

Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism Through Community Resilience

Training Module 2: How to Recognize and Address Online Forms of Recruitment, Propaganda, and Incitement to Violence

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Training Module 2 of the Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism (PAVE) project on how to recognize and address online forms of recruitment, propaganda and incitement to violence in your efforts to prevent or counter violent extremism in your context. In this module, we will explore key concepts on how online platforms can be utilized to recruit various individuals and groups to share propaganda and incite violence, directed specifically towards youth,

policymakers, civil society and religious actors and institutions. Subsequently, we will highlight concepts surrounding media literacy and how to identify and recognize polarizing and/or radical narratives. Building upon these key concepts, you will be equipped with tangible ways in which you can construct effective and collaborative counter narratives through targeted messaging and dissemination that can be utilized with, and partnered on, between civil society, faith actors and institutions, and policymakers.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Training: 8 hours

SESSIONS

Session 1: Identifying Hate Speech, Disinformation, and Radical Behavior Online

Session 2: Practical Applications to Construct Effective and Collaborative Counter Narratives to Prevent and Counter Radicalization Rhetoric

Session 3: Online Safety and Risk Mitigation



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Facilitator Guidance and Training Overview



How to use this document:

This training booklet serves as a tool that provides an experienced facilitator with a menu of options on how online platforms can be utilized to recruit and radicalize individuals and groups and mechanisms to counter their tactics, directed specifically towards youth, policymakers, civil society and religious actors and institutions. Each group facilitator can use a format that corresponds to their respective contexts and needs regarding conversations on online recruitment and radicalization and to ensure safe spaces and meaningful conversations, including suggested activities. It is the responsibility of the group facilitator to determine ahead of time how exactly the training will be designed and delivered. Conducting a baseline study on the needs of particular groups on the focus of this training is recommended before conducting this training to ensure delivery success. Learning objectives are laid out at the beginning of each section. Finally, ensure as facilitator that you use a ‘do no harm’ (https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/donoharm_pe07_synthesis.pdf) approach to not cause further damage and suffering to those you are serving. Think carefully about how you approach and talk about sensitive topics in order to protect yourself as a local facilitator.

Preparing for the training and setting up the room:

In preparing for the training, ensure to research and come up with your own national, regional or local resources to complement the various section topics. You are encouraged to create your own powerpoint or other supplemental materials to help in delivering the training. Develop and implement a budget for costs of your training to ensure you have the necessary resources for implementation, including for example, costs for food or beverages, meeting and activity supplies, or local travel stipends for inclusive participation.

In setting up the room, the best meeting design format is to set up a circle of chairs to ensure participatory behavior by the group. If you are using flip charts for breakout activities for example, ensure that these are behind the circle to ensure that everyone can see and speak to one another. Make sure to have a computer or TV available to share the videos listed within the module. You may want to have refreshments available.

Starting the training:

Lay the ground rules for the training and offer a space to capture questions that you can circle back to during the training. Request participants to follow the Chatham House Rule (<https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>), to facilitate trust-building and ensure a safe space for sharing among participants. Let participants know the goal and objectives of the training and that the training space is not affiliated with any religious or political agenda.

SESSION 1: Identifying Hate Speech, Disinformation and Radical Behavior Online

Objective

The first session will review key concepts and terms on how online platforms can be utilized to recruit and radicalize various individuals and groups to share propaganda and incite violence, directed specifically towards youth, policymakers, civil society and religious actors and institutions.

Expected Results

The expected results of this first session will be that participants have an introductory understanding on why extremists utilize online platforms in a strategic nature to disseminate narratives promoting radicalization and understand some of the vulnerability and resilience factors of women, youth, marginalized groups and religious actors.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 1: 4 hours

Agenda

PG. 5 – Opening

PG. 7 – How Does the Internet Support and Create Opportunities for Extremist Narratives and Radicalization?

PG. 9– Digital Recruitment in Today's Society

PG. 13 – What Tactics Do Violent Extremists Use to Radicalize Individuals?

PG. 17 – Who Do Violent Extremists Target in Radicalization and Recruitment Online?

PG. 21 – How and Why Do Youth Become Key Targets for Radicalization and Recruitment?

PG. 25 – Gendered Lens: How and Why Do Women Become Key Targets for Radicalization and Recruitment?

PG. 29 – How Does Religion Influence Online Recruitment and Radicalization?

PG. 32 – What About Policymakers? How do They Support Radicalization and Resilience Factors?

Welcome, Introductions, and Ground Rules



Introduce Yourself:

- Have the participants introduce themselves.
- Explain why you are hosting this training and the importance of preventing online radicalization and recruitment.
- Explain that participants are going to collectively create and follow the ground rules for the training to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment. Have participants develop a few ground rules for the training, writing them down on paper and posting at the front of the room for the duration of the training.

Examples for Ground Rules Can Include:

- Show respect for others as individuals by learning and using their preferred names and pronouns.
- Respect the speaker, even when you do not agree with or respect the point the speaker is making.
- Listen carefully; do not interrupt—even when you are excited to respond.
- Try not to generalize about groups (even groups with which you identify) and do not ask another person to speak as a representative of a group.
- Keep an open mind—enter the classroom dialogue with the expectation of learning something new. Look forward to learning about—and being challenged by—ideas, questions, and points of view that are different than your own.
- Do not “monopolize” the conversation; give others a chance to contribute to the discussion.
- Support an atmosphere of learning and growth. Approach discussion as a means to “think out loud.” Allow others (as well as yourself) to revise and clarify ideas and positions in response to new information and insights.
- Bring out ideas, perspectives, or solutions that you think are not yet represented or haven’t yet been adequately discussed.
- Support your arguments with evidence. Be honest when you are not sure if you have enough evidence to make a strong argument or when your thoughts about a topic are still speculative or exploratory.
- Try not to make assumptions; ask questions to learn more about other perspectives, especially those that are different from your own.

Establishing Classroom Ground Rules. Washington University in Saint Louis. <https://ctl.wustl.edu/resources/establishing-classroom-ground-rules/#:~:text=Establishing%20ground%20rules%20for%20classroom,controversial%20or%20otherwise%20challenging%20topics>.

Icebreaker Activity: 'Never Have I Ever'



Suggested Time:
20 minutes

Never Have I Ever is an icebreaker game that helps people get to know each other better. Everyone sits in a circle and take turns telling the others about some kind of experience they have never done. Each player starts with ten fingers showing. Each time someone says something that you've already done, you drop a finger. The goal is to be the last player remaining.

This *get-to-know-you* game can be played indoors or outdoors. The recommended number of people for this game is ten to fifteen, but all group sizes can play by dividing into appropriate sized groups. Recommended age is 8 and up. No special materials are required.

Start the Activity:

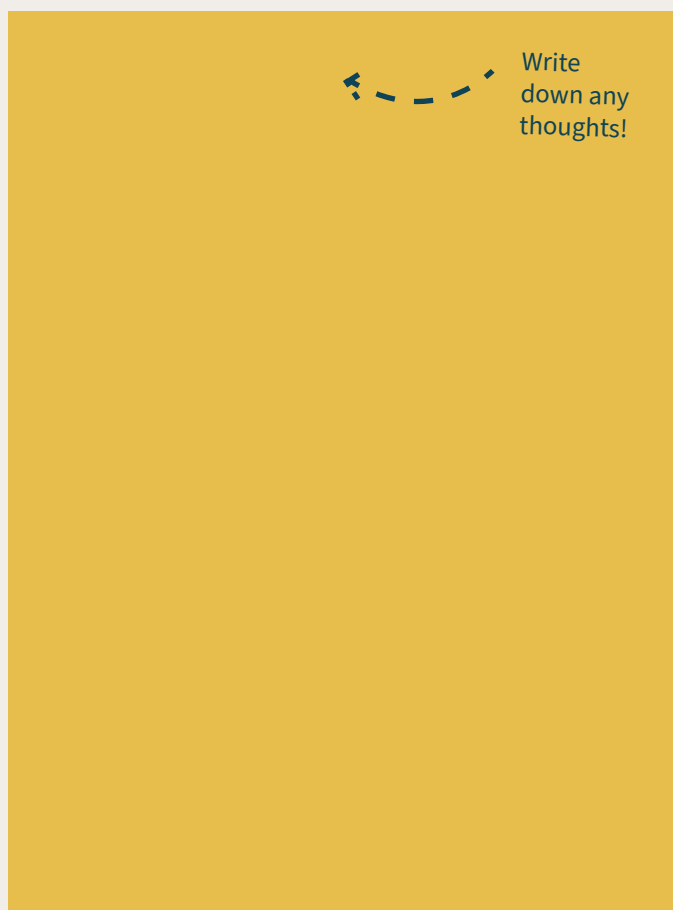
- Instruct everyone to sit in a circle. If you have an extremely large group, tell people to form smaller circles of about ten to fifteen people; this also works.
- To start each round, each player holds out all ten fingers and places them on the floor.
- Go around the circle and one at a time, each person announces something that they have never done, beginning the sentence with the phrase "Never have I ever..."
- Make sure they use statements related to internet/media/social media, etc.
- For example, one could say, "Never have I ever shared my password with a friend so they can use my streaming service, such as Netflix." For each statement that is said, all the other players drop a finger if they have done that statement. So, if three other people have shared their password before, those three people must put down a finger, leaving them with nine fingers. The goal is to stay in the game the longest (to be the last person with fingers remaining). To win, it's a good strategy to say statements that most people have done, but you haven't.

Other Examples:

- Been hacked
- Given my password to a friend
- Had a password that has part of my name in it
- Used the same password for everything
- Bullied someone online
- Shared anything that I think is useless
- Been scammed online
- Woken up at night to check my social media
- Ignored the friends I was sitting with to interact with my friends on social media
- Regretted a photo I posted online
- Bought anything online
- Watched pirated movies online

How Does the Internet Support and Create Opportunities for Extremist Narratives and Radicalization?

Question for Participants: How do you think the internet creates opportunities for extremists?



We live in a digital world and are more globally integrated and connected on the internet more than ever before, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the internet provides many opportunities for social connection, learning and entertainment, it has also become a strategic entry point for adversary actors. The internet has enhanced the capability for extremists to communicate and collaborate amongst themselves, as well as to maliciously engage with external audiences for recruitment and/or radicalization processes.

For instance, the PAVE project research identified that while traditional media remains influential in terms of shaping opinion in the Balkans, online channels present a more prominent mechanism for the dissemination of information and community mobilization on a particular issue, including radicalization related.

A large percentage of people in the Western Balkans heavily rely on social media as their primary source of information. For example in Kosovo, as of 2021, there are an estimated 1.7 million internet users and 1.1 million active social media users in a country with an estimated 1.9 million people. The significantly high number of social media users demonstrates that a majority of the country hold a degree of dependence on online channels for accessibility and delivery of information as well as interconnectedness amongst community members.



Photo Source: Harrington, Woody. "Jihadists and right-wing extremists use remarkably similar social media strategies." New York Times. November, 24, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/24/opinion/sunday/facebook-twitter-terrorism-extremism.html>.

What is online recruitment?

