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## Canadian CVE Coasting Off From US CVE Influence

Major Brian Gendron-Houle

**JCSP 46 DL**

### Solo Flight

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## CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

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## SOLO FLIGHT

## CANADIAN CVE COASTING OFF FROM US CVE INFLUENCE

By Major Brian Gendron-Houle

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## **Canadian CVE Coasting Off From US CVE Influence**

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) has been a growing concept over the last decade, but obviously endorsed differently worldwide. For many, CVE is seen as a form of prevention to terrorism, which in return can make dealing with CVE as complex as each country understands terrorism in itself. In this regard, Canada as a Western country enjoys little confusion about terrorism, often having to remain up to par with its intimate American neighbour. But while CVE seems to have spun up almost similarly between the two countries, the most recent years under the Trump presidency seem to have affected American CVE. But what about Canadian CVE efforts?

This essay posits that Canadian programs maintained a steady progress during that period, and that the Canadian government remained free to steer its CVE efforts effectively amidst the impediments to US CVE programs under Trump. This will be exposed first by acknowledging practical challenges posed by this comparative study, followed by depicting common hurdles of CVE, regardless of country. Then a CVE start state in both countries will be laid out, showing that exclusiveness had already started to appear prior to Trump. Finally, how the divide grew during the Trump era and how Canadian CVE efforts are bound to thrive better regardless will conclude this study.

### **Methodology Gaps**

Most sources for this analysis are from the academic field and official policy guidance or directives, but many factors influence how they can be used to compare between Canada and the United States (US) regarding CVE. First, the sheer population disproportion generates a bigger American academic pool to seek from, but also a greater number of CVE initiatives to be reported upon in the US. Since CVE is mainly aimed at community initiatives but that only

sizable cities can afford their own CVE programs, the US has more major cities, thus statistically more programs<sup>1</sup>. But with CVE applied-programs being local in nature comes another analytical bias: studies will either pinpoint one or a few initiatives, leaving many unheard of, while the academia is also full of macro-level studies that rather want to cover trending issues such as racial profiling, defunding the police, etc.

Finally, there will always be a major reporting discrepancy between Canada and the US for public programs. The American Government Accountability Office (GAO) is a permanently assessing body of all American public initiatives, put in place to provide a permanent overwatch on financial and operational performance of programs<sup>2</sup>, for which the results feed directly into Congress committees pertinent to said programs to justify funding<sup>3</sup>. In comparison, Canadian hard accountability is solely left to individual departments for their programs, and the Auditor General cyclical assessments can rarely review all programs a department sponsors<sup>4</sup>. Overall, all these discrepancies leaves numerous American reports available to study only a portion of the US CVE field, while lesser Canadian references can potentially represent a more reliable picture of the Canadian CVE horizon, but be more easily tainted by lack of supporting studies.

### **The CVE Conundrum**

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<sup>1</sup> For sheer comparison, the United States contains 10 cities of over a million inhabitants, without their metro areas (nationsonline.org), while Canada has 6 cities of over a million inhabitants, but including their metro areas (worldatlas.com), exposing the significant delta between the two.

<sup>2</sup> “GAO provides Congress, the heads of executive agencies, and the public with timely, fact-based, non-partisan information that can be used to improve government and save taxpayers billions of dollars.

Our work is done at the request of congressional committees or subcommittees or is statutorily required by public laws or committee reports, per our Congressional Protocols.” (<https://www.gao.gov/about/what-gao-does>)

<sup>3</sup> “Requests for GAO reports must come from congressional committees, subcommittees, or Members of Congress. In conjunction with Members of Congress, We developed our Congressional Protocols, which outline policies and procedures for accepting and completing work.” (<https://www.gao.gov/about/what-gao-does/for-congress>)

<sup>4</sup> Yearly audits on the actual conduct of programs are a small annual proportion, listed as *Other Federal Audits* by the Office of the Auditor General. “Financial audit and non-audit engagements by jurisdictions (jurisdiction, number): Financial Statement Audits (Federal), 70 audits; Other (Federal), 9 audits; Territorial, 23 audits; On Behalf of Provinces and First Nations, 44 audits; International, 7 audits.” ([https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/au\\_fs\\_e\\_371.html](https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/au_fs_e_371.html))

Aside of whose CVE efforts are studied, CVE poses a number of problems to Western states wanting to uphold civil rights, respect one another's sovereignty while protecting its territory and population and counter terrorism (CT). To ensure adequate understanding, these problems need to be put in context properly prior to launching into country applied analyses.

