S. secretary of state John Kerry declared that the self-styled Islamic State (IS) was responsible for the genocide against Yezidis, Christians, and Shiite Muslims.[1]

For centuries, mass atrocities have been perpetrated primarily by regimes and state proxies (e.g., the Khmer Rouge and the Hutu paramilitary organization, the Interahamwe) to punish, intimidate, or eradicate entire populations. Today, nonstate armed groups commonly labeled violent extremist or terrorist (e.g., IS, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab) are increasingly taking center stage by embracing mass violence as a strategic instrument to advance their tactical objectives or strategic vision. IS, for example, has brutally killed, captured, and enslaved thousands of men, women, and children.

The evolving nature of international conflict, and the growing prominence of VEOs as perpetrators of atrocities, requires us to rethink our traditional approaches to peace and conflict. VEOs are often combated with coercive measures, ranging from traditional law enforcement to air strikes, but the longer-term success of these methods remains questionable.[2] There is a growing belief, particularly in Europe and the developing world, in the potential of dialogue as an alternative or complement to coercion when engaging VEOs. The recent UN secretary-general's "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism," presented as part of the UN's global counterterrorism strategy, also highlights the need to strengthen our efforts to promote dialogue as a preventive tool.[3]

Further research is merited to explore the utility of humanitarian and political dialogue as an instrument to mitigate or prevent mass atrocities in contexts where VEOs are the likely perpetrators of these crimes. What works, what does not, and under what conditions? What are the opportunities available to humanitarian and political actors engaged in dialogue with VEOs? What constraints do they face? How can humanitarian and political dialogue be applied more effectively for atrocity-prevention purposes? This report takes a small step toward answering these pertinent questions.

As mass atrocities often occur in the context of violent conflict, the report considers both humanitarian and political dialogue as short-term crisis management instruments when mass violence against civilians is imminent or ongoing, or as structural prevention instruments in the face of latent risk. Dialogue represents only one tool that diplomats, facilitators, and other actors may use in isolation or—most effectively—as part of a multifaceted strategy to prevent potential perpetrators from implementing mass atrocity operations.[4] The utility of dialogue changes when positive incentives or coercive measures, such as military operations or sanctions, are in place.

Reviewing the utility of dialogue with extremists for the purpose of atrocity prevention integrates three different peacebuilding fields or practices that are infrequently combined, namely, dialogue, atrocity prevention, and the prevention of violent extremism. The analysis applies the theory and practice of dialogue in a context that traditionally has been a criminal justice matter under the purview of state authority. The spread of militant groups such as IS, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab across national borders and the extreme nature of the violence they apply present a broad set of international stakeholders with a transnational security challenge for which no robust international legal framework yet exists.

The report is structured in four sections. The first section introduces key concepts. The second section focuses on the potential of dialogue with VEOs and the different forms of engagement. The third and fourth sections explore the conditions for success and some of the inherent risks or challenges, respectively. The report concludes with a few practical recommendations.

Tool Descriptors and Definitions

The term atrocity prevention denotes any effort to prevent or mitigate genocide and widespread crimes against humanity or war crimes. The foundations of atrocity prevention as a field of peacebuilding practice reside in the Genocide Convention and international

human rights law, which was codified in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The field gained prominence in the 1990s, when several cases of mass violence, most notably in Rwanda and Bosnia, garnered widespread international attention. The policy debate on atrocity prevention initially concerned the application of military force in crisis situations, or the ability to prosecute political leaders deemed responsible for the crimes in the aftermath of mass violence. In recent decades the realization has grown that windows of opportunity for early prevention are often missed. Upstream atrocity prevention is increasingly considered an alternative set of actions best taken early, during the escalation phase and prior to the eruption of violence. In his 2015 annual report on the responsibility to protect principle, UN secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon recognized the importance of nonstate armed actors as a new protection challenge in this field.[5]

The U.S. government defines violent extremists as "individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals."[6] The term holds little analytical rigor, as it may refer to rebel groups, insurgents, or groups with a mix of criminal and political objectives. Furthermore, it emphasizes ideological motivation, as opposed to the manifestations of violence, and provides little information about the diverse and complex nature of VEOs. A multitude of tactical and strategic motivations may drive these groups, ranging from the establishment of safe havens for training and planning to the ambition to control large swaths of territory as a way to project power or the pursuit of a global transformation agenda.[7] VEOs have widely diverse characteristics, depending on the environment in which they operate, their organizational structure, and their relationship to the state. Some organizations are closely tied to a local constituency, while others are closely affiliated with global networks. Some groups are small and clandestine, while others have a large support base and geographic presence.[8] Ultimately, all of these attributes may shift and evolve over time.

