Chapter 13
Towards a Comprehensive Approach to Combating Violent Extremist Ideology in the Digital Space: The Counter–Ideological Response (CIR) Model

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ABSTRACT
Based on the assumption that ideology is the centre of gravity of a violent Islamist terrorist network, this chapter proposes a Counter–Ideological Response (CIR) Model for countering violent extremism (CVE) in Southeast Asia. The Model seeks to gradually diminish the appeal of violent extremist ideology. It comprises of five conceptual Spaces of Sender, Message, Mechanism, Recipient and Context, within which ideology-relevant policy interventions may be attempted, so as to impact the overall reach and appeal of the violent extremist narrative vis-à-vis any countervailing narrative put out against it. The model is applied to the Indonesian CVE milieu in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION
At the end of 2014, an Indonesian militant fighting with the notorious Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria, Abu Jandal al-Yemeni al-Indonesi, posted a video on YouTube. In it, he warned that “the group will slaughter Indonesians soldiers, police or Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members who oppose the establishment of Sharia law in Indonesia”. Abu Jandal directly addressing the chief of the Indonesian armed forces, General Moeldoko, as well as the Indonesian police, the crack police counter-terrorism unit Densus (or Detachment) 88, and Banser, the security wing of the traditionalist and moderate Muslim organisation NU, declared in the four-minute video that:

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We are awaiting your arrival here (in Syria) ... If you’re not coming, we will come to you. We will return to Indonesia to enforce Sharia Islam. For those who are against us, we will slaughter each of you one by one. (“Indonesian ISIS Fighter”, 2015, para. 4)

Abu Jandal’s warning exemplifies the current state of play in the continuing struggle of Southeast Asian states against globalised violent extremism fuelled by the virulent ideology of what has been variously referred to as Al-Qaedaism, Bin Ladenism, Jihadi Islamism or Salafi jihadism – of which ISIS is arguably the latest ‘mutation’ of the constantly evolving Al-Qaeda ‘super-organism’ (Ramakrishna, 2015). Central to this struggle has been the Internet, a great force multiplier for social media-savvy militants such as Abu Jandal and his ilk.

While ‘hard’ measures such as more effective law enforcement and military operations, tighter border and immigration controls, measures to cut terror financing and logistics flows, as well as enhanced intelligence sharing across and within borders remain crucial elements of a systematic grand strategy to deal with an ever-evolving violent extremist threat, a suite of ‘softer’ tools to complement these hard measures also appear apt. Whilst the elements of a ‘soft’ approach would include good governance that provides the basic public goods of security, socio-economic welfare and justice, it has been clear for a while now that countering the violent extremist ideology that legitimises the violence of the likes of Abu Jandal and his fellow travellers is also an essential part of the mix. Put another way, quite apart from the oft-discussed measures seeking to ‘drain the swamp’ of extremism that sustains Islamist terrorism and militancy such as the promotion of good democratic governance, socio-economic stability and growth (Australia’s Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism, 2015), systematic counter-ideological strategy is needed. While some observers have argued in recent years that ideology is the root of terrorism, others suggest that it is more of an enabler (Ramakrishna, 2015). In any case, dealing with the ideology would have to be a central plank of any grand strategy for neutralising the terrorist threat of the type posed by Abu Jandal.

**MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER**

In this respect, this chapter proposes a Counter-Ideological Response (CIR) Model for consideration for possible application and requisite adaptation to the different contexts of countering violent extremism (CVE) in Europe, Southeast Asia, the Iraq/Syria region, and elsewhere. The overall objective of the CIR Model would be to gradually diminish the appeal of online violent extremist ideology. The CIR Model comprises of five conceptual Spaces of Sender, Message, Mechanism, Recipient and Context, within which ideology-relevant policy interventions may be attempted. By the latter we mean policy interventions within each Space that impact the overall reach and appeal of the violent extremist narrative vis-a-vis any countervailing narrative put out against it. The chapter will unpack the argument in the following way. First, the role of ideology as an enabler of terrorism will be explored. This will logically lead to the next section which would lay out the need for a structured approach such as the CIR Model to counter violent extremism that animates the likes of Al-Qaeda and its latest, dangerous offshoot, ISIS. The chapter will then proceed to examine each of the five CIR Spaces in three steps. First, the conceptual structure of the Space in question will be elucidated. Second, the policy issue or question driving the relevant intervention in that Space will be examined. Third, examples from the Indonesian