Extremist groups actively try to get new members to join their causes. One of the ways they do this is online. Most extremist groups have their own websites, and they and their supporters have profiles on different social media sites. They use these platforms to connect with susceptible online users, share propaganda and ultimately build trust or a 'friendship' with people who seem to display interest in what they are thinking, doing and saying. Newcomers might become friends with several different extremists online. (**Propaganda** is the systemic dissemination of information, especially in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a political/social cause or point of view.)

Evidence has confirmed that the internet plays a role in the radicalization process of violent extremists and terrorists. They are able to reach audiences globally immediately, while also tailoring their messages to align with the desires and interests of different target audiences at all levels of society. Meaning, extremists are able to develop influential content for a mass audience, and still recruit individuals through targeted outreach.

Here's how:

- **By the early 2000's, all major terrorists organizations had a website or online presence.** The internet is ideal for extremists: it's easy access, difficult for private companies and government to regulate, allows for anonymity of communication, inexpensive and can even shape coverage in traditional mass media (which uses the internet for stories).
- Due to the number of global users, **the internet creates more opportunities for extremists to quickly interact with users** without being in the same physical location, thus being able to accelerate the process of radicalization.
- **The internet acts as an 'echo chamber,'** meaning it can provide a space for people to interact with like-minded people and to reaffirm their beliefs, regardless of the accuracy of the belief.

Think of it as a snowball - as more and more people view and share these posts, people may come to agree with the content. They will also talk about the content with like-minded individuals online - and even with their friends in-person. This creates a sense of community. What they may not realize is that these extremists are not their friends, rather, they are trying to take advantage to further advance their extremist goals. Because of so many like-minded individuals, people may forget why extremism and terrorism are wrong and believe that their new friends have legitimate view points. Overtime, people may come to believe that they have no choice but to use or advocate for violence.

Digital Recruitment in Today's Society



The internet offers terrorists and extremists the same opportunity and capability that it does for the rest of society: **to communicate, collaborate and convince**. There are already significant quantities of radical materials available online, especially on popular social media channels, and this volume is growing daily. For instance, the table below shows results from a 2013 Google search of critical keywords related to terrorism and radicalization.

Table 1:
Google Search
for Examples
of Critical
Keywords

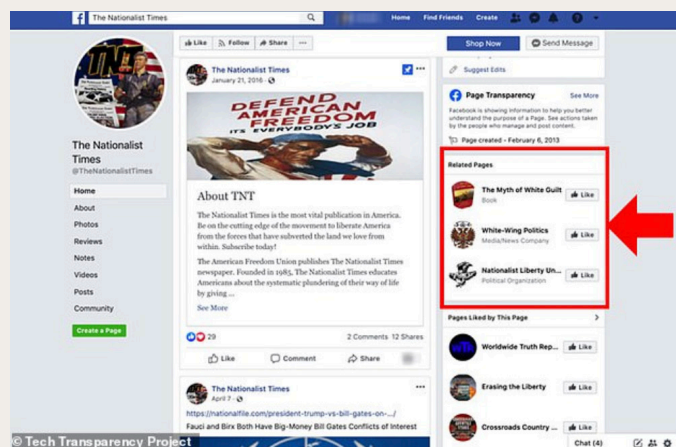
SEARCH TERM	NUMBER OF RESULTS
"How to Make a Bomb"	1,830,000
"Salafi Publications"	46,200
"Beheading Video"	257,000

Photo Source: von Behr, I. (2013) radicalization in the digital era The use of the internet in 15 cases of terrorism and extremism. RAND Europe. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR453/RAND_RR453.pdf

With the advent of the internet, modern extremists can now self radicalize or find people with extremist ideologies faster than ever before and more importantly, they now have a playbook to follow in observing previous attacks through online platforms. Since 2011, one third of white supremacist attackers were inspired by others conducting similar copycat attacks, professing admiration for them online. For instance, the Christchurch shooter followed a specific pattern, including a pre-planned online manifesto distribution strategy and a Facebook video livestream. In his manifesto, the attacker, Brandon Trenton, said he drew inspiration from similar attacks, especially Anders Breivik, a Norwegian RWE who killed 77 people, mostly youths who were participating in a summer camp in Utøya. The shooter explained in his manifesto he had been inspired by similar right-wing attacks in Norway (2011, 77 killed), Charleston, South Carolina (2015, 9 killed), and Quebec (2016, 6 killed). This has led to a growing fear of copycat attacks given the simplicity of the attacks these extremists use and the high level of social media content related to the motivations at attack itself.

Facebook

With more than 1 billion users, Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. Facebook provides violent extremists with a vast recruiting ground. Extremists take advantage of the fact that parents and law enforcement often are not aware of the dangers that could be present when a young person spends large amounts on Facebook or other social networking sites. Extremist individuals and organizations use this viewing potential to create lines of communication, enabling them to find, recruit, groom, and communicate with young people worldwide. This aids extremist groups intent on attacking Western countries and their interests in creating an international network of followers that can be radicalized to violence.



Facebook groups and pages expressing support for violent extremists and terrorist organizations allow anyone to read information, view videos and other propaganda, comment on wall posts or write their own posts, and click on links to content hosted on other sites. These pages effectively bring propaganda to a wider audience and serve as a gateway to other extremist websites where more radical content is available. In many instances, posts include historical and factual data that is skewed or changed to foster support or empathy to the cause and link to websites with additional information. In addition, extremists also post tips and guidance about operational and tactical information, gathering counterintelligence, and coordinating attacks.

A 2016 internal Facebook study found that **“64% of all extremist group joins are due to our recommendation tools”** and that most of the activity came from the platform’s “Groups You Should Join” and “Discover” algorithms.

Photo Source: 'White Supremacists are Thriving on Facebook.' Tech Transparency Project. <https://www.techtransparencyproject.org/sites/default/files/Facebook-White-Supremacy-Report.pdf>.

YouTube

According to the latest YouTube statistics, the video-sharing platform has 2.6 billion users worldwide as of 2022. It’s ranked as the second-most popular social network, and the only platform that has more active users than YouTube is Facebook. These 2.6 billion users are defined as viewers who log into the site at least once per month.

Violent extremists of all persuasions upload videos that include depictions of perceived affronts committed by enemies, speeches and statements of radical leaders, and other videos promoting violence and uprisings. Videos can also explain extremist ideologies and justify violent actions and

responses. These videos often include graphics and edits that make them appear similar to traditional newscasts, making it difficult for viewers to realize that these are segments based on propaganda and skewed information. Extremists also upload videos that provide moral support and encourage motivated viewers to launch attacks of their own. Violent extremist groups have even created cartoons that are intended to appeal to youth.

From June to December 2017, YouTube removed over 150,000 videos for violent extremism, with 98 percent of these flagged by machine-learning algorithms. Nearly 70% were taken down within eight hours of upload.

Twitter

Micro-blogging sites like Twitter present more advantages for extremist groups because traceability of the identity and the source of the tweets are harder to achieve, thus increasing the communication potential for recruiters. Twitter provides violent extremists with an international recruiting ground. Radical recruiters contact users who have re-tweeted their posts and left favorable comments on numerous tweets that express a desire to become involved in the cause. Many extremist organizations use Twitter to issue statements and press releases, disseminate propaganda, and provide justification or encouragement for attacks. Whether their narrative suggests that the West is at war with Islam, the government is overstepping its bounds, or that certain religions or races are inferior, groups use Twitter to broadcast their ideology and propaganda to a large audience. This promotion can also take the form of directly criticizing opposing sources and information on other Twitter accounts. These groups can also post links to other websites and pages with radical content.

In 2018, Twitter announced that over 1.2 million accounts were suspended for terrorist content.

Video Games

Video games can be placed in a similar category as social media because they increasingly have their own forums, chat rooms and micro-blogging tools. Even as video games are becoming ubiquitous in modern society, the controls around content have become less clear. Video games provide an unmonitored environment where extremists, from the Islamic State to Neo-Nazis, can contact and groom potential recruits from around the world. The content of modern video games also generates concerns. One game in particular, Counter-Strike,



Photo Source: Dino, Daniel, 2019. "E-Recruits: How Gaming is Helping Terrorist Groups Radicalize and Recruit a Generation of Online Gamers." *Centric*. <https://www.concentric.io/blog/e-recruits-how-gaming-is-helping-terrorist-groups-radicalize-and-recruit-a-generation-of-online-gamers>.

allows players to simulate terrorists trying to perpetrate a terrorist attack. Dubbed the "Gaming Jihad," terrorist organizations have exploited violent multi-player first-person shooter games and violent imagery to attract young recruits. In 2014, the Islamic State even developed a propaganda film designed to look like the popular video games Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto to appeal to young gamers by glorifying and fantasizing video game violence.

This phenomenon has become a global threat in recent years as terrorists have been able to reach larger audiences through such methods, which may have contributed to an observed increase in far-right political terrorism worldwide.

In relation, Twitch, is an international online video game streaming service where individuals are allowed to live stream audio and video of them playing video games. Although meant to share gaming experiences with others, some individuals

utilized Twitch to spread their polarizing and violent political beliefs about controversial issues. Larger terrorist groups like ISIS are not the only actors to increase their focus on video games and other online platforms. Smaller, less sophisticated terrorist organizations have been inspired by ISIS's recruitment strategies and have begun utilizing these techniques as well.

Artificial Intelligence

Terrorist groups are beginning to explore the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their online radicalization and recruitment strategies. AI can be extremely dangerous if used with malicious intent. With a proven track record in the world of cybercrime, it is a powerful tool that could conceivably be employed to further or facilitate recruitment, terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. One of the most common uses of AI is through 'deep fakes.' Deep fakes use artificial intelligence, or AI, to modify videos and images and replace a person's likeness with that of another, creating nearly imperceptible fakes.

As explained by the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism, 'deep fakes and the technology behind them can be a powerful weapon in today's disinformation wars. Moreover, coupled with the reach and speed of the Internet, social media and messaging applications, deep fakes can quickly reach millions of people in an extremely short period of time. In this regard, deepfakes present considerable potential for a range of malicious and criminal purposes which include: **destroying the image and credibility of an individual; harassing or humiliating individuals online, including through the use of sexual deepfakes; perpetrating blackmail, extortion and fraud; disrupting financial markets; and stoking social unrest and political polarization.**

Considering the adverse effects of deepfakes, it is conceivable that terrorist groups or individuals can seek to leverage the technology behind deepfakes to run disinformation campaigns on social media to manipulate public opinion or undermine people's confidence in state institutions.



Photo Source: Face swap Neutral Net – Wikipedia commons

Such technology could also be used as an effective instrument for propaganda, radicalization or as a call for action. For instance, this could be achieved through the creation of "deepfaked" content by extremists in which a targeted political figure makes offensive remarks against a specific community in an effort to increase outrage within it and increase the number of sympathizers.

Question for Participants: What other platforms do you think extremists could use to radicalize and recruit? What elements of that platform could make it appealing to extremists to use?

Write down any thoughts!

What Tactics Do Violent Extremists Use to Radicalize Individuals?



Photo Source: Cvetkovska, S. (2 November 2021). *Trump and COVID-19 Fuel North Macedonia's Clickbait Boom*. Resonate Voices Initiative. <https://resonantvoices.info/trump-and-covid-19-fuel-north-macedonias-clickbait-boom/>.