The scope of violent extremism as a policy-generated term highlights its limited utility for research and strategy design. The requirements of successful dialogue remain highly contextual, untenable in some contexts and promising in others. For the purpose of analytical parsimony, this report explores the utility of dialogue with the leadership and membership of nonstate violent groups that support or commit extreme and ideologically motivated violence to further (often transnational) religious and political goals.

Humanitarian dialogue, another term of art, refers to efforts by humanitarian organizations, private diplomacy organizations, and other international or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to directly engage armed actors to gain access for assistance purposes, to protect civilians, or in some cases to pave the road for political dialogue or conflict transformation. Some of the major actors involved in humanitarian dialogue are the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the Berghof Foundation, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Geneva Call.

In the context of extremist violence, political dialogue refers to efforts by third-party actors to make extremist movements open to negotiation by "inducing moderation and flexibility in their demands, reshaping their ends into attainable reforms, [or] forcing an end to their violent means of protest while, at the same time, opening the political process to broader participation."[9] Political dialogue entails gaining a better understanding of the different perspectives involved in a conflict, whereas mediation refers to structured negotiations whereby a third party assists other parties in search of an acceptable solution to a conflict.[10] In some cases, political dialogue is followed by negotiation and mediation as related forms of political engagement. Various types of organizations engage in this practice, including national governments, international and regional organizations, and international or local NGOs.

Opportunities for Dialogue with Extremists

NGOs operating in conflict zones often seem convinced that the current security challenge presented by VEOs is unprecedented. The type of violence perpetrated by groups designated VEOs surely mirrors some of the violence executed by past state-sponsored or nonstate armed organizations; however, the dogmatic and inflexible ideology of VEOs the world is facing today has made engagement particularly challenging.

A related trend is the broad loss of legitimacy by those state entities and international organizations that have traditionally served as the primary facilitators of dialogue. The position of such organizations as the UN, for example, has been progressively undermined. The UN's impartiality is increasingly questioned by warring parties because of the integrated nature of its interventions. The experience of the UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, like that of the African Union Mission in Somalia, illustrates how security and political, humanitarian, and peacebuilding agendas are increasingly interwoven.

Engagement at Different Conflict Stages

Dialogue represents a noncoercive tool under pillar III of the UN's responsibility to protect principle for prevention and protection.[11] The power of dialogue as an atrocity-prevention instrument was traditionally attributed to its ability to influence the leaders of abusive regimes, rebel forces, or other "traditional" perpetrators by using positive and negative inducements, or to introduce innovative perspectives into negotiation processes. The utility of dialogue may shift, however, when one considers VEOs as the potential perpetrators of mass violence.

When atrocity crimes are imminent or ongoing, direct dialogue with VEOs can serve as a crisis-mitigation instrument with the potential to offer short-term humanitarian relief. When the threat is remote, political dialogue can serve as a structural prevention tool with long-term impact potential. In this context, dialogue can be applied as an upstream prevention mechanism early in the escalation phase, aimed at long-term conflict resolution or resolving grievances at the community level. Humanitarian dialogue is generally more effective in providing short-term relief, while political dialogue may pave the way for long-term political transformation.

Conflict is, by definition, fluid. It mutates and morphs into different phases. Conflict curves serve as helpful visualizations of the evolution of conflict, illustrating the escalation from unstable peace to tension, crisis, and war, followed by a phased de-escalation.[12] The phases identified in a conflict curve present ideal types and do not realistically illustrate conflict dynamics. However, the curve illustrates how dialogue can serve various purposes in different conflict environments involving VEOs. In the initial stages of conflict, before atrocities have been perpetrated, political dialogue can serve as a primary prevention tool. In light of the challenge of predicting how violence will manifest, atrocity-prevention efforts need to employ a broader, structural lens. In this context, dialogue can be used to identify the interests and motivations of those directly involved in extremist organizations and to address community-level grievances that may be exploited by extremists to facilitate recruitment. This type of dialogue represents an upstream peacebuilding approach to preventing widespread extremist violence. Upstream prevention deals with the underlying causes of mass atrocity crimes rather than with their immediate manifestations. At this stage, dialogue for atrocity prevention looks quite similar to traditional conflict prevention, which is not surprising, since a majority (67 percent) of mass killings occur within a context of armed conflict.[13]

