Government Partner Research Priorities
(updated 18 December 2018)

The use of technology

1. What are some innovative tools and methods the security and intelligence community can use to counter a wide range of threats from disinformation to foreign influence in the electoral process to ensure the integrity of Canadian institutions?

2. What accountability gaps are generated in the Canadian intelligence community by changing technologies and bulk collection of intelligence, and how do we resolve them?

3. What are the opportunities and challenges presented by new technologies (such as the blockchain), and their exploitation by violent extremists, and what are the opportunities and challenges posed by the adoption of these technologies in counter-terrorism, countering terrorist financing, and law enforcement?

4. What innovative digital forensics and interception techniques can the security and intelligence community adopt to enhance the ability of evidence collection?

5. How do we meaningfully study and measure the individual, group, community and social impact of violent extremist activity, as mediated through traditional and social media along with technology trends such as the involvement of bots, algorithms, and foreign influence activities?

Characteristics of particular individuals or groups

6. What are the similarities and differences between indigenous (First Nation land claims and sovereignty political protests) & right wing anti-government movements (I.e. Freeman on the Land - Sovereigns)

7. How do AQ- inspired Islamist terrorists view being charged, convicted, and incarcerated?

8. What does the existing literature tell us about the nexus between gangs and radicalized groups? Are they blurring together in prisons or communities (in Canada or globally)? Is there evidence of coerced recruitment or religious conversion? What can we learn about how to support resiliency among offenders and community members?

9. What are the similarities and differences in recruitment methods, tactics, targeted populations or persons between convicted organized crime group members and terrorist / violent extremist group members in the prison setting?

10. What explains how individuals, groups, social networks, and milieus involving violent extremism, including hate-motivated varieties, change over time? For instance, which life pathways sway individuals towards and away from involvement in violent extremism? What are the roles played by different kinds of actors and influences? What patterns in group development or interaction between different factions or competing movements exist over time?

11. How do group, milieu, and social movement dynamics shape violent extremist movements

12. Which new, emerging, or less studied groups, sub-groups, and movements involving violent extremism are relevant to Canada, and what should we understand about them?

Metrics and Evaluation

13. How do we measure performance and evaluate programs and policies related to (a) radicalization to violence? (b) prison-based interventions, measures and programs aimed at disengagement from violent extremism?

14. In preparation for the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review, how should our metrics & evaluation be informed by existing practices in M&E, in Canada and internationally? How do we create a M&E framework that will is flexible enough to be used on programming done in Canadian suburbs or in Horn of Africa rural areas (for example), as well as for the results to be accessible to both government officers in Ottawa and local staff on the ground?

15. How should we measure accountability of intelligence review bodies like SIRC / NSICOP?

16. What are the most effective ways to evaluate terrorism prevention and intervention programs and activities, including various facets of PVE / CVE such as early prevention that builds on society-wide strengths against the impacts of violent extremism, engaging with those at-risk or vulnerable to involvement, supporting rehabilitation and reintegration of those previously involved, both online and offline? Interview-based qualitative evaluations relying on practitioner participation can be difficult to implement due to the time pressures on the practitioners, and tools must help us to understand meaningful change, be feasible given constraints in gathering and analyzing information, and meet ethical standards for human subjects research and the protection of personal information. Where can we innovate in qualitative and quantitative methods to assess outcomes, including any unintended effects, of these activities? How do we make these research tools relevant to policy makers so they can share their lessons?

17. How available and effective are resources and programs offered by settlement service organizations at building resilience to extremism among newcomer populations?

18. How effective is radicalization/Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Awareness Training for correctional staff (e.g. courses, programs, booklets, pamphlets, indicators and guidelines, etc.)? How effective is training for other front-line workers involved in countering radicalization to violence, including hate-motivated forms? How good are they at training workers to identify factors related to risk, need and

vulnerability; manage intervention cases and monitor progress over time; develop rapport with individuals seeking guidance, or participate in prevention and/or intervention programs; build understanding and trust in multi-disciplinary or multi-organization settings; and raise awareness about relevant trends.

Accountability

19. What are the accountability gaps in the Canadian intelligence oversight community, and how do we mitigate them?

20. What are the potentially conflicting role of religious service providers (i.e. chaplains, imams) in correctional settings as facilitators of rehabilitation and reform vs. security observers (and associated service reporting requirements)? How are these navigated?

Gender and Diversity

21. What are some innovative tools that address the way that terrorists use the internet as a tool for recruitment, training, propaganda, and financing, often by exploiting the different ways men and women can be targeted online, by investigating the gender-based strategies of terrorist groups?

22. How can we control for gender bias in counter-terrorism, or how can we use a gendered lens to analyse counter-terrorism? How do we implement GBA+ in counter-terrorism policy?

23. What is the role of diversity (or lack thereof) in police forces and law enforcement in building trust and confidence among racialized newcomer communities?

24. What is the role of intersectional identities (e.g. women, immigrant, racialized, Muslim) on the vulnerability of groups to extremism and radicalization?

25. What are the advantages (ie reform and coping) and disadvantages (ie potential for radicalization or groupthink) of prison-based offender faith worship?

26. Can models for understanding religious conversion be applied to offenders within a correctional setting (both Provincial/Territorial and Federal)?