One of the primary uses of the Internet by terrorists is for the dissemination of propaganda. **Propaganda** is the systemic dissemination of information, especially in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a political/social cause or point of view. The promotion of violence is a common theme in terrorism-related propaganda, and it generally takes the form of multimedia communications providing ideological or practical instruction, explanations, justifications or promotion of terrorist activities. These may include virtual messages, presentations, magazines, treatises, audio and video files and video games developed by terrorist organizations or sympathizers. Internet propaganda may also include content such as video footage of violent acts of terrorism or video games developed by terrorist organizations that simulate acts of terrorism and encourage the user to engage in role-play, by acting the part of a virtual terrorist.

Other objectives of terrorist propaganda may include the use of psychological manipulation to undermine an individual's belief in certain collective social values, or to propagate a sense of heightened anxiety, fear or panic in a population or subset of the population. This may be achieved through the dissemination of disinformation, rumors, threats of violence or images relating to provocative acts of violence. The intended audience may include direct viewers of content, as well as those affected by potential publicity generated by such material.



Extremists use context-specific propaganda to reach and influence audiences. It is more effective when:

- **Displayed in a local language.** This is especially relevant for members of the diaspora feel comfortable with, i.e., German or English.
- **Creates a role model that recruits can identify with.** ISIS created role models for women, which did not exist before.
- **Sharing images or rhetoric with a negative connotation associated towards a particular group.** Often in Europe, there is the spread of different negative images from Islam and Muslims.
- **Online content dissemination of violence abuse amongst teenagers and young adults that encourage change to cultural and social norms.**
- **Daily interaction with violence** in video games, movies, comics, etc. creates an essence of violence normality.
- **Insights fear of the ‘other.’**

Let's look at an example:

The ISIS recruitment video titled “No Life Without Jihad,” was released by the Al Hayat Media Center, which is an ISIS-affiliated group focused on recruiting Muslims in western countries.



Photo Source: Al Hayat Media Center

The 13-minute video features a British and Australian man — sitting next to other alleged ISIS members — who identifies himself as Brother Abu Muthanna al Yemeni extolling the virtues of jihad. He encourages foreign Muslims “to answer the call of Allah and his messenger when he calls you to what gives you life...what he says gives you life is jihad.”

Let's look at what tactics were used in creating this video:

- **Creates a role model that recruits can identify with, as well as shares positive aspects to joining the group:** The video encourages ‘loyal’ followers to come to the Middle East to ‘reconquer Muslim land’ and allows viewers to hear and see first-hand the ‘glamorization’ of life by those have been actively engaged in the extremist organization. The video also features foreign fighters from Western nations who have joined the group.
- The “message to the brothers who have stayed behind” is a **strong, sustained, and emotional** appeal to Western Muslims to join ISIS immediately, and seeks to remove every possible excuse, such as work, family, comfort, for not going. The video connects the need for immediate sacrifice for the sake of suffering Muslims in Syria to a long-awaited millenarian hope.
- **Displayed in a local language:** The video was shared on accounts in German and French - allowing the video to be understood by, and targeted to, a larger audience.

Another tactic used by violent extremists is through spreading online hate speech. Hate speech covers many forms of expressions which advocate, incite, promote or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons. As more and more people have moved online, experts say, individuals inclined toward racism, misogyny, or homophobia have found niches that can reinforce their views and goad them to violence. Social media platforms also offer violent actors the opportunity to publicize their acts. Hate speech on the internet is not a new phenomenon, but rather the digitalization of cultural backlash politics against processes of cultural change and progress.

Hate speech can also be derived from far-right groups. For instance, created in Britain in 2017 as an alternative to YouTube, BitChute has become notorious for videos promoting racism, hate and

Holocaust-denial. In the Summer of 2020, twenty of the most popular videos on the platform were a mix of extreme racist propaganda and harmful disinformation, mostly originating from QAnon and anti-vaxxer groups. The site is used throughout the Western Balkans, with individuals sharing content from BitChute, including translated videos that claim the COVID-19 pandemic is fake and the vaccines dangerous, have also taken part in protests against COVID-19 restrictions imposed by authorities in Bosnia and elsewhere in the Balkan region. In Serbia and Croatia, they have joined protests against migrants and refugees and LGBTQ rights.

Extremist groups are using conspiracy theories and other content on far-right channels as a tool to recruit followers and spread radical agendas, abusing the insecurity, fear, socioeconomic problems and mental health issues of vulnerable individuals.

The diagram illustrates various forms of online hate speech. On the left, a central profile icon is connected to three speech bubbles: a green one with "I hate Muslims. They should not exist.", a blue one with "Muslims are human too. All ethnicities and social groups deserve tolerance." (marked with a green check), and a pink one with "You are truly one stupid backwards thinking idiot to believe negativity about Islam" (marked with a red X). On the right, four social media post screenshots are shown, all dated July 2019, with hateful content against a religious group.

What are some examples of online hate speech inspiring acts of violence?

- Extremist propaganda displays the war in Bosnia as an attack by the West on the Islamic world, thereby establishing a direct connection to Islamist ideology in the interpretation of the conflict.
- Online hate speech targets Iraqi journalists and activists leading to targeted threats directly inciting violence against them.

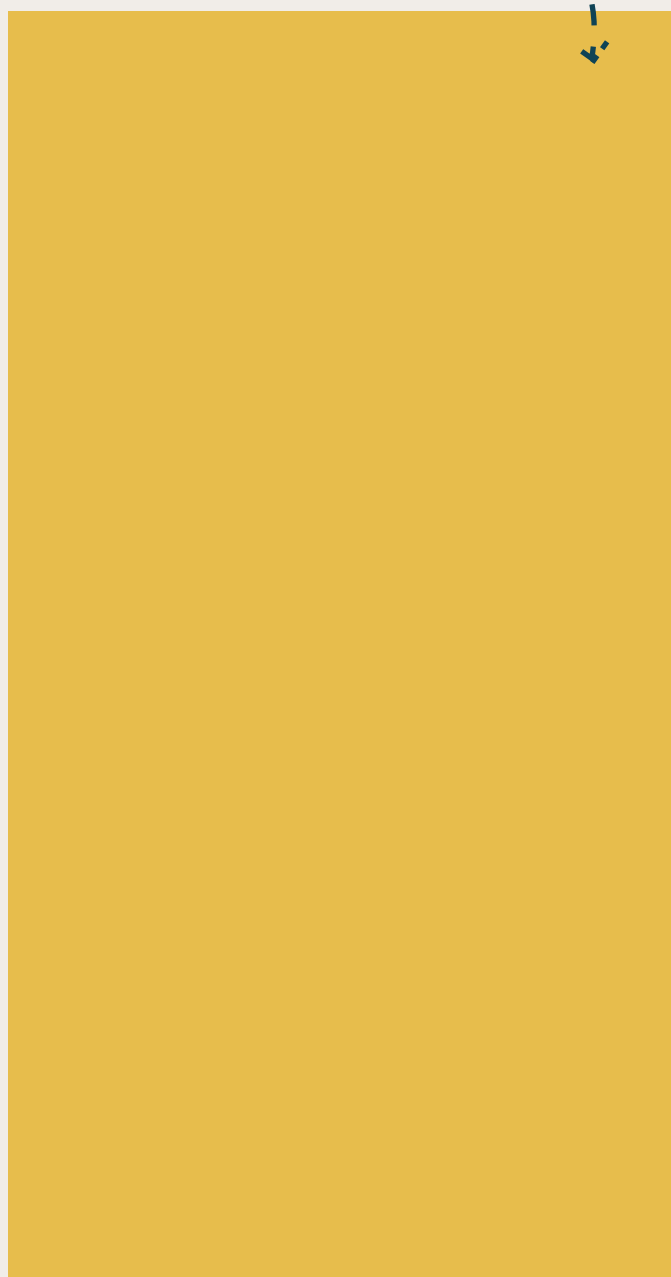


Photo Source: Civil Media. “TikTok fight for inter-ethnic and political struggle.” 2020. <https://civilmedia.mk/tik-tok-tepachka-za-meguetnichka-i-politichka-presmetka/>.

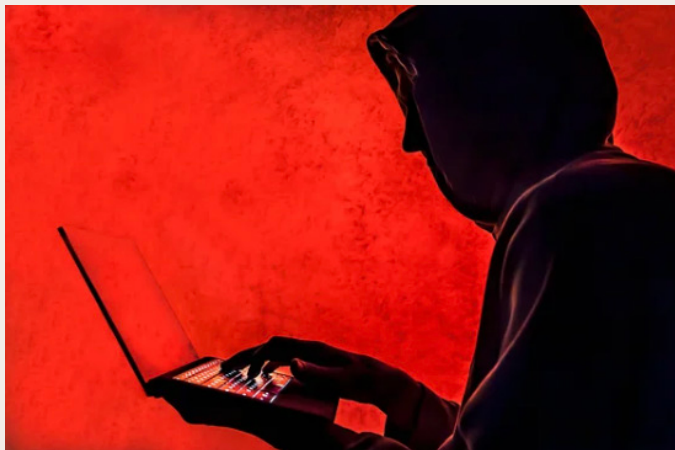
- During the summer and fall of 2020, a new trend highlighting the region’s conflicts emerged in the Balkans. In these videos, a group of people walk along a street. A bully appears, harassing them. Suddenly, a friend emerges to fight off the bully. Different users attach different flags to the bully and to the savior. The flag reflects the user’s view of conflict and cooperation in the Balkans. In one video, the group consists of Kosovo and Macedonia, with Serbia as the bully and Albania the savior. In another combination, Albania is the bully and Serbia is the defender. The cathartic part of the video is accompanied by dramatic music, reinforcing the message.

Question for Participants: Have you noticed or seen any of the tactics described above or examples of hate speech on social media? If so, how did you know? How did it make you feel?

What are other forms of online hate speech inspiring acts of violence that you have seen in your context?



Who Do Violent Extremists Target in Radicalization and Recruitment Online?



Question for Participants: Brainstorm a list of reasons as to why someone may be susceptible to online radicalization or recruitment. Have them share their responses to the group. What were the commonalities?

Write
down any
thoughts!

Extremist groups will engage with anyone they feel may be able to be susceptible to their messaging - ranging from youth to adults and everywhere in between. From an outside perspective, it is easy for us to categorize anyone recruited online as 'gullible' or 'naive', but this is simply not the case. In fact, many people who become influenced or radicalized by online propaganda did not seek it out—they were intentionally targeted and unaware of the radicalization agenda.

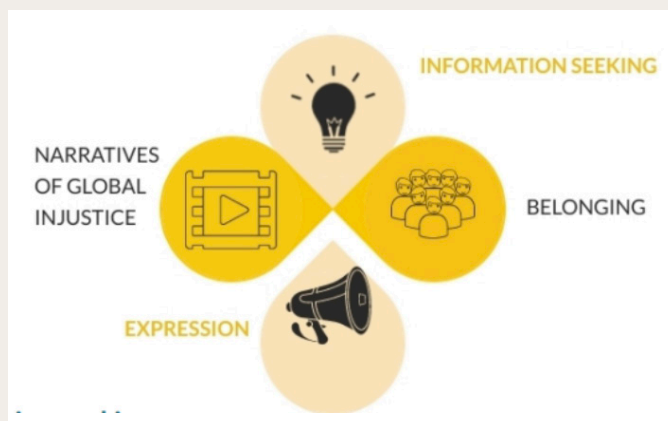
Radicalization is more widespread where conditions of inequality and political frustration prevail. It often takes root in people who sympathize with the plight of the oppressed and wish to show their solidarity. It also looks to capitalize on people's vulnerabilities and insecurities and connect them with like-minded individuals to give them a sense of community and belonging within an online space.