### **Outward CT vs. inward CVE**

CVE objectives have been noticeably hard to establish and track<sup>5</sup>, as opposed to community policing which can clearly target the detection of petty crime and limit street gang growth, thus funding is hard to secure without clear CVE objectives. CT is one field that is less victim of this<sup>6</sup>, as it often relies on overall preparedness budgets, and it otherwise clearly target existing terrorism, often foreign but otherwise clearly illegal thus clear-cut to engage, similar to a conventional military objective. Prevention for CT simply feeds into an intelligence cycle to trigger later actions.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, CVE aims to prevent radicalization to occur and turn into violence or terrorism, and countries can only truly affect their own society to that effect. But

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<sup>5</sup> “Considering the disagreement in outlining the problem, it is no surprise that the crafting of effective policy responses mirrors some of these uncertainties. Given the complexities of violent extremism and the diversity of stakeholders concerned, contestation over which actors are best equipped to respond persists. Moreover, the lack of robust empirically validated evidence base of good practices makes it difficult to determine what strategies should be used...” Ibrahim, N.A. “The Next Wave of Canadian CVE” in Von Hlatky, S. (2020). *Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Assessing Domestic and International Strategies*. Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 190.

<sup>6</sup> “The intergovernmental response to the terror attack on the Pentagon has been widely praised. However, the president and other policymakers concluded that prevention should be the focus in addressing future terror threats and attacks. Consequently, authorities introduced prevention as a phase in emergency management. [...] Terrorism prevention again took precedence over all other types of mitigation and preparedness. Policymakers used homeland security funding to induce state and local authorities to join a system of reinforcing cross-jurisdictional information sharing regarding “persons of interest.” Sylves, R. (2015). *Disaster Policy and Politics: Emergency Management and Homeland Security (2nd Ed)*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd, p. 244-245

<sup>7</sup> “A common framework to encourage law enforcement and intelligence agencies to effectively share information on homegrown extremist networks, perpetrators and recipients, is also required in order to prevent the threat from proliferating (i.e. to prevent already radicalised individuals from recruiting new extremists into their network).” Tierney, M.P. “Combating homegrown extremism: assessing common critiques and new approaches for CVE in North America” in *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, Vol. 12, No 1, pp. 66-73. Milton Park, UK: Routledge, p. 70.

in this context, CVE is a form of limitless prevention that if successful will not cause an incident to measure against. To the best extent, CVE performance could be measured by the number of fruitful engagements completed by its initiatives, but in the worst cases, exposed extremists could reveal how they slipped through CVE safety nets. This renders CVE effectiveness almost unpalatable to assess in all honesty, regardless if under American or Canadian governance.

### **Defining contours of CVE**

Terrorism is already a phenomenon known to have spread transnationally for decades, and while violent extremism or radicalization were always its start-state wherever it originated, only recently has violent extremism been able to transpose internationally to root itself in other countries<sup>8</sup>, mainly Western ones. Facing these inbound influences were originally only law enforcement and intelligence communities tied to geopolitically-referenced jurisdictions, but terrorists and extremists could not care less and intelligence has surprising problems to flow across jurisdictions.<sup>9</sup> With CVE initiatives, one hope is that civilian communities become an integral rampart against violent extremism<sup>10</sup>, separate from law enforcement and intelligence, with their close contact to their own experiencing such extremist influences. This on the hand

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<sup>8</sup> “In this increasingly globalized world, influence is not constrained by physical boundaries. As we see increasing instances of targeted ideological propaganda designed to recruit and radicalize individuals to violence, regardless of geography, the psychological and statistical evidence of violent extremist activity warrants further examination.” Barbari, N. (2018). *Reconsidering CVE: The Unintended Consequences of Countering Violent Extremism Efforts in America*. Monterey, CA: Naval Post Graduate School, p. 55.

<sup>9</sup> “The domestic-versus-international split creates an artificial divide between intelligence and response capabilities” insofar as it limits information flow between foreign and domestic intelligence agencies (for example, jurisdiction of the Central Intelligence Agency versus the FBI) and the role of state and local law enforcement. Increasing homogeneity brought on by globalization makes it increasingly difficult to categorize, identify, and prosecute individuals for terrorism when they are American citizens or legal U.S. residents.” *Idem*.

<sup>10</sup> “As home grown terrorists increasingly target random and innocent civilians, governments have “logically shifted” their efforts to focus on prevention within the framework of broad-based, public-private-government partnerships. This multidimensional strategy involves transferring in part, the role of counter-terrorism to communities, who they claim, are better positioned to root out radicalized individuals.” Jacoby, T.A. (2016). “How the War Was ‘One’: Countering violent extremism and the social dimensions of counter-terrorism in Canada” in *Journal For Deradicalization*, No. 6, pp. 272-304. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco University, p. 281.

poses the negative side effects of turning families into intelligence sources of sort, and to potentially exacerbate relations with some already-heavily targeted populations, such as Muslims.<sup>11</sup> While the Trump presidency has brought on a strong bias against Muslim communities, these trend affects both the US and Canada CVE efforts.

