



### BEYOND THE HOMELAND: PROTECTING AMERICA FROM EXTREMISM IN FRAGILE STATES

Since the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, extremist groups have expanded in fragile states across the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. Against this backdrop, the congressionally mandated, bipartisan Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States has released a report that calls for a new strategy to mitigate the conditions that enable extremist groups to take root, spread, and thrive in fragile states.



TASK FORCE ON  
EXTREMISM IN  
FRAGILE STATES

### KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE INTERIM REPORT

#### 1. Terrorism has grown since 9/11.

- ▶ Terrorists staged five times as many attacks in 2017—10,900 attacks worldwide—as in 2001.
- ▶ Extremist groups have spread to 19 of the 45 countries that make up the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel, sowing chaos and undermining already fragile states.

#### 2. We face a challenging strategic environment today.

- ▶ The states of the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel have become increasingly fragile; their governments lack legitimacy, struggling or failing to provide security, justice, and basic services.
- ▶ Extremist groups are increasingly focused on exploiting fragile states' weaknesses to seize and rule territory to establish a new political order.

#### 3. America's rivals are exploiting disorder to expand their influence.

- ▶ Russia, China, and Iran are preying on fragile states, often in ways that contribute to extremism.
- ▶ By supplying arms, supporting corrupt and illegitimate governments, and spreading extremist ideology, America's rivals gain power and wealth while fomenting instability that threatens American interests.
- ▶ America cannot compete effectively against strategic rivals as long as extremism and fragility persist.

#### 4. Extremism cannot be curbed through force alone.

- ▶ Extremist groups have drawn us into an expanding fight against terrorism. The U.S. has:
  - Spent \$5.6 trillion on military efforts to combat terrorism since 9/11;
  - Conducted combat operations in five of the 45 countries that make up the Middle East, Horn of Africa, and the Sahel since January 2017; and,
  - Provided security assistance to 39 of those 45 countries.
- ▶ Yet, new generations of terrorists continue to emerge in fragile states where resentment against poor or predatory governance is exploited by extremist ideas and groups.

## 5. The time has come for a new U.S. strategy to alleviate the conditions that enable extremism.

- ▶ Fragile states are incubators of extremism: the sense of injustice and political exclusion of their citizens, spread of extremist ideology and presence of extremist groups all contribute to the problem.
- ▶ Going forward, the priority for U.S. policy should be to help fragile states build resilience against the spread of violent extremism within their own societies.

## 6. A preventive strategy is a cost-effective and sustainable way to keep America safe.

- ▶ Preventive measures cost far less than military interventions—saving \$16 for every \$1 invested.
- ▶ The U.S. should catalyze investments where our partners are working nationally and locally to address the conditions that fuel extremism.

## 7. However, the U.S. cannot execute a preventive strategy on its own.

- ▶ The U.S. needs to more effectively share the costs of a prevention strategy with willing international partners, including our allies, international organizations, and the private sector.
- ▶ New opportunities have arisen for burden sharing with the European Union, the Arab Gulf states, and the World Bank on tackling the sources of extremism in fragile states.

## 8. A preventive strategy cannot succeed without strong U.S. leadership and sustained commitment.

- ▶ Even as our partners shoulder their share of the burden, U.S. leadership will be critical to mobilize collective action toward a common goal.
- ▶ A sustained commitment to a long-term strategy of strengthening governance in fragile states will be needed to help our partners foster societies that can resist violent extremism.

### About the Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States

The Task Force is a congressionally mandated, bipartisan commission charged with formulating a comprehensive strategy to address the underlying causes of violent extremism in fragile states. The Task Force is led by former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean and former Representative Lee Hamilton, the co-chairs of the 9/11 Commission, and is under the auspices of the United States Institute of Peace, an independent, nonpartisan leader in reducing and preventing conflict. It is composed of 15 leading former policymakers, legislators and other experts whose unique experience and insights will contribute to a range of policy recommendations to address these threats to U.S. security. USIP established the Task Force pursuant to legislation authored by Senator Lindsey Graham that calls for a “comprehensive plan to prevent the underlying causes of extremism in fragile states in the Sahel, Horn of Africa and the Near East.”

*The Task Force will release a final report with recommendations for policymakers in early 2019.*