Humans intrinsically search for a sense of belonging. Social media sites allow for introverts and extroverts alike to communicate with others - whenever they like - and generally along topics of interest. A filter bubble can cause users to have significantly less contact with contradicting viewpoints, causing the user to become intellectually isolated and in a ‘bubble’ of their own beliefs and perceptions related to political and social ideologies. Personalized search results on Google and personalized news streams on Facebook are two perfect examples of this phenomenon.

Let's look more at how extremists create a sense of belonging and capitalize on **filter bubbles**:

■ **Chat rooms** offer a place for individuals to engage in networking and connectivity opportunities, often amongst people with similar ideas. This space reinforces interpersonal relationships and creates a sense of belonging. However, extremists have also been known to share information on these platforms, such as photos, videos, blogs, guides, etc. Additionally, these spaces are easy for group mobilization through exploiting collective identities or through relational and emotional bonds in order to achieve endorsement of extremist values.

In Tunisia, **PAVE research found many webpages claiming a ‘primary belonging,’ through a regional identity**, such as Abnaou Al Janoub' (people of southern Tunisia). This claim represents a certain type of solidarity, which is more or less temporary, but can be revived at any time, following any incident, decision or simple event.



Source: DARE. “How Important Are Online Spaces to Radicalization.” June, 2021. https://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/rb - online_spaces_final_version.pdf.

This method of engagement by extremists is through a method known as **narrowcasting**.

Narrowcasting aims messages at specific segments of the public defined by values, preferences, demographic attributes, or subscription. An online page, video, or chat’s name, images, appeals, and information are tailored to match the profile of a particular social group. In short, it is disseminating information to a smaller group rather than a wide audience.

For instance, in Lebanon, the PAVE project noted youth resorted mostly to online media and communication channels specifically in their search for reassurance and guidance. They believed that their new affiliation would provide them with a sense of belonging and identity given the void in collective belonging.

Watch this example of a young man interacting with an extremist via a video game: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHmOnCRAGvw&t=33s>.



Source: Devon County Council. "Safer Devon: Online Radicalization." November 2, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHmOnCRAGvw&t=33s>.

Question for Participants:

1. What ways did the extremist try to earn the young man's trust and create a sense of belonging?

What Makes Someone Susceptible Exercise



Suggested Time:
10 minutes

To Prep:

- Ask participants to break down 'at-risk' groups and see how extremists may use 'narrowcasting' to fulfill their objective of radicalization and recruitment. So, we know why and how extremists may use the internet for radicalization or recruitment, but what makes someone susceptible to recruitment?

Examples Could Be:

- Experiencing identity conflict
- Feeling there is a lack of meaning in life
- Wanting status/search for employment
- Wanting to belong
- Desiring action or adventure
- Being naive or having little knowledge of religion and ideology
- Hold grievances or seeking revenge
- Exposure to violent extremist groups or individuals
- Family members or friends in violent extremist network

Answer: All are correct!

- There are a plethora of reasons as to why someone may be susceptible to online radicalization or recruitment. There is no single, uniform recruitment process for a group; rather, there are as many recruitment processes by extremist organizations that contextualize narratives between the distinct regions and nodes in which the groups operate and target people who may be susceptible within online spaces.



How and Why Do Youth Become Key Targets for Radicalization and Recruitment?

Youth are generalized as most involved and active within violent extremist groups, but research and implementation experience have shown that only a small portion of young people who are vulnerable to violent extremism actually become violent. However, as youth are often key users of the internet and broadly susceptible to propaganda, the internet, therefore, is an effective mechanism for youth radicalization and recruitment. **The PAVE research highlighted “the majority of youth in Kosovo, prior to going to Syria, had developed the majority of their radical ties through social media, not traditional media.”**

Around the world, youth are becoming radicalized and recruited by extremist organizations. In 2015 alone, the United Nations verified 274 cases of children having been recruited by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations verified the existence of centers in rural Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr and rural Raqqah that provided military training to at least 124 boys between 10 and 15 years of age. Verification of the use of children as foreign fighters has increased significantly, with 18 cases involving children as young as 7 years of age. The use of children as child executioners was reported and appeared in video footage. In Iraq, in two incidents in June and September 2015, more than 1,000 children were reportedly abducted by ISIL from Mosul district. These figures are likely to be significant underestimates because of the limited opportunities to gain access and monitor violations against children.

Grooming

One tactic extremists use to engage and recruit youth is through ‘grooming.’ **Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them.** While the drivers and objectives are different, the actual process of grooming is broadly similar to radicalization, with the exploitation of a person’s vulnerability usually being the critical factor. Those who are targeted are often offered something ideological, such as an eternal spiritual reward, or sometimes something physical, such as an economic incentive, that will make them ‘feel better’ about themselves or their situation. People who groom and radicalize also use the anonymity of the web as a layer of protection to avoid detection. The added ability to encrypt communication can make law enforcement extremely difficult. A predator may use the internet to offer support, friendship and belonging are all used to gain influence and control, so it’s important to be alert. Despite the best efforts of social media providers and platforms, the sheer volume of web traffic means that questionable content can be uploaded and distributed for a considerable length of time.



It's critical to point out that extremists use lots of different channels to try to connect with someone who they think could be vulnerable and persuadable. They will look at posts, likes and shares and social media profiles and friend lists to identify people to target. **The ways young people are recruited however, vary widely across contexts, gender, and other identity factors; often with extremists capitalizing on feelings of insecurity, discrimination, or social isolation.**

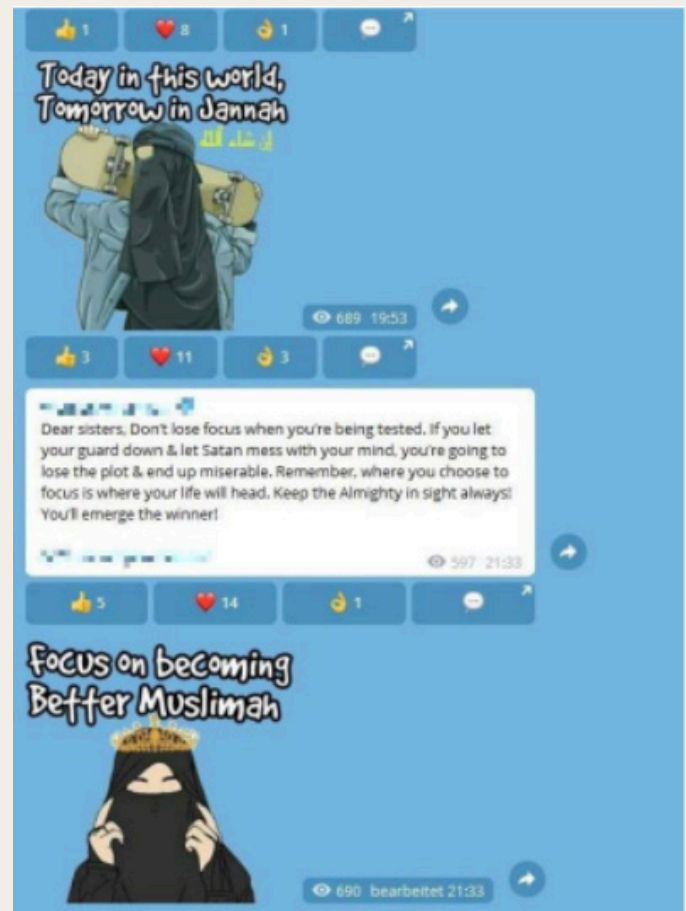


Online Recruitment of Girls and Young Women

For example, online recruitment of girls and young women is proportionately more prevalent than their male counterparts as they often face restrictions in public spaces due to societal gender norms. Factors contributing to young women joining extremist organizations include: rejection of Western feminism; online contact with recruiters who offer marriage and adventure; peer or family influence; adherence to the ideology and politics;

naivety and romantic optimism; and the chance to be part of something new, exciting and illicit.

Extremist groups and pages on social media that are specifically targeted at young women tend to be **very colorful**, often including internet-famous cat and dog videos to generate attention.



For young men, extremist groups may play off of their desire to 'belong.' For instance, this quest for significance gets personal when ISIS directly challenges a male's masculinity and shames him to join their cause or commit attacks in the West. It gets especially personal when one considers the messengers along with the message.

For example, one of ISIS' latest propaganda videos features a French-language a cappella chant containing footage of young children dressed in military fatigues, fully armed, and marching in bombed-out city streets. The video was accompanied by lyrics declaring, "Our warriors are everywhere ready to sacrifice themselves, beware our orphans are growing." In another video, potential recruits are encouraged to join up and fight alongside ISIS militants while a picture of a young boy holding an assault rifle is shown as the words "What's your excuse?" flash across the screen. ISIS' use of child soldiers in their propaganda videos plays on the discomfort many men experience at the thought of a child being more empowered than themselves to avenge Muslims' perceived humiliation.

Watch the video here: <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/isis-threat/video-isis-child-jihadists-sing-in-french-your-blood-will-flow-452968>



Source: The Jerusalem Post. "ISIS child jihadists sing in French - 'Your blood will flow.'" May 3, 2016. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/isis-threat/video-isis-child-jihadists-sing-in-french-your-blood-will-flow-452968>.

Female ISIS supporters also use narratives of shame and emasculation to reach out to and recruit impressionable "fence sitters" who have not yet taken decisive action. For instance, a 2015

tweet by a user named @UsofNuh declared, "There are women who are already here before you and look, they are already doing more than you have for the Islamic State."

Memes

Violent extremists are supplementing their traditional messaging—which can rely heavily on lengthy, academic-style recitations and philosophical arguments—with memes that are faster and easier to consume. Such content allows quick sharing of vast amounts of information with like-minded end users and can normalize or lessen the gravity of violent extremist narratives. It is important for first responders to understand how violent extremist narratives are being spread using memes, while also respecting constitutionally protected rights and appreciating that the memes discussed in this paper (or others like them) may be shared by those who are not connected to violent extremism.



Photo Source: Liang, C. and Cross, J. (July 2020). "White Crusade: How to Prevent Right-Wing Extremists from Exploiting the Internet." Geneva Centre for Security Policy. <https://dam.gcsp.ch/files/doc/white-crusade-how-to-prevent-right-wing-extremists-from-exploiting-the-internet>.

Pepe the Frog, an internet meme, serves as an example to subversive exposure of a meme (an image that is meant to be funny and subversively evocative but also gets the viewer to think about whether the views they had been taught are true, or if alternative facts are available). ‘Pepe’ the cartoon frog, created for humor on a non-political site, became appropriated as a popular figure in far-right circles. Recent appropriations of Pepe as Hitler, a Klansman, and multiple racist caricatures has earned the frog a spot in the American Defamation League hate symbols database. But what gives memes like Pepe their power is their ability to spread messages quickly. Because they use widely recognizable visuals and text formulas to pass their message (referencing famous movies, pop culture, famous political events), they are effective at generating ‘lols.’ Whether their content is comedic and light-hearted or angry and nihilistic, they make the viewer laugh and are easy to consume no matter the message. Memes, whichever way they are generated, can effectively convey a message to millions of people across the world and are incredibly effective at targeting youth on sites like Reddit or Instagram. The result of this is a format for disseminating information virally, regardless of its veracity.