### **Radicalization and asymmetrical terrorism**

The final constant applying to both countries is the status of what bolsters violent extremism. First, no one is ever born a terrorist, and unless someone becomes a terrorist out of growing among them, a normal person will radicalize into a violent extremist, “with beliefs and habits changing slowly over time until the point of *consolidation*”<sup>12</sup>. At this stage, either an extremist seeking to regroup or a lone wolf will defend an “insular world view that is capable of developing rationalizations to refute any counter-arguments”<sup>13</sup>. This can apply to any extremists regardless of what motivates them, including from within the population’s ethnic and social majority. Western democracies tend to blindly disregard that values of free speech and opinion they nurture can let some people develop ideas and motives to reject these very values,<sup>14</sup> after that either to contribute to feeding violent extremism rhetoric or to direct moving to action with violence, which is known as asymmetrical terrorism<sup>15</sup> by academia but not by law. It

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<sup>11</sup> “The “strategic partnership” will give the state access to spaces that might have been beyond the reach of federal and local law enforcement agencies. This increases the risk of CVE programs becoming sites of surveillance and intelligence-gathering. While the impact of CVE pilot program on Somali Muslims is yet to be determined, the incorporation of community organization and services into the CVE enterprise might exacerbate social and economic inequalities Somali immigrants face in Minnesota” Dahir, Z.A. (2017). *Blurred Intersections: The Anti-Black. Islamophobic Dimensions of CVE Surveillance*. Mankato, MN: Minnesota State University, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, Jacoby, p. 279.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>14</sup> “While terrorism fails to produce high casualty rates, it serves to destabilize the very political institutions, identities and symbols that uphold the values of a liberal democratic society. The important point is that asymmetrical terrorism results from a process of radicalization that can occur within democratic society itself, but which ends up rejecting every democratic value that allows for its conditions of existence. For example, freedom of speech provides adherents with the right to say what they want and yet the content of that speech may generate hate and incite violence” *Ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

qualifies as such because most terrorism definitions legally have to be against a government or security apparatus<sup>16</sup>, but several groups such as right-wing extremists often claim to act in the defence of their state's integrity and rarely target law enforcement or institutions, but rather minorities. Canada and the US are both facing this legal asymmetry, even after the US following the January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 right-wing actions on Capitol Hill.

### **Growth of Canadian/US CVE**

If CT was re-energized with 9/11, CVE appeared shortly thereafter to encompass prevention efforts required to avoid terrorism to appear in the first place and then to spread transnationally. Canada having to be somewhat reciprocal with its closest neighbor thus hoisted CVE aboard.

### **The burden of 9/11**

9/11 was an obvious game changer for CT, and while the US dialogue leading to CVE was to ensure that states such as Afghanistan do not become hospitable grounds for new terrorists, Canada was facing the problematic that its country had been used as a partial stepping stone for some of the 9/11 attackers<sup>17</sup>. So American CVE took an initial abroad interventionist flavor<sup>18</sup>, while Canada already started to look into internal causes favorable to extremism

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<sup>16</sup> “[the US Code] defines the term “federal crime of terrorism” as an offense that: is calculated to influence or affect the conduct of government by intimidation, coercion, or to retaliate against government conduct; and is a violation of one of several listed statutes, including [...] killing or attempted killing during an attack on a federal facility [...] or attempted killing of officers and employees of the US.” US Code in *Op. cit.*, Barbari, p. 85.

<sup>17</sup> “In fact, violent extremism has become a permanent fixture in Canadian national security agendas, as the reverberations of the 11 September 2001 attacks escalated movements of homegrown terrorism, both in Canada government has also paid close attention to the invisible yet extensive networks of terrorist financing that connect Canadian funds and resources to violent extremist organizations abroad.” *Op. cit.*, Ibrahim, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> “The FBI is also interested in intelligence issues and it does collaborate with other law enforcement agencies abroad. In fact, the FBI has offices in at least 40 nations around the world. However, and in contrast to the CIA, the FBI is only interested in preventing terrorist attacks at home. FBI Special Agents seek to arrest individuals who threaten or plan attacks in the United States. At times, these measures may turn violent if the alleged criminals or terrorists resist. Counter-terrorism is also carried out by military forces. Some of the more well-known teams include Delta Force (U.S. Army), Special Warfare Units (U.S. Navy), Special Operations Wing (U.S. Air Force), and the Anti-terrorism Battalion (United States Marine Corps). These teams are sent around the world to stop terrorist

growth<sup>19</sup> to protect its good neighbor reputation, but both were focusing on Salafi jihadist extremism at the start of War on Terror. But after a decade into this, the US had seen several jihadist extremist attacks from within, and started to slowly realign its CVE efforts to its own population, while not giving it the same level of priority compared to outside attackers.

### **The divide grows**

The events in Iraq will surprisingly influence further split between the US and Canada. First, the US is entangled in Iraq until 2011, and while its terror archenemy Al-Qaida is Sunni, its conventional Muslim enemy is still Shi'a Iran which is sponsoring terror across the Middle East<sup>20</sup>. Iran also emerged as a key player, pushing proxies during the Iraqi sectarian rebellions that bugged down the US in Iraq. This caused the US CVE compass to remain imprecise, while Canada CVE did not suffer such pressure and could focus on Al-Qaida and other Sunni terror groups emerging in its population.<sup>21</sup> When Da'esh appeared, another trend differed: Canada had

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organizations.” McEntire, D.A. (2009). *Introduction to Homeland Security: Understanding Terrorism With an Emergency Management Perspective*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas, p. 156.