When violence reaches the extreme level of a mass atrocity, the conflict enters a spiral from which it is difficult to exit. Finding a peaceful settlement or pursuing political dialogue

at this stage is extremely difficult, but dialogue can help mitigate the by-products of war and prevent further atrocities. Humanitarian dialogue can provide relief and basic protection to civilians at this stage. Once trust has been established around food delivery or basic relief measures, the shift to broader civilian protection may become more realistic. Humanitarians can advocate for the protection of certain individuals or groups at risk in the areas under the control of VEOs and can negotiate conditions to minimize harm (e.g., by establishing humanitarian corridors). In this phase of the atrocities, political dialogue may accomplish little beyond attaining a better understanding of the perpetrators, influencing the way they view themselves, affecting their tactical calculations (especially vis-à-vis the use of atrocities), and establishing long-standing relationships that might prove critical during later phases of the conflict.

One clear benefit of dialogue at any conflict stage is to facilitate the collection of information about the group's command structure and organization, and its intentions, priorities, and strategies with respect to the civilian population. Dialogue can also work at an individual level by promoting deradicalization and moderation, persuading potential perpetrators to refrain from atrocities, and encouraging defection.[14] That said, dialogue can also aggravate internal divisions or contribute to the fragmentation of extremist groups.

When parties reach a mutually hurting stalemate, violent conflict enters its final stages, and political dialogue can be used as a conflict-resolution tool. Recognizing and understanding the dynamics associated with this stage can, however, be challenging in the context of VEOs. The United States' negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan illustrate the difficulty of conflict resolution through negotiation and the peaceful transformation of extremist organizations. Instead, talks have tended to drag on while violence has fluctuated from stable cease-fires to sporadic or sustained violence, including atrocity crimes.[15]

In the aftermath of large-scale violence, dialogue also has the potential to rehumanize conflicting parties when atrocity crimes have contributed to a dehumanization of the other. Atrocity prevention traditionally operates according to a simplified dichotomy of victims versus perpetrators. This contradicts the experience of conflict actors who perceive themselves as victims and undercuts the need for relative equality as a requirement for dialogue.

The Dialogue Process

The conduct of humanitarian and political dialogue with VEOs has been an irregular and ad hoc practice, mainly because of the necessary discretion surrounding these activities and the lack of a robust international legal framework. Those practitioners that do engage VEOs for atrocity-prevention purposes express openness to dialogue when the following criteria are met:

- A willingness by VEOs to discuss a set of topics previously agreed to by both parties

- A reasonable likelihood of progress toward predetermined political or humanitarian goals

- Minimal security guarantees for those facilitating the dialogue

- Sufficient legitimacy of the dialogue in the eyes of the local population

- Moral acceptance by key international stakeholders

- An ability to pull out when there is evidence that VEOs are abusing dialogue or when the primary objectives can no longer be realized

The legitimacy and morality of a given dialogue setting present subjective criteria that each organization will determine independently. Additional context-specific criteria may be in place. U.S. criteria for engagement with the Taliban in 2012, for example, included breaking with al-Qaeda, ending the violence, and accepting the constitution of Afghanistan.[16]

Any type of engagement should start with a trust-building process designed to construct an environment where discussions can advance, and a conflict analysis and stakeholder mapping to determine a point of entry. Most engagements with VEOs are undertaken by third parties through personal contacts or interlocutors who are familiar with local conditions. Direct engagement with the leadership is uncommon and usually involves a number of gatekeepers with whom trust needs to be carefully crafted.[17] It is not unusual for dialogue to last for years without concrete results. Initial talks can serve to open channels of communication based on a series of principles or ground rules (e.g., renouncing the threat or use of force). Establishing strong preconditions or demands at this point can harden positions and impede progress during the negotiation process.[18] Once talks have been established between different warring parties and progress has been made, there is a need to move the process forward to ensure talks are not abused by armed groups while mass atrocities continue. Cease-fires, for example, may contribute to extending the conflict when parties use it as a tactical cover to strengthen themselves militarily or to reposition themselves to launch new attacks.