PAVE research demonstrated within the MENA region, that a “huge number of media outputs and activity shows the extremist organizations’ ability to employ social networks for two primary purposes: ideological propaganda and demonstration of greatness and strength. This attracted many young people from the Majdal Anjar region in Lebanon as they were watching many of these [video] releases and telling their friends about them. They would meet to watch together the videos and documentaries issued by the Islamic State, with the same excitement of friends gathering to go to the cinema.

While youth may be one of the most susceptible stakeholder groups to radicalization, we need to remember that **they are also key partners to design and implement preventing and countering extremism programming and policies.** We will circle back to this in section 2!

Interested in learning more? Check out **PAVE Training Module 3:** ‘Advancing Inclusivity in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Efforts.’

Gendered Lens: How and Why Do Women Become Key Targets for Radicalization and Recruitment?

While a disproportionately high number of males are in extremist groups, women are still susceptible to radicalization and recruitment for a range of reasons similar to men's, ranging from search for employment or economic independence, family revenge, ideological persuasion or a sense of belonging. In many cases, women and young women experience limited freedoms in offline settings shaped by cultural norms and/or family pressure, which can result in a lack of education and employment opportunities. Limited social ties with peers or opportunities outside the home often lead women and young women to increase engagement in online spaces.

In fact, **the number of women implicated in terrorism-related crimes is growing.** In 2017, the Global Extremism Monitor registered 100 distinct suicide attacks conducted by 181 female militants, 11% of all incidents that year. In 2016, women constituted 26% of those arrested on terrorism charges in Europe, up from 18% the year before. Given that radicalization is often the culmination of economic, social, and political factors and all of these processes are gendered, so is the pathway of radicalization and disengagement from violent extremism. For example, content, messages and language are characterized by gender stereotypes and/or promote strict gender segregation. Modern extremist groups use social media to actively enlist women into supportive roles, reaching unprecedented numbers **through narrowcasting—creating a targeted message for a specific subgroup.** For instance, the Islamic State's concerted campaign to recruit Western women emphasized camaraderie, sisterhood, and opportunities to enjoy freedom and adventure as state-builders.

Terrorist groups also appeal to women through creative outlets. For instance, Al Qaeda released a magazine focusing on women's jihadist style called *Al-Shamikha*, which loosely translates to “the majestic woman.” The magazine that offers home and beauty tips alongside testimonials from the wives of suicide bombers and female jihadists. Inside, next to advice on suicide attacks and waging electronic warfare, readers can also find tips on “marrying a mujahideen” or how to get the perfect complexion.



Source: Cover Page of *al-Shamikha*. Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/militant-imagery-project/0300/>.

Women also serve as influencers for other women, as well as actual recruiters. One study of online pro-Islamic State groups found that female recruiters had higher network connectivity than men, making them more effective at spreading the Islamic State’s message than their male counterparts— an important finding given that an increasing number of extremists are radicalized online. Women’s participation also improved the survival rate of online pro-Islamic State groups, extending the time before technology companies shut them down. PAVE research shows that while women in the Western Balkans are not actively engaged as vectors of radicalizing messages compared to men, fieldwork has shown that they actively participate in online platforms disseminating radical content. As noted in the case of North Macedonia, there are specific online platform groups and channels dedicated to exclusive content aimed at fostering radical ideologies among women.

Women’s roles vary within P/CVE efforts. Women and young women can be perpetrators and recruiters, as well as preventers and peacebuilders, which puts them also at risk in their activism. And while both men and women can experience incidents of online violence and abuse, women and young women are considerably more likely to be victims of repeated and severe forms of harmful actions online or with the help of technology. Online hate speech and threats within online spaces may be linked to political and ideological positions or stemming from patriarchal systems embedded in local societies. This may include online abuse, harassment, and gendered defamation via social media platforms. Not only does the language incite psychological or even physical harm, it also silences women, limiting their right to express themselves freely and without fear, and deters

them from digital participation in political, social and cultural life. Often, it forces women to retreat from the internet and to socially isolate.

Here are six common trends identified of digital violence against women and other marginalized groups include:

1. Online attacks with clear manifestation of hate speech
2. Online attacks that follow domestic violence
3. Online attacks that lead to physical violence
4. Online attacks that include or lead to privacy breaches
5. Online attacks on publicly exposed women groups, in particular journalists and politicians
6. Online attacks on already vulnerable groups, in particular minorities, migrants and members of the LGBTQ community

Research in the MENA region revealed that gender has been disregarded as a cross-cutting element in assessing community vulnerability and resilience towards violent extremism. As the Lebanese case shows, PAVE interviewees, “did not acknowledge or even recognize the gender dimension” in relation to violent extremism, radicalization, and deradicalization! Efforts must be increased to ensure this lens is included in online P/CVE efforts.

Interested in learning more and how to make your P/CVE efforts inclusive of women and young women? Check out **PAVE Training Module 3: ‘Advancing Inclusivity in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Efforts.’**

Veil Exercise



Suggested Time:
30 minutes

Aim:

- To explore discrimination, exclusion, and inclusion.

Materials:

- Seven large scarfs that can be draped over a volunteer's head obscuring their vision

Purpose of Exercise:

- This experiential exercise enables participants to see and feel what it is like to be a young person when exposed to extremist ideologies – and to explore what may help to counteract emotions and ideas associated with extremism.

Start the Activity:

- The facilitator reads out a series of seven statements and participants are asked to place a veil over a volunteer participant after each statement. Once all seven veils have been placed over the volunteer, the second set of statements is read out, and after each statement a veil is removed. At the end, the volunteer is asked to share her/his experience and others are asked to reflect upon this.

Scenario 1:

- Pascal is 19 years old and studying at college. He lives in a suburb, which has many diverse communities including refugees.
 1. I am studying at college and recently I found out from my friends that these foreign students have been given a special prayer room. I feel excluded and left out.
 2. When I walk in my neighborhood, I notice these foreign students standing in street corners speaking in their own language, I feel unsafe.
 3. I hear on the news that thousands of refugees are on their way to my country. Our country will have to spend all this extra money on them. What about our people? I feel angry.
 4. My brother applied for a job and didn't get it because they gave the job to one of them.
 5. These foreign boys are after our girls and keep their own women covered up and indoors. Makes me feel sick and angry.
 6. I meet a group of people at college who think like me and are really annoyed at these immigrants. It makes me feel stronger.
 7. We have decided to start approaching their women and harass them. They will know what we feel like when they talk to our women. I feel in control.

■ Part 2:

1. The college publicized the opening of an inclusive 'open to all' contemplation room and I find out that I can use this space too. I tell my friends. It makes me feel that my college has thought about me as well.
2. Local youth workers in my neighborhood are forming football teams and I notice that some of these people who are hanging about in street corners are great players. They really want to win the football tournaments just like I do and make our neighborhood feel proud of us. I feel that we are more similar than I thought.
3. One of the immigrant boys in our football team invites me to his home; I don't want to go because I heard their houses are smelly and unclean. I like him and decide to go and I can't believe how hospitable and kind the whole family is. I taste food that I have never tasted before and get to know the rest of the family, including his sisters. I feel I am trusted and respected.
4. My brother confronts the immigrant that got the job and finds out he has been living in this country for three generations. My brother also finds out that he had applied for ten other jobs in the last six months, which he didn't get and has a university degree which my brother doesn't have. I feel this is fair.
5. I go to the house of my football friend and I find out that one of his sisters is very good at maths. She is at the same college as me and is a few years older. She offers to help me with maths once a week. I feel valued and didn't expect to learn from someone from a different culture.
6. I hear about a group of students at college who don't like immigrants and they want to take action. They invite me to join. I choose not to. I feel my mind is open to new experiences and people.
7. I talk with few people from the football group about how we need to do more things together so that we get to know about each other. We decide to speak to the local youth workers about this. I feel I can make a difference and feel good about myself.

How Does Religion Influence Online Recruitment and Radicalization?

The PAVE project noted that many communities perceive that ethno-political radicalization poses a higher risk to societal peace compared to religiously inspired radicalization. However, they are not mutually exclusive and religious identity is utilized by ethno-political discourses to strengthen a sense of “othering”. While religion may play a factor for some, it is not the primary reason one may be radicalized or recruited. Some individuals may feel constrained or uninterested in the limited range of perspectives and interpretations of religion provided by religious institutions and even family. More radical interpretations of religion are readily available in online spaces. Many young people are starting to move away from traditional institutional teachings and older generational leadership, being more in favor of online forms of content or leaders.

How do extremist organizations exploit or collaborate with religious leaders to propel extremist narratives for radicalization?

While a vast majority of religious leaders and actors oppose acts of violence or violent extremism in the name of religion, **there are instances where religious actors serve as perpetrators for violence.** Religious leaders are often successful in having their messaging positively received by an audience - as people are often influenced by people they trust - and they trust religious leaders.

For example, Anwar al-Awlaki was a radical American Muslim cleric of Yemeni descent, who was linked to a series of attacks and plots across the world - from 11 September 2001 to the shootings at Fort Hood, United States in November 2009. Awlaki's overt endorsement of violence as a religious duty in his sermons and on the internet is believed to have inspired new recruits to Islamist

militancy. He incited violence in a number of texts via his website, his Facebook page and many booklets and CDs, including one called "44 Ways to Support Jihad". Such materials have been found in the possession of several convicted English-speaking militants in Canada, the UK and US.



Awlaki with the Al Qaeda flag calling for death to Americans, March 2010 video. Photo Source: 'The Anwar al-Awlaki File.' 2015. National Security Archive. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB529-Anwar-al-Awlaki-File/>.



The cover of *Inspire*, Awlaki's magazine in 2010, with a headline, 'Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom.' Photo Source: 'The Anwar al-Awlaki File.' 2015. National Security Archive. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB529-Anwar-al-Awlaki-File/>.

The Christian Brotherhood in North Macedonia has not shied away from posting threats and making demands through its online channels. For instance, there is an infamous live video posted by Zharko Grozdanovski, the leader of Christian Brotherhood, in which he threatens the Prime Minister of North Macedonia with violence should he prosecute a member of the group.

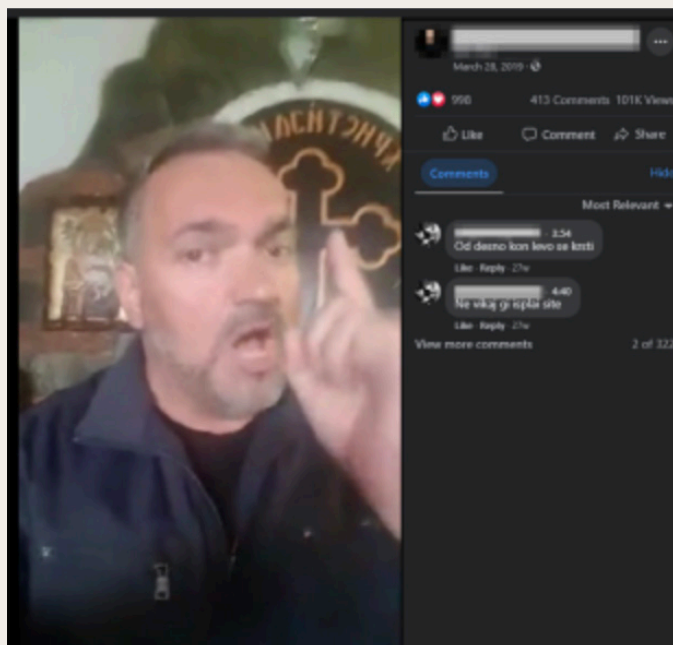


Photo Source: Dukic, Simon. "Online Extremism in North Macedonia." *Strong Cities Network*. 2021. <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Online-Extremism-Mapping-North-Macedonia.pdf>.