<sup>19</sup> “According to the Department of Homeland Security (Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2016), homegrown extremism connotes an individual or group of people who are radicalised to commit violence at home or attempt to travel overseas to become foreign fighters. For Public Safety Canada (2015b), homegrown extremism relates to ‘those individuals who have become radicalised by extremist ideology and who support the use of violence against their countries of residence, and sometimes birth, in order to further their goals’.” *Op. cit.*, Tierney, M.P. “Combating homegrown extremism: assessing common critiques and new approaches for CVE in North America” in *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, Vol. 12, No 1, pp. 66-73. Milton Park, UK: Routledge, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> “Historic Sunni animosity toward Shi'a Islam is also a factor impinging on Shi'a security. Although, as noted above, the Iranian revolution served as a source of inspiration for Islamist movements elsewhere in the Islamic world, most of these other movements have been in Sunni communities. Unfortunately, the most extremist of them (e.g. al Qaeda, al Qaeda in Iraq, the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan), in addition to their attacks on Western targets, have resurrected the ancient Sunni—Shi'a conflict that has expressed itself in vicious sectarian attacks on Shi'a mosques and ceremonies, particularly in Iraq and Pakistan. Shi'a efforts to counter these attacks—via newly established government authorities in Iraq and via militia (e.g. the Sepah-i Muhammad in Pakistan) have also escalated Sunni—Shi'a sectarian conflict.” Gross, Max L. “Shi'a Muslims and Security: The Centrality of Iran.” In Seiple, C. Dennis R. Hoover, D.R. & Otis, P.I. (2013). *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security*. New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> “The current Canadian CT strategy foregrounds ‘Sunni Muslim extremism’ as a national security threat, which therefore suggests that Sunnis (the majority of Muslims in Canada) are not doing enough to help combat extremism. But one wonders whether extremism is exclusively a ‘Sunni’ problem or a larger social problem. Such generalization also ignores the fact that Sunnis, although a majority in Canada, are not a monolithic group and that

proportionally more youth departing to join Da'esh compared to the US.<sup>22</sup> Da'esh was significantly less selective and purist in the people it targeted,<sup>23</sup> and extremist youth living in Canada had the disadvantage of not living in the US to attack it, whilst US young extremist were already imbedded in the most attractive target and had no point to travel. So Canada needed to yet again protect its reputation and diplomatic security among Western countries by actively countering this new trend within.

### **Obama's CVE push**

In 2011, the US published their first CVE policy<sup>24</sup>, but it was still strongly influenced by a post 9/11 vibe with a strong orientation against a Salafi jihadist threat, and CVE at home was mainly a Department of Justice (DoJ)/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) problem. But by 2016, the US had seen a dramatic rise in jihadist lone wolf attacks which required a more active response, including the infamous Boston Marathon bombings. This caused President Obama to exploit the 5 year review of its CVE policy to attempt bolstering CVE, officializing the

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they come from diverse cultural traditions (among them again a majority comes from South East and South Asia))' Ahmed, K. (2016). "Radicalism Leading to Violent Extremism in Canada: A Multi-Level Analysis of Muslim Community and University Based Student Leaders' Perceptions and Experiences" in *Journal for Deradicalization*, No. 6, pp. 231-271. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco University, p. 260.

<sup>22</sup> "In January 2014, six months before the Islamic State's public emergence, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence ranked cyber-security and counterintelligence as the primary threats to the US (Office of the Director of National Intelligence 2014). Terrorism ranked only third, with an emphasis on threats from abroad, followed by homegrown violent extremism. This assessment contrasts with the 2013-2014 Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) Public Report that continued to list terrorism—including the risk of individuals travelling abroad—as the paramount threat to Canadian security" Carvin, S. & Tishler, N. (2020) "Made in Canada: The evolution of Canadian counter-terrorism policy in the post-9/11 world" in *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 53-70. Toronto, CAN: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, p. 65

<sup>23</sup> "The Islamic State's approach to recruitment—as compared with al-Qaeda's self-conscious elitism—effectively lowered the barrier to entry into violent extremism for Westerners. While the phenomenon of Canadians traveling in order to fight abroad was not new, by late 2012, it was becoming apparent to Canadian security agencies that Canadians (or those with a "nexus to Canada") were joining extremist movements in Syria in numbers not seen since Afghanistan in the 1980s." *Ibid.*, p. 64