27. How can we improve our understanding of key audiences/populations relevant for various approaches to prevention and intervention for countering radicalization to violence, beyond common categories like youth, community and gender? Which values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are important to understanding relevant audience sub-groups, and what does that mean for understanding vulnerability and building resilience to hateful, polarizing, and violent extremist messages and influences?

Public Perceptions of Security & Intelligence Institutions

28. What are public perceptions and expectations of accountability bodies such as SIRC/NSICOP?

29. What are public expectations of the intelligence community on issues such as surveillance, 5G, quantum, data analytics, and lawful access?

30. What is the impact on society of prosecuting terrorism as non-terrorism (ie as murder, or by using other crimes as a way of prosecuting terrorism – the 'Al Capone' method), particularly for communities who may particularly want to see prosecution *as* terrorism?

31. How do we counter a perceived bias, domestically and internationally, that 'terrorism' and terrorism charges are only associated with individuals who have motives couched in a certain religious perspective?

Public Safety & Security

32. How do we best mitigate risks associated with soft targets (public spaces that may be vulnerable to attacks)?

33. How do we analyse existing data on soft targets?

34. How and when does everyday violence elevate to radicalized violence or hate crimes? Conversely, what factors seem to provide protection from violent extremism at the individual and group level in various contexts?

35. How (well) do multi-agency partnerships between the criminal justice system and Public Safety work to manage and re-integrate convicted terrorists and violent extremists into the community?

36. What are the predominant narratives of radical ideological groups in Canada, and what are some effective counter-narratives specific to the Canadian context?

37. After release, what are the rates and characteristics of the continued engagement with radical beliefs and activities vs. desistance from those beliefs and activities among offenders radicalized during their period of incarceration?

38. Does countering radicalization to violence complement other efforts to understand and address harmful speech and content, such as hate and polarization, foreign interference, and threats to democracy?
39.

Emerging Threats

40. To what extent is terrorist online media (e.g. propaganda, discussion boards, social media presence, etc.) impacted by news of CBRN-related attacks? Is there a noticeable impact on interest by terrorist groups or their supporters?

41. Is there an interest among domestic right-wing extremist/anti-government groups to use CBRN materials (e.g. mailing powder, hoaxes, etc.)?

42. What level of interest is there among terrorist groups for conducting CBRN attacks? Is there any interest to conduct CBRN attacks against Canadian targets (domestic or foreign)?

43. Is there an emerging terrorist threat in the realm of environment? Either from radicalized environmentalists, or from other extremist groups making environmental destruction a goal of their action?

44. Do the political pre-conditions for the sorts of severe social fractures that have allowed the rise of right-wing extremist violence other countries exist in Canada?

45. What are the links between hate speech and hate incidents and radicalization to violence, and what are effective prevention methods?

Diplomacy & Global Politics

46. What is the state of anti-terrorism debates at the UN, and how can Canada best protect its interests there? How do we preserve the gains we have made in preserving human rights while combatting terrorism in global diplomatic forums? How do we craft arguments to resist those seeking to purge any and all "non hard" security language in multilateral fora (e.g. human rights, gender, "violent extremism")

47. What are the implications of living next to a socially fractured USA for Canada, and Canadian policies on PVE, CVE and counter-terrorism? What are the implications for dealing with socially fractured allies that we usually view as having like-minded policies on terrorism and extremism?

48. What are the similarities and difference between Canadian – US policy on the management of federally convicted terrorist offenders?

49. Different terminology is used in multilateral fora to describe phenomena associated with terrorism. Although these words are not defined in any international documents, how they are used, and what they refer to, reflect important distinctions and potential points of divergence. How are the following terms used by different actors in multilateral fora, and what meaning is attributed to them, and what are the policy, programming and operational implications of these usages?: "terrorism", "violent extremism", "extremism", "violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism", "radicalization", "radicalization to terrorism", "counter-terrorism", "countering violent extremism" and "preventing violent extremism" have important policy, programming and operational implications.

Law and Prosecution

50. How do we increase the number of prosecutions of terrorist crimes?

51. How do we manage the intelligence-to-evidence challenge in a new legal & oversight regime?

Public-Private Partnerships

52. What are the prospects and track-record of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in PVE, CVE, and counter-terrorism?

53. What are the opportunities and barriers for development of effective partnerships for prevention, between private sector, civil society, education, health and social service, police, faith-based, and youth organizations and groups with different demands, requirements, goals, and culture?

Societal Effects and Resilience

54. How do extremist right-wing discourses shape the framing and content of media narratives about immigrants and immigration?

55. How do the types, geographical spread and incidences of hate crimes have an impact on the sense of belonging and vulnerability of newcomer populations?

56. What can existing literature tell us about the development of healthy personal identities from a variety of different fields/domains, and how varies theories apply to those with both criminogenic and ideological needs?

57. How do we build resilience to radicalized discourses in newcomer communities?

58. How well do programs and approaches that focus on digital literacy and critical thinking as ways to protect against the effects of harmful content and speech, online as well as in traditional media, work?

59. What are the impacts of violent extremism (including public discourse, media coverage, and content in social media/online), and how should we take these into consideration for effective prevention and response to events to help limit and mitigate harm?