PAVE field research confirms that the negative role of traditional media in radicalization extends into cyberspace. Over the last three decades online channels in Tunisia have been contributing to the spread of Salafist movements, including Wahhabism. This research has also found strong instrumentalization of religion in Facebook pages and websites of some political parties and politicians in Tunisia aimed at spreading radical Salafist ideology.

While religion does not always lead to radicalization or terrorism, religious and political discourse by religious actors that take an out-group/in-group approach rather than one with a universalist message of humanity, can exacerbate conflicts. In addition, the presence of online hate speech in public discourse adds to the religious divisions, with religion taken as a layer to add to "othering" and promoting differences between communities.

Here are some other examples of how religion can influence radicalization:

- **Many regions are dominated by majority and minority religious communities - oftentimes creating an 'us versus them' scenario**, with the minority communities unable to safely practice their religion. In turn, this may lead minority communities to turn to online spaces to spread narratives and build momentum towards violence to achieve 'respect' and equality amongst peers and within leadership.
- **Balanced-contextual theology** relates to a theology that takes into consideration local customs, cultures, and traditions. **If users are retaining content that does not synchronize with local context and culture, it can lead to radical beliefs and/or actions.**
- **Religious education may act as a propeller for radicalization.** For instance, the PAVE research noted many children were sent to Saudi Arabia to attend religious-based schools, which in turn were radicalizing children from a young age. In turn, these youth could utilize online spaces to disseminate radical narratives.

Repeated messaging by religious leaders or people of faith may reinforce political or religious ideas and can even alter the thinking of the most indecisive when correctly targeted.

HOWEVER! Religious leaders and actors are often respected leaders in their community and are seen as essential to countering radicalization and violent extremism!

Religious leaders have an important responsibility in promoting resilience to radicalization by becoming positive examples for the community through their moral voice. They can also look to contextualize their teachings to be more relevant to today's society to mitigate public interest in radical religious content in online spaces. Interviews conducted in the framework of the PAVE research also support the argument **that a major factor of community resilience to religious radicalization has been the open-mindedness of religious leaders, who opposed efforts to impose a literal interpretation of religious doctrine.** However, it is important to note that religious leaders and actors may not fully understand their role in the community and/or lack knowledge on how to deal with radicalization and issues related to extremism.

Some positive examples of deradicalization implemented in Kosovo are those of moderate imams disseminating knowledge through lectures published on YouTube, that tackle issues like nation, religious tolerance and patriotism as components of Albanian identity. Such examples found through PAVE fieldwork in Kosovo include the case of Imam Idriz Bilalli, the FolTash (<https://foltash.org>) online portal and the 'Real Jihad' platform. Fol Tash is a platform which has been established by imams, professors of Islamic Studies, and academics of Islamic studies.

The main objective of this platform is related with the new trends of extremism in Kosovo, to protect the Islam from “the danger of radical and extremist elements, foreign ideologies” and to offer the believers alternative sources on how to preach Islam.

The image shows the logo for FOLTASH. The word "FOLTASH" is written in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. Below it, the phrase "platforma pro pages" is written in a smaller, white, cursive script. The entire logo is set against a solid red background.

Photo Source: Foltash. <https://foltash.org>.

What About Policymakers? How do They Support Radicalization and Resilience Factors?

The potential of the internet has become a primary concern for policymakers and tech companies alike, and changed the way in which national security threats are investigated. These entities are increasingly aware of the importance of the internet in radicalization techniques. Major tech firms have been accused of failing to adjust algorithms that accelerate violent extremism and lawmakers have accused executives at social media firms of consistently prioritizing growth and revenue over safety and security. Advocates of direct governmental regulation present a straightforward narrative of companies failing to meet their responsibility to police terrorist content on their platforms, and governments intervening with strict parameters, hefty fines, and legal penalties to force them into compliance.

However, the success and scale of the operations of violent extremist groups is dependent on the financial, physical and ideological support of sympathetic communities. **It is not uncommon for terrorist organizations to obtain support through government supporters.** In addition, religious leaders do not exist in isolation from politics. Many of the leaders are political appointments and are often not an accurate representation of their constituents and beliefs. As such, they may perpetuate a sectarian system that inhibits the social integration of all and continue to suppress diversity of religions, which can lead to corruption and dissemination of harmful rhetoric.

Deradicalization requires effective tools to counter radicalization starting from counter narratives. **Policymakers in MENA and the Western Balkans have yet to formulate an effective policy concerning online deradicalization;**

simply shutting down social networks with radical content or removing such content is not effective. However, it is important for policy makers to acknowledge that they may not always be best positioned to officially disseminate counter narratives. This nuance makes collaboration between policy makers, religious actors and civil society all more critical.

Despite shortcomings, policymakers and governments have strived to support counter-efforts to online radicalization and recruitment. For instance, the government of the United Kingdom created the Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) to coordinate efforts with private sector industries to remove illegal content, from videos of violence with messages of glorification for terrorists to bomb-making instructions. **More than 30 UN member states have created a national action plan to prevent violent extremism.** A majority of these documents contain provisions for governments to combat extremism in all its forms, including in online spaces.



However, additional efforts must be made through regional cooperation between governments and local actors such as NGOs, scholars and journalists must strongly advocate for legal and institutional reforms to be able to tackle extremism, and right-wing extremism (RWE). Advocating for rule of law enforcement should be a priority, such as advocacy for severe punishment of online or in-person violence and incidents by RWE activists, incrimination of the activities and banning of RWE organizations that have the potential for violence. Smaller community-based organizations should be empowered for operational and advocacy activities.

Raising awareness of online risks for extremism is important. Development of online preventive measures by local stakeholders for countering toxic but “borderline” RWE expressions, and more effective countering of fake news and conspiracy theories with straightforward messages and answers, suitable to young and old, are needed.



Additional Resources for Session 1



Digital Technology and Extremist Use

- Aaron Smith and Joanna Brenner, 2012. "Twitter Use 2012," Pew Internet & American Life Project., www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Twitter-Use-2012.aspx.
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SESSION 2: Practical Applications to Construct Effective and Collaborative Counter Narratives to Prevent and Counter Radicalization Rhetoric

Objective

The second session will help you identify elements of an effective alternative or counter narrative campaign and guide you through developing your own.

Expected Results

The expected results of the second session will be that participants will have an introductory understanding on elements of a counter narrative campaign and how to create their own campaign based on their local context.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 2: 3 hours

Agenda

PG. 39 – What Could An Extremist Narrative Look Like?

PG. 42 – How Can We Address Online Radicalization and Recruitment?

PG. 44 – What is Counter or Alternative Messaging and How Can it Be Used to Prevent Radicalization?

PG. 48 – Building a Strategic Campaign

PG. 51 – Guidelines for Creating an Effective Campaign

PG. 53 – Mapping Your Target Audience

PG. 56 – How is Our Target Audience Currently Interacting with Extremist Content?

PG. 58 – How to Craft Your Counter or Alternative Message

PG. 62 – Tactics to Disseminate Your Campaign Messages

PG. 65 – Your Counter or Alternative Narrative Campaign is Launched - Now What?

PG. 66 – Evaluating Your Counter or Alternative Narrative Campaign

PG. 71 – Now It's Your Turn to Make a Counter Narrative Campaign!

Energizer and Review



Suggested Time:
20 minutes

You can start the next session with a quick review of the previous session by highlighting three or four key learnings. Next, begin a group discussion on if they have ever seen an extremist narrative before. What did it look like? If they have not seen an extremist narrative, what do they think one may look like? What could be some defining features of an extremist narrative?



Write down any notes!

What Could An Extremist Narrative Look Like?

Extremist narratives can come in all forms ranging from bias, hate speech, marginalization and polarization. They can also build upon geopolitical and ethno-religious conflicts embedded in a society or region. For example, online extremist propaganda in the Western Balkans exploits and draws on regional narratives and demographics. Many Western Balkans extremist ideologies, have followings across the region that correspond largely with linguistic lines—ethnic Albanian Salafi jihadist clerics from Kosovo also have an influence in Albanian language communities in Albania and North Macedonia, while supremacist Serbian nationalist narratives target Serb populations across Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro. Such regionalized extremist narratives cannot be detached from legacies of conflict and longstanding inter-ethnic tension within the region.

Extremist messages mix ideological, political, moral, religious and social narratives, based on narratives and stories conveyed with one dimensional interpretations of the world and seek to **dehumanize the ‘enemy’** by diminishing human rights.



What themes could extremists’ narratives center around look like?

- **Duty:** You have a duty to protect, avenge, stand up for, defend those ‘on your side’, whether on humanitarian or religious grounds.
- **Victimhood:** You, your family and friends are the victims of an aggressor or wider conspiracy, and you need to do something to stand up to it. Religious Reward: God rewards those who fulfill their obligation to defend their religion and fellow believers.
- **Identity:** You need to join the group to find where you really belong. You can become a part of our family.
- **Creating Purpose:** Your day-to-day life is meaningless, so you need to find that meaning by joining our group.
- **Adventure:** Joining up is fun, you will have access to weapons you can’t get and have exciting opportunities you want in your life.

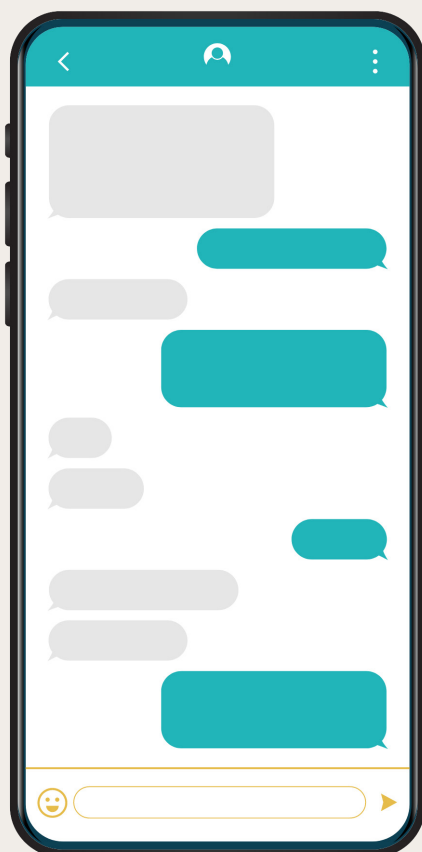
When selecting a counter narrative message, it is important to understand the messaging tactics of an extremist group. For example, a consultation hosted by Hedayah and the International Center for Counter Terrorism explored narratives of extremism. The Al-Qaeda narrative tends to include messaging that:

1. That a cherished world is under threat;
2. It is obligatory to defend that world from contamination;
3. That the threat has reached a critical point or crisis;
4. That violence is the only way to overcome the threat/contamination;
5. That action is obligatory according to Islam;
6. That those fighting for the cherished world will receive a heavenly reward for doing so.