Aid agencies that operate in areas where VEOs have a structured framework for aid delivery, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia, often register with the organization's top leadership and accept a number of conditions, including respect for local culture or sometimes a form of payment or tax.[19] In these contexts, dialogue generally occurs at two levels: with the leadership and with the middle and lower ranks. Dialogue at the lower level is more uncertain but can have a greater impact on atrocity-risk mitigation. Conditions with local commanders are usually more fluid and open to interpretation, and they tend to be more pragmatic. In areas where different groups compete for power, structured negotiations have always resulted in "precarious access."[20] Some aid agencies have avoided this scenario by engaging directly with and seeking acceptance by local communities where possible.[21]

Opening Political Space through Humanitarian Dialogue

The utilization of humanitarian dialogue to open up space for political engagement remains a particularly contentious issue. Humanitarian organizations often operate with a mandate that is entirely apolitical and offer humanitarian assistance on the basis that this is a human right, yet other national, regional, or international organizations consider humanitarian issues a useful overture to engage politically. The principles of independence and neutrality are critical for humanitarian organizations in any aspect of their work and should be respected by political actors. However, humanitarian organizations do not operate in a vacuum and their actions have political repercussions. This often renders the distinction between political and humanitarian work artificial.

Humanitarian organizations that wish to engage in a discussion about political issues and political organizations seeking to discuss humanitarian issues need to be open and transparent; otherwise they risk losing credibility and trust in environments where the humanitarian space is already shrinking. Humanitarian engagement can open channels of communication on political issues when VEOs respond positively to a slow and gradually broadening dialogue process. Extreme caution is required, however, as deception and failure risk eroding trust and closing humanitarian access altogether.

Necessary Conditions for Dialogue

The necessary conditions for successful dialogue vary based on the context in which atrocity crimes are pursued and the tactical and strategic objectives sought by the VEO. Those

pursuing dialogue need to examine the web of perpetrators, enablers, and bystanders, study their motivations, assess the VEO's organizational structure, and reflect on their own role and preparedness to engage. Even when these necessary conditions are fulfilled, the overall likelihood of success in preventing atrocities remains limited.

To succeed, negotiators need to undertake a comprehensive actor mapping to identify the motivations, interests, and strategies of violent extremists, in line with traditional conflict assessment frameworks. This analysis should not be restricted to high-level individuals and hard-line extremists but should also include moderates and local commanders, and should identify different factions within the organization that may have different motivations and interests. The actor mapping should highlight the position of local enablers, supporters, and bystanders with the capacity to influence extremists indirectly or to assist in the commission of atrocity crimes. Actor-mapping analyses are particularly challenging owing to the decentralized and opaque structure of many VEOs. A positive outcome, however, is more likely when there is sufficient knowledge about the nature, structure, and decision-making processes of these organizations.

Several VEOs are perceived as primarily driven by religion; however, evidence suggests that VEOs often emerge in areas where long-standing local grievances have been neglected. Generally speaking, there is a thin line between organizations and individuals who genuinely voice local grievances and those who feed on marginalization, center-periphery tensions, or socioeconomic inequality for recruitment purposes. Assessments of local grievances and sources of marginalization need to be complemented by the analysis of other economic, criminal, and opportunistic agendas that drive the violence and by a consideration of whom the local community views as a legitimate representative of their interests. Additional conditions for successful dialogue include patience and perseverance, respect for nonnegotiable guiding principles, and an engagement strategy that targets all levels of the extremist organization.

It is preferable for the initial political dialogue to happen discreetly so that facilitators can demonstrate empathy and provide the right incentives. Often, international organizations lack the capacity and staying power to engage in long-term dialogue and generate minimum levels of trust,[22] a problem that is further aggravated by high staff turnover.[23] Dialogue will also be most effective when VEOs have reached a certain level of maturity and stability as opposed to earlier phases of their institutional development, when organizations focus on gaining recognition, developing a clear identity, and securing a physical presence on the ground. Upstream dialogue with community leaders and back-channel talks with potential recruits would be most effective during the conception stage.[24] Dialogue is also more likely to succeed when interlocutors are coherent, have clear structures of command and control, and are representative of their constituency.[25] This said, extremist organizations tend to be rather fragmented and fluid, with horizontal or network-based structures. This organizational characteristic significantly reduces the likelihood of success.