<sup>24</sup> "In August 2011, President Obama issued a counterterrorism plan to describe how the federal government would support American communities in preventing violent extremism. The strategy, entitled the *National Strategy on Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism* (henceforth referred to as the *National Strategy*), was followed four months later by the release of a *Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP)* for the same document." *Op. cit.*, Barbari, p. 4.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as lead for CVE, create a so-called CVE Task Force (CVETF)<sup>25</sup>, and trying to internationalize CVE for everyone to implement in their own countries<sup>26</sup>. But CVETF was clearly organized not to replace law enforcement and intelligence roles in CVE, so the CVETF attempted to simply supplement and enable local initiatives, leaving unclear objectives to be fulfilled. On the contrary, the FBI's ongoing CVE efforts kept onward, and being nested in policing and law enforcement their objectives were already palatable and assessable. CVETF under DHS was thus starting one step behind, trying to thrive alongside already existing DHS CT programs; a recipe for inefficient performance management that GAO did not take long to pick upon<sup>27</sup>. Meanwhile, Canada saw some jihadist attempts on its side of the border but it still focused on its extremist export problem fueled by Da'esh propaganda, so its CVE efforts under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were still ramping up but in a steady state<sup>28</sup>, compared to the US roller coaster of programs.

### **Racial profiling**

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<sup>25</sup> “To address this persistent threat, the Obama administration mandated the formation of the CVE Task Force, led by DHS in close coordination with DOJ. One responsibility of this task force included evaluating, and modifying, efforts to implement the *SIP*, which it did on October 19, 2016, with the release of updated CVE *National Strategy* and *SIP*.” *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> “In 2015, The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) highlighted the need to incorporate more community-based strategies, to advance the engagement of civil society, and to amplify ‘credibility and authentic religious voices’ in the fight against violent extremism. Consequently, the VCE agenda gained momentum as a significant breakthrough within counterterrorism around the world...” *Op. cit.*, Ibrahim, p. 181-182.

<sup>27</sup> “While progress was made in implementing the tasks, the Assessment Working Group was never formed according to DHS and DOJ officials responsible for implementing the *SIP*. Moreover, as of December 2016, there had been no comprehensive assessment of the federal government’s CVE efforts’ effectiveness.” United States Government Accountability Office [GAO]. (2017). *GAO 17-300 Countering Violent Extremism: Actions Needed to Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts* [report]. GAO, Washington DC, p. 13. Retrieved from: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/683984.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> “This mission is principally implemented through the investigative activities of the RCMP-led Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams (INSETs) based in Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal, the RCMP-only National Security Enforcement Sections (NSES) in every other province and the Border Integrity Program.” *Op. cit.*, Jacoby, p. 293.

Both Canadian and US CVE programs have so far started to part ways in some aspects, but prior to the Trump era, they both suffered from a common trend: racial profiling. So far, most strategies at the national level in both countries were still focusing on a jihadist-based extremist needing countering, so they were racially-biased programs<sup>29</sup>, but many local initiatives were targeting violent extremism without discrimination and were offered equal opportunities for funding.<sup>30</sup> But as soon as a program starts facing performance issues and needs a significant steer to preserve funding, an automatic reflex from local law enforcement or public programs is to leave the community outreach sphere and shift towards the proven and more easily financed ground of anti-gang tactics.<sup>31</sup> But anti-gang programs are inherently bottom-up initiatives that often target marginal groups taking part in criminal activities of a community. Thus the parameters to select target groups and to collect intelligence depend deeply on racial profiling and gang history. In the US, this leads invariably to target Muslim minorities<sup>32</sup> but even more Black Muslims minorities of various African origins.<sup>33</sup> Otherwise, in Canada the outcome of this trend is more nuanced, as gang history was strongly influenced by Black gangs and biker gang

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<sup>29</sup> “Given the heightened focus on Islamic-inspired radicalization and violent extremism since 9/11, counterterrorism (CT) and CVE practices have contributed to the securitization of ethnicities and diversity, the deepening of societal cleavages, and have allowed for the amplification of divisive rhetoric such as Islamophobia and xenophobic sentiments.” *Op. cit.*, Ibrahim, p. 191.

<sup>30</sup> “... grants were originally intended to support multidisciplinary approaches to CVE, concerns about racial profiling early in the Trump administration and campaign for the presidency made grantees apprehensive; they believed that accepting the grant money would force them to focus on combating radical Islam as opposed to all forms of violent extremism.” *Op. cit.*, Barbari, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> “The reliance on existing anti-gang models provides a cheap alternative for law makers, federal and, local law enforcement agencies since existing scholarship and policies are repurposed to inform future counter violent extremism policies and programs. [...] The perceived similarities between gangs and terrorist organizations, regarding recruitment and engagement, nourishes the fallacy that examining radicalization utilizing youth gang research methods and theory can yield an informative analysis on radicalization and violent extremism.” *Op. cit.*, Dahir, p. 41-42.