We can also look at the ISIS narrative, which uses strong emotional messages, carried out through posting photos on Twitter and in Dabiq of their perceived successes and the atrocities of its enemies. ISIS has also developed a strategy for responding quickly to current events and using social media to recruit and radicalize. ISIS uses the Twitter app called the “Dawn of Glad Tidings” to inform its followers on the latest news of the group, and more importantly, create a synchronized Twitter counter narrative includes a framework for CVE in which designs counter and positive narrative campaigns through user accounts that are capable of sending thousands of tweets controlled by one or two media managers into cyberspace in an instant. This means that ISIS has mastered the ability to get the message out quickly, and with very little effort.

To inspire and radicalize, extremists draw on common propaganda techniques, including:

- **Bandwagon:** Encouraging their targets to fit in with the crowd;
- **Scapegoating:** Blaming problems on a particular group;
- **Offering a “Choice”:** Convincing targets that the “choice” being offered is the only rational one;
- **Affirmation:** Presenting information as a fact when it is really open to interpretation;
- **Transference:** Applying feelings or views about one issue to another issue; and
- **Omission:** Leaving out facts that would otherwise radically change the meaning of the message.



Narratives and Counter Narratives Exercise



Suggested Time:
30 minutes

Aim:

- To think through the arguments that extremist groupings make in support of their actions and to articulate a response.

Materials:

- None

Purpose of Exercise:

- This activity enables groups to explore the narratives that influence particular extremist groupings and to find ways to challenge destructive content.

Start the Activity:

- Split the group into smaller groups of four to five young people. Ask each group to think about a particular ideology or 'framing story' that might influence extremist actions – such as, violence in support of environmentalism, animal rights, or White Pride. Prepare the position taken by this extremist view, together with the accompanying narrative.
- Example statements may include:
 - People who experiment on animals should have the same done to them!
 - These foreigners are taking our jobs and our country; they should all be kicked out!
- Then ask each group to prepare an alternative narrative that can be used in response.
- Example statements may include:
 - Any kind of violence towards others makes us lose our compassion and humanity.
 - All of us have more in common than we realize, there is only one human race and we need to work together to overcome problems like unemployment and poverty.
- Ask two people from each group to present the ideas that have been prepared as a conversation between two people each taking the opposing position.
- Take time for a group reflection and debriefing on the activity:
 - What have you learned as a result of working on this activity?

How Can We Address Online Radicalization and Recruitment?

In response to prolific and successful Internet and social media mediated propaganda campaigns used by extremist and far-right groups around the world, international and intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union, as well as numerous civil society organizations are increasingly encouraging stakeholders to utilize both alternative and counter narratives as crucial tools in preventing and countering violent extremism.

As outlined by a report for the Directorate General for Internal Policies at the European Commission, there are four key trends in current efforts to tackle terrorist propaganda:

■ **Disruption of propaganda distribution:**

The key objective is to interfere with the distribution of propaganda. In short, trying to stop propaganda at the source by preventing it from reaching its target audience. This has focused on taking down propaganda from social media and deleting offending accounts.

- **Redirect method:** Rather than erasing propaganda, this approach seeks to redirect viewers to different messages in an attempt to ‘nudge’ their behavior. Pioneered by Jigsaw and Moonshot CVE tactics, this project redirects those searching for jihadist material to counter messaging.

- **Campaign and message design:** These projects seek to provide information and skills to civil society organizations to develop communication campaigns, typically based on counter narrative or alternative narrative approaches. Whilst disruption seeks to stop the spread of propaganda, this approach seeks to enable civil society organizations with the skills to confront and undermine the propaganda.

■ **Government communications and synchronization of message and action:**

There is a tendency for communication campaigns to be designed in a vacuum, disconnected from events in real life. Synchronization approaches take a comprehensive perspective and aim to link messages and actions, and to coordinate messaging across government and with international partners. The strength of these approaches is to prevent the undermining of a narrative by exposing its ‘say-do-gap’, through ensuring message and actions are aligned, and through limiting contradictory messaging.



Counterterrorism and countering violent extremism strategic communications efforts across various programs and initiatives can be informed by the following recommendations:

1. Disruption of violent extremist material needs to be applied comprehensively and across multiple platforms, in order to avoid displacing terrorist messaging activity between channels. The vacuum created by disruption needs to be filled with a series of messages designed to leverage a range of motivational drivers, in order to resonate with a target audience subject to varying motivations and in order to have a reinforcing cumulative effect on that audience.

2. To ensure coherent messaging over the short, medium and long term, campaign and message design principles need to be synchronized through the establishment of a clear and simple-to-understand, overarching central narrative, which is supported by a thematically diverse array of messages.

3. A clear identification of the target audience is vital to effective strategic communications, taking into account a spectrum of potential consumers of the message (intended, unintended, supporters, adversaries and neutrals). A nuanced behavioral and attitudinal understanding of that audience is needed to persuasively shape attitudes and behaviors.

4. Measuring the efficacy of strategic communications requires assessments that focus on measures of strategic literacy, technical literacy and target audience. These assessments need to be initially performed prior to the commencement of a strategic communications effort in order to establish a

baseline measure. Once the baseline metrics are established, these assessments need to be regularly implemented as a means to gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of the campaign over time.

5. In order to gain trust, credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of a target audience, messaging needs to be synchronized with activities on the ground, thereby reducing the perceived disparity between what one says and does (the ‘say-do gap’).



Photo Source: Ingram, H. J. and A. Reed. “Lessons from History for Counter-Terrorism Strategic Communications”, *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* 7, no. 4 (2016).

There are three important levels at which such communications take place – macro, mezzo, and micro – referring to the scope of the message being delivered, each with a specific set of considerations. **Macro-level considerations** include the reach, relevance, and resonance of the message, while at the mezzo level, one must consider the specific medium, messenger, and the format of the message. Finally, at the **micro level**, considerations must be made relating to the design of the specific message itself.

What is Counter or Alternative Messaging and How Can it Be Used to Prevent Radicalization?

The term ‘**counter-messaging**’ has come to be used in relation to a wide range of communication activities. This can include everything from public diplomacy and strategic communications by governments to targeted campaigns to discredit the ideologies and actions of violent extremists by civil society. For the purpose of this module, we are going to look at government strategic narratives, alternative narratives and counter narratives.

■ **Government Strategic Communications** are led by government employees and exist to present government policy and strategy in a positive light; this may take the form of a public awareness campaign.

■ **Alternative Narratives**, which are undertaken by either government or civil society, aim to present a new narrative, rather than engaging on the same terms as the extremist content. This may include stories relating to diversity, or tolerance, or social values.

■ **Counter Narratives**, which are best used by civil society, directly tackle an extremist narrative in an attempt to discredit violent extremists’ messages.

WHAT	WHY	HOW	WHO
Government Strategic Communications	Action to get the message out about what government is doing, including public awareness activities	Raise awareness, forge relationships with key constituencies and audiences, and correct misinformation	Government
Alternative Narratives	Undercut violent extremist narratives by focusing on what we are ‘for’ rather than ‘against’	Positive story about social values, tolerance, openness, freedom and democracy	Civil Society or Government
Counter Narratives	Directly deconstruct, discredit, and demystify violent extremist messaging	Challenge through ideology, logic, fact, or humor	Civil society

Source: Rachel Briggs and Sebastian Feve, "Review of programs to counter narratives of violent extremism: What works and what are the implications for government?" Institute for Strategic Dialogue, (2013)

Lets dig deeper:

Alternative Narratives are used to undercut violent extremist narratives by focusing on what we as society are “for” rather than “against.” By using this type of messaging, you are not directly challenging extremist messaging, rather influencing those who might be sympathetic towards a cause or increase social cohesion through emphasizing commonality and inclusion.

For example, the Extremely EUnited campaign (<https://www.extremelyeunited.eu/extremely-critical/>) targets the critical thinking skills of young people through videos, podcasts, art and other tools. ‘I am a Full-Right Human Being,’ video produced for the campaign encourages youth to change their perspective and see how viewing things differently can change their outlook on life. The video showcases different perspectives of youth in Hungary about acceptance, diversity and inclusivity. Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmRxzsrmlSo>.



Source: Extremely EUnited. “I Am a Full-Right Human Being.” June 16, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmRxzsrmlSo>.

Notice! **This campaign does not say anything about violent extremism - but it does help youth to enhance their critical thinking skills** to foster social cohesion and ultimately, prevent hate speech and even radicalization.

Counter Narratives, on the other hand, are used to directly deconstruct, discredit and demystify violent extremist messaging. This can include utilizing messaging that challenges through ideology, logic, fact or humor. By using this messaging, you are creating doubt amongst at-risk audiences who are seeking out or viewing extremist content online.

As shared by Hedayah and the International Center for Counter-Terrorism, narratives can challenge the beliefs and actions in a variety of ways:

Strategic Counter Narratives

Strategic counter narratives for broad audiences may be useful for governments or large, multilateral organizations wishing to condemn violent extremists and their efforts. However, participants also noted that, while strategic counter narratives are often a necessary response to a crisis or an attack, these narratives are not necessarily intended on reaching the individuals that are already supporting Al-Qaeda and similar organizations.

Ethical Counter Narratives

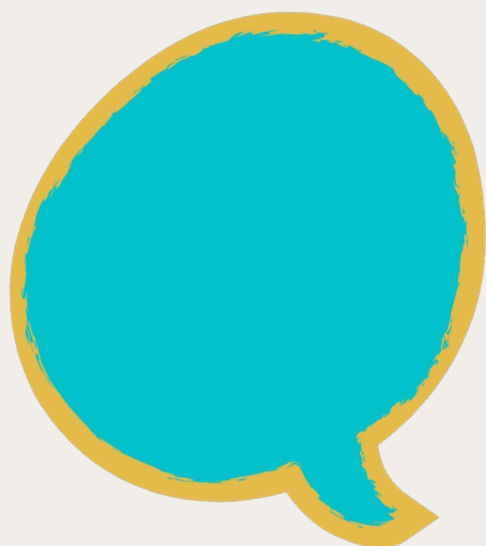
These types of narratives point out that violent action is not a moral way of achieving aims. They may be useful if the messenger has ethical or moral influence over the target audience. These arguments may not be religious in nature, but rather point out the commonalities between all humans, and call for a better cooperation between all nations and peoples.

Ideological and Religious Counter Narratives

This type of counter narratives may be useful if the messenger has religious authority in the target community. In the case of Al-Qaeda, this includes Islamic scholars, imams and community-based religious leaders. Participants noted that governments making religious arguments, especially Western governments, can be counter-productive, and the (credibility of the) messenger is especially important in this case.

Tactical Counter Narratives

Tactical counternarratives are those that emphasize that violence in the long run is often less effective when compared to more peaceful methods, and not useful to an organizations' overall reputation and objectives. This type of narrative can be used by a variety of messengers, including governments and community-based organizations. The main obstacle to success for this type of narratives is in providing an alternative that still allows for the individual, group or organization to potentially achieve their goals in a non-violent way.