With respect to the role of dialogue facilitators, there is a need to be at least perceived as transparent, independent, and impartial when engaging in dialogue. A clear understanding of the available concessions needs to be established well in advance. To build trust, humanitarian and political organizations should work to establish private relationships, and ensure VEOs see dialogue as an alternative route to meeting their objectives. A focus on atrocity prevention may be helpful in the search for common ground for dialogue, particularly when atrocities are identified during the conflict analysis and stakeholder mapping as a means to advance ulterior motives rather than as ends in themselves.

Risks and Challenges

Despite the growing openness to engaging extremist groups, the conditions for effective atrocity prevention through dialogue are rarely in place. The offer of dialogue can be abused or rejected by extremist organizations. Negotiations may become an extension of the battlefield, deployed strategically when the group arrives in a position of weakness. Groups that are consolidating may not have an incentive to negotiate, as expressing openness to dialogue is seen as a concession or a sign of weakness. Dialogue may also cause internal fragmentation, leading to a proliferation of new actors.

Another challenge is the common absence of negotiable aims when faced with groups motivated by an inflexible ideology. The political scientist David Rapoport argues that we are currently experiencing a "religious wave of terrorism" that is dogmatic and less open to pragmatism and concessions.[26] Some VEOs are driven by maximalist goals, such as the demise of the nation-state system and the creation of a caliphate; these organizations may also reject political and religious pluralism and have little interest in political transformation or democratic governance.[27] When demands are so extreme that it is not possible to find common ground, and these groups are unresponsive to broader constituencies, "engagement is not recommended."[28] Furthermore, if atrocities are regarded as the sole means to reach strategic objectives related to attaining power or eliminating entire populations, then dialogue will rarely present a promising alternative. That said, dialogue can provide incentives to extremist actors: protection for the communities they claim to represent; recognition as a credible, legitimate interlocutor; a seat at the negotiation table; or avoiding prosecution.

VEOs, however, often do not view traditional dialogue facilitators such as the United Nations and international NGOs as impartial interlocutors. Confidence levels have dwindled, in part because of the security dependency of international organizations on entities engaged in offensive military campaigns against VEOs. Even when extremist organizations are interested in dialogue, as happened with the Taliban in Afghanistan, the process has been slowed by distrust.[29] The need for gradual trust building is also difficult to reconcile with the urgency that stems from imminent and ongoing mass killing.

Engaging extremists through dialogue may be seen as conferring undue legitimacy and may alienate the victims of their crimes. It may undermine moderates within the organization, marginalize other groups that have chosen peaceful or nonviolent means of protest, and be perceived as rewarding violence. When VEOs resort to large-scale, indiscriminate, and sustained violence, morality (rather than pragmatism) will weigh more heavily in the decision to engage. In these contexts, there is often domestic tolerance for, and expectations of, a coercive response to atrocious crimes.

Safety presents another challenge in contexts where dialogue facilitators are the target of attacks or kidnappings, particularly in case of disconnects between the central leadership and local operatives. The lack of coordination and information sharing is also a key challenge, creating an environment in which humanitarian agencies are played against one another by VEOs. This reality calls for more transparency and coordination between different organizations.

Legislation on counterterrorism complicates these challenges and further restricts the space available to prevent atrocities. The legislation not only places travel bans and sanctions on VEOs, it also criminalizes the provision of material support to and engagement with VEOs by private individuals and organizations anywhere in the world.[30] The United States upholds one of the most restrictive frameworks, and its approach is mirrored by other major powers and strategic allies. Even the provision of expert advice and assistance to terrorist organizations, and humanitarian assistance in areas where VEOs operate, is considered unlawful.[31] Several countries, including Kenya, have recently installed new antiterrorism legislation prohibiting most types of engagement with designated terrorists.[32] Generally speaking, European

organizations operate in a less restrictive environment, although their flexibility also depends on the legal framework of the host country. The Swiss system, for example, is one of the most permissive, allowing organizations to hold dialogue with any type of nonstate armed group.[33]

Europeans in particular are increasingly convinced that restrictive legal systems reduce the space for diplomacy and humanitarian action. Although the laws regulating governmental and nonstate actors in this field are rooted in security considerations, they have dissuaded many organizations from engaging in a dialogue that could potentially prevent further atrocities, protect civilians, and facilitate conflict resolution.