<sup>32</sup> “Within the United States, radicalization is exclusively understood as acquiring radical, Islamic beliefs and said radicalization is often assumed to result in violence” *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> “Trump's irrational fear of Somalis would later manifest itself in an executive order, which banned the entrance of Somalis to the United States along with immigrants from six other Muslim majority countries. The executive order is an extension of the United States' long history of discriminatory mass deportation of African immigrants and Black Muslim.” *Ibid.*, p. 61.

violence of the 90's, the assassination attempt on Premier Pauline Marois by a Caucasian English-speaking lone wolf, a right-wing lone wolf active shooter incident in Moncton, but also two jihadist attack against military members. Canada thus accounted for a mixture of threats, and was less predisposed than the US to actively launch into CVE racial profiling.

### **The Trump Era**

So it is already established that Canadian CVE initiatives, while in their infancy, evolved uniquely in recent years compared to American programs. The arrival of Trump at the White House represented a significant political and social shift that gave the impression that all American programs would go astray and affect negatively worldwide security. But the Canadian CVE had already grown from independent influences, limiting such concern.

### **The US return towards CT**

The spirit of the renewed 2016 US CVE policy was really short-lived. While it had started to adopt a more racially-neutral stance and grant funding to more initiatives without racial biases or oriented towards community outreach – 36 programs in 2016 – Trump exploited the first year of financial reports for GAO to ascertain that these programs had no effect and CVE should be revamped. But like the first months of his presidency proved, his strong anti-Muslim positions influenced several programs, and CVETF was dissolved,<sup>34</sup> funding diverted towards the already existing DHS Office of Terrorism Prevention Partnerships<sup>35</sup>. The official policy statement quickly became that the US had to abandon its political correctness, and openly put the

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<sup>34</sup> “Perhaps the most telling piece of information, however, is that the CVE and CVE Task Force page on the WhiteHouse.gov website is no longer there. While there appears to be no official statement from the White House on the future of CVE specifically, a significant portion of this thesis identifies and discusses the discernable shift in counterterrorism and CVE efforts under the Trump administration.” *Op. cit.*, Barbari, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Department of Homeland Security [DHS]. (2019). *Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Partnerships*. Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention, Washington DC. Retrieved from: <https://www.dhs.gov/terrorism-prevention-partnerships>

blame of Muslims for terrorism.<sup>36</sup> Among the initially 38 programs supported by CVETF, the number shrank to 27 in 2017, and all programs not related to law enforcement or that targeted right-wing extremism were cut funding<sup>37</sup>. In protest, many organizations granted funding in 2016 did not even cash in, returning funding as form of protest.<sup>38</sup> Eliminating all federal-level support to community outreach and countering right-wing extremism, CVE ceased to practically exist at the DHS-level, only surviving in local self-sustaining initiatives. Solely based on law enforcement and intelligence gathering, DHS would exclusively run CT initiatives, leaving the independent FBI muddle through countering other strains of violent extremism.<sup>39</sup>

### **Canadian right-wing extremism**

While this took shape south of the border, Canada started seeing a clear spike in right-wing extremism. Notwithstanding the original assertion that there will always be a disproportion between the two countries, the rise might have still constituted a small number compared to the number of cases, but it would prove to be a statistical peak<sup>40</sup> compared to other extremist

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<sup>36</sup> “the refusal to focus [programs] on radical Islamic extremism as needlessly “politically correct”” Acosta, J. & Watkins, E. (2017). *Trump admin eyes scrapping anti-extremism program* [article]. CNN, New York NY, no page number. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/01/politics/trump-countering-violent-extremism/index.html>

<sup>37</sup> “Four of the grant recipient organizations ended up turning down the funding before it was allocated to them, arguing that the grant program had turned into an unofficial war on American Muslims [...] in June 2017, when DHS released a revised list of twenty-six grant recipients. The new list eliminated eleven of the organizations that had previously been awarded funding and added several new organizations; there was no clear explanation as to how or why DHS made the decisions. Comparing the two lists of grant recipients shows that DHS added additional law enforcement agencies to the new list and removed organizations that focus on preventing violent white supremacy, or that feature efforts led by ethnic minority groups.” *Op. cit.*, Barbari, p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> “In 2017, Ka Joog and another Minneapolis based nonprofit organization rejected CVE grant worth half a million dollars to protest Trump’s Muslim ban.” *Op. cit.*, Dahir, p. 63.

<sup>39</sup> “The criteria for the grants, prescribed by former DHS Secretary General John Kelly and the new Trump administration, largely focuses, instead, on law enforcement-centered applicants. This is an essential and recurring finding of this research: that DHS and the USG are leaning on law enforcement to counter violent extremism. *Op. cit.*, Barbari, p. 77-78.