Practical Recommendations

Several practical recommendations for responding to the critical challenges involved in political and humanitarian dialogue for atrocity-prevention purposes can be considered. These recommendations are grouped under research and analysis suggestions and ideas for the conduct of dialogue with nonstate armed actors.

Research and Analysis

- Further strengthen the evidence base for effective atrocity prevention, dialogue, and the prevention of violent extremism through practice-oriented applied research. An important first step is to more rigorously define what a VEO is.

- Expand the practice of combining conflict analysis with violent extremism risk assessments based on the expanding knowledge about the push-and-pull factors of violent extremism.

- Through a comprehensive actor-mapping analysis, break down the different levels of interests and motivations of VEOs as likely perpetrators of mass violence, and identify the role of enablers, backers, or business partners with the capacity to influence them.

- Regularly assess the windows of risk and opportunity for political and humanitarian dialogue based on conflict dynamics, the type of VEOs involved in atrocity acts, and their strategies, priorities, and demands.

Dialogue Operations

- Carefully consider which organization or individual would be the ideal interlocutor in terms of impartiality and access as a dialogue facilitator, bearing in mind VEOs' lack of trust in many global organizations.

- Develop clear principles and standards of engagement (and disengagement) and a set of guidelines to protect those individuals who are directly engaged in dialogue with extremists. When demands far exceed the limits of predetermined concessions and it is not possible to find common ground, dialogue should not be pursued.

- When feasible, pursue dialogue as early as possible to maximize its impact on atrocity planning. The engagement should not be limited to members of the extremist organization but should also include local supporters, bystanders, and enablers.

- Recognize the way grief, trauma, and anger affect the mental ability to negotiate, and explore the utility of trauma-informed approaches to engage both victims and perpetrators in dialogue.

- Emphasize atrocity prevention in a clear and transparent manner as a priority goal of engagement.

Notes

1. See Elise Labott and Tal Kopan, "John Kerry: ISIS Responsible for Genocide," CNN, March 18, 2016, http://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/17/politics/us-iraq-syria-genocide/.

2. A 2008 RAND study contended that terrorist groups commonly end as a result of a process of political transformation. In cases where political transformation is not possible, they usually end as a result of police efforts and intelligence work. Only 7 percent of terrorist groups stop their violence as a result of the use of military force. See Seth Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2008).

3. United Nations General Assembly, "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General," document A/70/674, December 24, 2015, www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674.

4. Indeed, while dialogue can facilitate political transformation and, in turn, end the cycle of violence against civilians, it is rarely the only factor driving this process, and it usually takes a long time. See Audrey K. Cronin, "Ending Terrorism: Lessons for Defeating Al-Qaeda," IISS Adelphi Paper series (New York: Routledge, 2008). According to the RAND study, terrorist groups generally end with the use of different policy instruments, including police, intelligence, dialogue, military force, and economic sanctions.

5. Nonstate armed actors involve a wide range of groups, including insurgents (those who enjoy control over part of the state's territory), militant groups (who may not hold effective control of a territory), urban gangs, warlords and criminal networks, and private militias and transnational networks, including terrorist organizations. See Keith Krause and Jennifer Milliken, "Introduction: The Challenge of Non-State Armed Groups," Contemporary Security Policy 30, no. 2 (2009): 202–20.

6. See White House, "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," August 2011, www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf.

7. For a description of jihad, see International Crisis Group, "Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State", Crisis Group Special Report (Brussels: International Crisis Group, March 14, 2016), www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-the-islamic-state.pdf.

8. Audrey K. Cronin, "When Should We Talk to Terrorists?," Special Report no. 240 (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, May 2010).

9. I. William Zartman and Guy Olivier Faure, "Introduction: Why Engage and Why Not?," in *Engaging Extremists: Trade-offs, Timing, and Diplomacy*, edited by I. William Zartman and Guy Olivier Faure (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2011), 1–19.

10. See Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mediation and Dialogue Facilitation in the OSCE: Reference Guide (Vienna: OSCE Secretariat, n.d.), www.osce.org/secretariat/126646?download=true.

11. The UN secretary general's 2009 report on the implementation of the responsibility to protect identified three pillars, the first pertaining to the protection of responsibilities of the state; the second one focusing on international assistance and capacity building; and the third one involving the timely and decisive response to prevent and halt genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, including pacific and coercive tools of collective action. See United Nations General Assembly, "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: Report of the Secretary General," document A/63/677 (January 12, 2009), http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/implementing%20the%20rtop.pdf.

12. See Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1996).

13. See Alex Bellamy, "Mass Atrocities and Armed Conflict: Links, Distinctions, and Implications for the Responsibility to Protect," Policy Analysis Brief for the Stanley Foundation (Muscatine, IA: Stanley Foundation, 2011).

14. Conciliation Resources, "Summary of Expert Meeting: 'Mediation and Engaging with Proscribed Armed Groups, March 29, 2012'" (London: Conciliation Resources, 2012).

15. Cronin, "Ending Terrorism."

16. Marc Grossman, "Talking to the Taliban 2010-2011," *Prism*, no. 4 (2014): 21–37.

17. Communications with practitioners, February–May 2016.

18. Chatham House in collaboration with Conciliation Resources, "The Impact of UK Counter-Terrorism Legislation on Peace Processes and Mediation with Armed Groups," Rapporteur Report (London: Chatham House, November 19, 2010).

19. For further details on the conditions for humanitarian engagement in Afghanistan, see Ashley Jackson and Antonio Giustozzi, "Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Engagement with the Taliban in Afghanistan," HPG (Humanitarian Policy Group) Working Paper (London: Overseas Development Institute, December 2012).

20. Ibid.

21. Communication with a practitioner, February 2016.

22. Most VEOs suffer from severe capacity challenges to engage in dialogue as well.

23. Ashley Jackson, "Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Engagement with Armed Non-State Actors," HPG Policy Brief 47 (London: Overseas Development Institute, June 2012).

24. William Donohue and Moty Cristal, "Growing Out in an Organization," in Zartman and Faure, eds., *Engaging Extremists*.

25. According to a RAND study, the narrower the goals of a terrorist group, the more likely it will be able to reach a negotiated settlement with the government. In other words, "terrorist groups that end because of politics seek narrow policy goals" (Jones and Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, 33).

26. Previous waves of terrorism involved anarchists, who used terror to destroy the basic tenets of modern society; nationalists, who sought self-determination; and revolutionaries, who pursued drastic socioeconomic changes and regime change. See David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, ed. A. K. Cronin and J. M. Ludes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46–73.

27. International Crisis Group, "Exploiting Disorder."

28. Véronique Dudouet, "Mediating Peace with Proscribed Armed Groups," Special Report no. 239 (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2010). Groups may adopt extremist ideologies that have a global outreach to gain

international and local notoriety but it is not uncommon for these organizations to pursue—or develop over time—local demands; opening opportunities for engagement (Cronin, "When Should We Talk to Terrorists?").

29. Matt Waldman, "Dangerous Liaisons with the Afghan Taliban: The Feasibility and Risks of Negotiations," Special Report no. 256 (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2010); Jackson, "Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Engagement with Armed Non-State Actors."

30. For practitioners' discussions of how counterterrorist legislation affects political and humanitarian engagement efforts, see Nathan Stock, "The Wisdom of Reforming Terrorist Designations," *Foreign Policy,* June 1, 2012; Sophie Haspeslagh, "Listing 'Terrorists': The Impact of Proscription on Third Party Efforts to Engage Armed Groups in Peace Processes—a Practitioner's Perspective," Critical Studies on Terrorism 6, no. 1 (2013): 189–208; Chatham House in collaboration with Conciliation Resources, "The Impact of UK Counter-Terrorism Legislation."

31. U.S. Supreme Court, Holder vs. Humanitarian Project, Nos. 08–1498 and 09–89, June 21, 2010.

32. Notwithstanding the legal frameworks that prohibit engagement with proscribed groups, some governments may engage in informal dialogue, as the United States did with the Taliban.

33. Dudouet, "Mediating Peace with Proscribed Armed Groups," 3.

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