<sup>40</sup> “Les événements violents et haineux liés à l’extrême droite ont atteint un niveau record en 2020 au Québec. Après une période de latence en 2019 due à leur désorganisation, les groupes radicaux ont décuplé leurs activités, tout en se réorganisant autour des groupes anti-mesures sanitaires. [...] Ce nouveau mode d’action est plus violent. En 2020, le chercheur a observé une croissance « particulièrement marquée » des menaces et discours haineux (+225 %), du vandalisme (+500 %) et de l’intimidation ou du harcèlement (+700 %) de la part des groupes

motivations in Canada.<sup>41</sup> This included the 2017 Quebec Mosque shooting, the rise of several right-wing groups, declared military members plotting right-wing attacks, and even the incursion of a lone wolf attacker attempting to kill the Prime Minister Trudeau on his official residency grounds. This crystallized the debate regarding CVE in Canada, and gave better standing to local CVE initiatives and federal efforts to counter extremist discourse of any kind, including social media<sup>42</sup>. Once again, Canada was now diverging away from American policies all together, providing actual backing to its programs while US federal CVE had become extinct for that period.

### Target divergence

Acknowledging the dichotomy both countries are in with regards to CVE at this stage in the Trump presidency, programs cannot be compared anymore, but policy decisions can still be. The US, always leaning strong towards CT and anti-gang logic, started to be pushed into containing various civil unrest movements revolving around Black Lives Matter. While many local law enforcements agencies might have limited their canvassing of such groups, the Trump-

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d'extrême droite.” Pélouquin, T. (2021). *Le nombre d'événements liés à l'extrême droite explose* [e-article]. Montréal, CAN: La Presse, no page number. Retrieved from: <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/2021-05-14/le-nombre-d-evenements-lies-a-l-extreme-droite-explose.php>

<sup>41</sup> “Moreover, if far-right extremism is on the rise and has recently been deemed a significant national security threat by Canada’s intelligence agencies, and if individuals are committing acts of serious violence in the name of a far-right ideology, then one wonders why AQ-inspired plans are being disrupted to the tune of dozens of charges, but no far-right plans have been disrupted and terrorism charges laid. Putting the picture together, the numbers once again suggest a divide between the treatment of far-right ideologies in terms of how they are investigated and prosecuted and AQ-inspired terrorism.” Nesbitt, M. (2021). “Violent crime, hate speech or terrorism? How Canada views and prosecutes far-right extremism (2001–2019)” in *Common Law World Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 1-19. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> “Sans entrer dans le détail des dispositions de la mesure législative, Steven Guilbeault affirme qu’elle prévoit entre autres la création d’un poste de régulateur qui aurait la responsabilité de surveiller le contenu sur les sites et les plateformes web – discours haineux, publication d’images non consensuelles, incitation à la violence, incitation au terrorisme et pornographie juvénile seraient dans sa ligne de mire.” Marquis, M. (2021). *Fin de la récréation pour les géants du web* [e-article]. Montréal, CAN : La Presse, no page number. Retrieved from: <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/politique/2021-02-01/discours-haineux/fin-de-la-recreation-pour-les-geants-du-web.php>

ordered involvement of federal police into certain States automatically led to the inclusion of black groups onto extremist watch lists,<sup>43</sup> the FBI creating a Black Identity Extremist list and committing operational resources to intervene against some listees.<sup>44</sup> Simultaneously in Canada, the complete opposite was occurring, with political discussions occurring to include some American right-wing extremist groups onto Canadian terror watch lists.<sup>45</sup> This significantly increases the CVE divide between the two countries, as it now includes that Canada would produce intelligence regarding these groups that the main partner of the Five Eyes intelligence community would not be able to honestly handle legally based on the First Amendment rights these groups have in the US, even following the January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

### Forever Dividing Trends

Trump's presidency is now over, but the damage is done to US CVE while Canadian CVE has escaped most of the turmoil and is shaping itself towards a decent future. But as

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<sup>43</sup> “This latest leak of documents about the FBI’s targeting of Black people on the basis of a purported shared ideology has further fueled public concern that the FBI wastes resources targeting Black activists and Black-led organizations at the expense of addressing violence by white supremacists, such as mass shootings targeting people of color.” ACLU. (2020). *RE: Request Under Freedom of Information Act*. New York City, NY: Media Justice/ACLU, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> “On August 8, 2019, FBI documents leaked to The Young Turks revealed that the FBI implemented a program, titled “IRON FIST” to target its resources against so-called “Black Identity Extremists.” The leaked documents also confirmed that the FBI did not revoke the “Black Identity Extremist” designation, but that it instead simply renamed the label to “Racially Motivated Extremism,” and then relabeled it again to “Racially Motivated Violent Extremism” which was identified as a counterterrorism priority for 2020.” *Idem*.

<sup>45</sup> “Le Canada a inscrit le groupe d’extrême droite Proud Boys à sa liste d’entités terroristes, devenant le premier pays au monde à mettre à l’index l’organisation impliquée dans l’assaut du Capitole — un geste qui n’est pas passé inaperçu à Washington. [...] Le groupe d’extrême droite se trouvait dans leur ligne de mire « depuis plusieurs mois, voire plusieurs années », a tenu à spécifier Joël Lightbound. [...] Le Canada devient ainsi le premier pays au monde à classer dans une liste d’entités terroristes ce groupe « néofasciste » dont les membres « épousent des idéologies misogynes, islamophobes, antisémites, anti-immigrants et/ou suprémacistes blanches » et « assistent aux manifestations de Black Lives Matter (BLM) en tant que contre-manifestants », selon la description du gouvernement fédéral.” Marquis, M. (2021). *Les Proud Boys désignés comme terroristes par Ottawa* [e-article]. Montréal, CAN : La Presse, no page number. Retrieved from: <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/politique/2021-02-03/les-proud-boys-designes-comme-terroristes-par-ottawa.php>

benevolent as any future US presidents might be, there will always remain unavoidable facts that should render nearly impossible the gap between Canadian and American CVE to ever close.

### **Foundational divergence**

At the basis of Canada and the US are noble but different core values. The US Declaration of Independence sums up the core values of the US to *liberty, equality and justice*,<sup>46</sup> which are then sub-defined by the Bill of Right and the various amendments, the most important one here being the First Amendment, which enables freedom of speech for all, including right-wing extremists. In contrast, Canada's core values are peace, order and good governance, depicting a strong tendency for state accountability and security for all<sup>47</sup> over individual freedom. Thus, Canada will always be ready to endorse restrictions on threatening groups even if borderline. On the other hand, the US will never openly challenge right-wing extremism under fears to deny First Amendment rights to its population<sup>48</sup>, while at the same time easily prosecuting jihadist extremism under the hospices of the PATRIOT Act. This American bias never to be challenged in any foreseeable future, a persistent split between Canadian and American CVE, the Trump era having limited direct impacts on this while having blown out of proportion second-order effects of this.

### **Levels of endorsement**

During Obama's presidency, CVE seemed to become more than a concept, and creating the DHS CVETF was the federal attempt to operationalize it into a functioning body. While it

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<sup>46</sup> Bill of Rights Institute. (2021). *Principles and Virtues* [webpage]. Arlington, VA: Bill of Rights Institute, no page number. Retrieved from: <https://billofrights.institute.org/resources/principles-and-virtues>

<sup>47</sup> Gall, G.L., McLellan, A.A., Panneton D. & McIntosh, A. (2020). *Peace, Order and Good Government* [webpage]. Toronto, CAN: The Canadian Encyclopedia. Retrieved from: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/peace-order-and-good-government>

<sup>48</sup> "Challenges include the absence of a lead federal agency, resource and grant availability for local communities, and First Amendment infringements in the name of challenging terrorist narrative and promoting American ideals." *Op. cit.*, Barbari, p. 40.

has been demonstrated that CVE's virtues had travelled vertically to some extent and survived, the more horizontal dissemination is dysfunctional. Other than DHS and the FBI, national level organizations have rarely endorsed CVE with actual resources and actions within their fields. For example, the American Psychology Association only shares some hyperlinks about the subject, and the American Civil Liberties Union actually opposes CVE as a spy program in disguise.<sup>49</sup> The US CVE domain has significantly suffered from such partial involvement as many simply want CT while their opponents want to counter right-wing extremism. As for Canada, political ideas are extremely more nuanced and dissipated among many political parties that do not contribute to streamline funding as openly, and especially not to negatively impact CVE national initiatives. The Canadian Psychological Association for example assigned personnel to a terrorism/extremism section to exploit how psychologist could better participate in CVE.<sup>50</sup> Such divergence between the US and Canada should not change in any foreseeable future.

### Conclusion

CVE evolved in the US and in Canada somewhat equally but with some qualitative differences up to 2017. In this era, Trump's presidency led to drastic changes that could have let many believe that the consequences would be disastrous for CVE worldwide and more so

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<sup>49</sup> "CVE called on—and provided funding to—law enforcement, social service providers, and members of religious communities to identify individuals who they thought might be susceptible to violence, based on specious, vague, and broad criteria that encompassed lawful speech and association. In essence, health professionals, social service providers, and even teachers and community members could be tasked with monitoring and reporting to law enforcement on the beliefs and activities of law-abiding Americans—also known as spying." American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU]. (2021). *The Problems With 'Violent Extremism' and Violence Prevention' Programs* [webpage]. New York City, NY: ACLU, no page number. Retrieved from: <https://www.aclu.org/other/problems-violent-extremism-and-violence-prevention-programs>

<sup>50</sup> "The psychologist's potential contribution to combatting extremism was noted by the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), which established in 2009 a Section on Extremism/Terrorism as part of its overall mandate. The professional training of psychology in radicalization and recruitment, leader-follower relations, personality variables and social network analysis places psychologists in an opportune position to engage in preventative treatment of radicalized persons through individual and group counselling" *Op. cit.*, Jacoby, p. 287.

Canada. Nevertheless, Canada already decided to part ways from the US with some key details of implementation and prevention, so it was able to withstand any interferences coming from the US between 2017 and 2021. The trends leading to the initial split between the two countries' CVE programs have proven to be more intrinsically based in each country, and such trends will continue to nurture a form of gaps between the two international partners.

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