Humor and Sarcasm

Humor and sarcasm may be useful in delegitimizing the narrative of violent extremists in certain instances. Participants gave the example of the film *Four Lions* as a pop-culture way of delegitimizing the violent extremist narrative through humor. However, it was also mentioned that there had been little work done in terms of assessing the impact of that film or how it was received by the public through a CVE lens. It was also suggested that using humor may not reach the intended target audience, and only reinforce the absurdity of terrorism to the general public that already does not support Al-Qaeda and similar organizations.

Other uses of counter narrative campaigns could include:

- **Highlighting how extremist activities negatively impact the people** they claim to represent - including women, youth and other vulnerable communities.
- **Demonstrating the hypocrisy of extremist groups** and how their actions are often inconsistent with their own stated beliefs.
- **Identifying factual inaccuracies used in extremist propaganda** and countering the misinformation with accurate information.

Let's look at an example of a counter narrative campaign:

The 'Operation Trojan T-Shirt' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSlbsHKEP-8%20>) campaign in Germany sought to eliminate peer influence and encourage engagement with another narrative. In 2011, members of EXIT Deutschland (<https://www.exit-deutschland.de/>), an anti-Nazi organization in Germany devoted to helping Germans "get out of the scene," went undercover at a far-right music festival run by Germany's right-wing National Democratic Party. Members of EXIT Deutschland dressed to blend in and handed out 250 of what appeared to be hardcore T-shirts that read, "Hardcore Rebels. National and Free." However, once the shirts were washed, the message changed to read, "If your T-Shirt can do it, so can you. We will help you break with right-wing extremism," and included a contact number for EXIT Deutschland. Find out more about the campaign here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSlbsHKEP-8>.



Source: EXIT-Deutschland. "OPS // Trojan T-Shirt." March 30, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSlbsHKEP-8>

Building a Strategic Campaign

When thinking about the right approach for your campaign, ask yourself three questions:

1. What is the **intent and purpose** of that strategy?
2. How is that particular strategy **being synchronized** with other efforts?
3. What is the **strategic logic** underpinning that approach and what are its **implications for practitioner mentality and team culture?**

Also consider what your messaging goal intends to achieve.

Are you trying to:

1. **Deter** individuals from exploiting digital platforms to inflict harm and committing acts of violent extremism.
2. **Intervene** with individuals who may pose a risk of violent extremism and encourage them to disengage.
3. **Prevent** individuals from joining violent extremism groups and address the push and pull factors.
4. **Build primary resilience** to violent extremism radicalization.
5. **Empower bystanders** to prevent or counter violent extremism.



Strong alternative or counter narrative campaigns are underscored by the development of key skills within vulnerable communities, which include:

- **Critical consumption skills**, which help vulnerable communities to recognize and understand the use of propaganda techniques online;
- **Digital literacy skills**, which help vulnerable communities to understand how the Internet works, how search engine results are generated, and how to use various online tools to refine their searches;
- **Media literacy skills**, which allows vulnerable communities to question the intent of the media and protect themselves from any negative influence or response to media engagement; and
- **Interpretation of extremist narratives** to help those most at risk to understand the narrative techniques used by extremists and how to see through them.

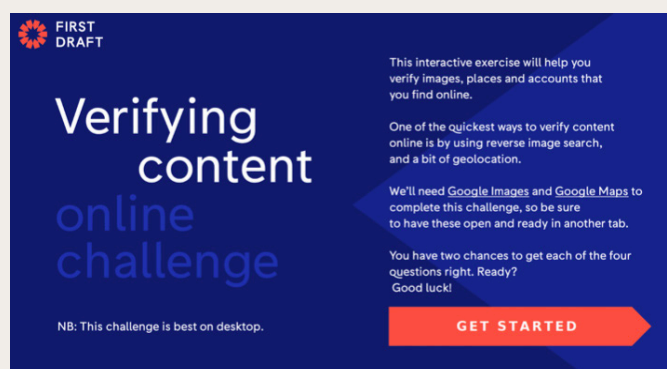
The PAVE project demonstrated an interconnected relationship between education and social media peer-group radicalization. Education and media literacy are seen as the overarching factor that hinders progress in addressing online peer-group radicalization. Therefore, in understanding the nuances of vulnerability, PAVE researchers identified education, including media literacy, as a pillar for community resilience. This includes increasing programming to develop critical thinking skills among school students to decrease vulnerability.

Strong alternative or counter narrative campaigns must also recognize and address misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation is false information, but not created or shared with the intention of causing harm. Disinformation is information that is deliberately created to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, social group, organization, or country. For example, a lot of misinformation takes place through rumors. Rumors can take the form of fake news that spreads quickly on social media. When you hear or read a rumor that sounds true enough, you might send it along without double-checking if it's real, but you were not trying to cause harm. While those who knowingly spread rumors are sharing misinformation, those who start the rumors (or spread them with malicious intent) are guilty of providing disinformation. Whether the rumor takes place in a school or on the internet - if you know it's not true and you say it anyway, it's disinformation.

Misinformation and disinformation can spread fast, with adverse reactions that can impact communities. Here are seven items consider before sharing information:

- **Consider the Source:** Is this a well-known or trusted news outlet, and are they reputable for the subject at hand?
- **Triple Check the Source:** Check the name, logo, and “About” section to verify.
- **Identify the Author:** Misleading and false articles often do not include authors. If authors are listed, do a quick search to see if they are trusted sources.
- **Inspect the URL:** Web Pages that notoriously spread disinformation often have odd web domain names that try to imitate real sources (Example of an incorrect website address: peacemakersnetwork.com.co)

- **Examine Spelling and Punctuation:** Webpages with misspelled words, unnecessary ALL CAPS, poor grammar, and excessive punctuation are often unreliable.
- **Seek Alternative Viewpoints:** Search for other articles and sources on the same topic. If there are limited or no results, or you find contradicting information, you may want to do further research and fact-checking.
- **Think Before You Share:** Damaging disinformation spreads quickly via shared posts. Emotional and sensitive topics are often used to manipulate readers into sharing without thinking. Review the above steps.



Source: First Draft. “Verifying Content, Online Language.” https://ftp.firstdraftnews.org/articulate/temp/ovcR/story_html5.html

By empowering people to become proactive and critical consumers of information, communities are able to limit the impact that violent extremist narrative can have, thus limiting the capacity of violent extremists to recruit effectively from within the community.

Fighting Fake News Exercise



Fighting Fake News

1. Ask participants to share potential consequences when fake news goes viral?

Do you think you could spot fake news or would you be fooled? Why or why not?

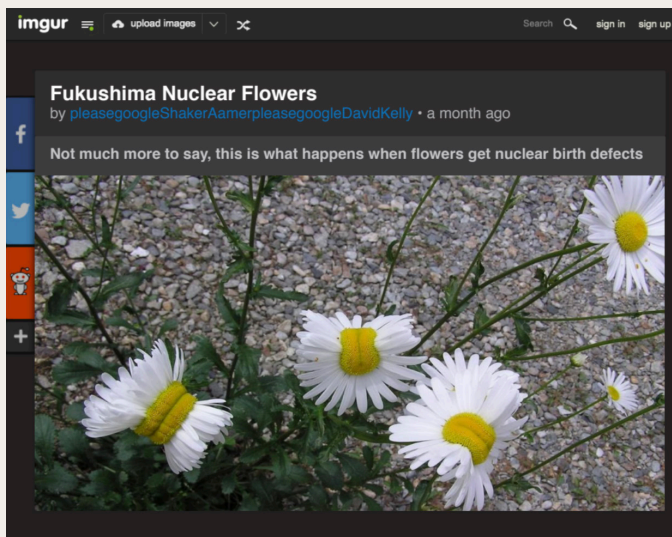
2. Next, read the following prompt and share the following photo:

On March 11, 2011, there was a large nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. This image was posted on Imgur, a photo sharing website, in July 2015.

b. Guide the students to the questions they should be asking themselves about the photo.

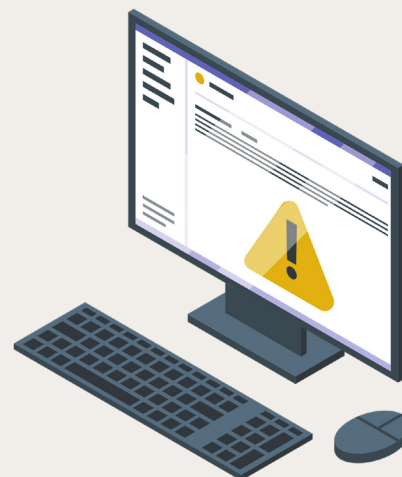
c. Make a list of reasons why this image shouldn't be trusted to confirm Fukushima nuclear contamination. (Ex: We don't know the photographer's credentials, there is no way of knowing if the daisies are near the power plant or if radiation caused the mutations or even if the photo was taken in Japan!)

4. **Debrief the experience** by revealing that less than 20% of the high school students in a study by Stanford University could fully evaluate the image or come up with the above list. Remind students that many fake images and news stories exist online. Ask: What will you do next time? What will you do every time?



3. Ask the participants if they saw this image online, is this enough to convince them that there really was an explosion near the Fukushima plant? Or do they need additional information? How do you know either way?

a. Primed by the topic, students may say the image is faked or altered. In fact, the image is not altered, according to Snopes. The daisies really look like that.



Robinson, R. Lesson Plan: Fighting Fake News. The Lowdown. <https://cdn.kqed.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2016/12/Fake-news-lesson-plan.pdf>.

Guidelines for Creating an Effective Campaign



Knowing how to set communication goals and objectives in your strategic planning is vital because it enables you to prove their tangible value. Let's look at using the **GAMMMA+ Model¹** to measure, monitor and evaluate the impact of an online counter or alternative narrative messages. This model was developed by Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) and focuses on six elements of a successful campaign: **Goal, Audience, Message, Messenger, Media, and Action.**

RAN GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE AND COUNTER-NARRATIVE CAMPAIGNS (GAMMMA+)
G - Goal
A - Audience
M - Message
M - Messenger
M - Media
A - Action
+

Photo Source: *Effective Narratives: Updating the GAMMMA+ model.* (19 December 2019). RAN Network. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-12/ran_cn_academy_creating_implementing_effective_campaigns_brussels_14-15112019_en.pdf.

¹ Ritzmann, A. (31 December 2017). *RAN guidelines for effective alternative and counter narrative campaigns (GAMMMA+).* RAN Network. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/ran_cn_guidelines_effective_alternative_counter_narrative_campaigns_31_12_2017_en.pdf

Goal: What do you really want to achieve? When planning a campaign, you must be clear about precisely what you wish to achieve. You cannot measure success if you are not certain what your success should look like. Reminder, goals that cannot be measured are visions.

Audience: Who do you really want to reach out to? Having a detailed understanding of your target audience will be the key to your success. Most groups, communities or milieus have their own 'language', narratives, signs and subcultures. Interventions need to be based on an understanding of what your audience cares about, how and where they communicate with each other, and why they would react to your campaign.

Message: What are you talking about? Your aim is to stimulate people's thoughts and feelings, and maybe even elicit a shift in their opinions and behavior. Your narrative needs to resonate with the target audience. There is a lot of online content already, why would they want to listen to your message? Your message has to pull people in, and make people think 'This makes sense to me' or 'I want to do that.' Having an in-depth understanding of your target audience will allow you to create messages that address issues people feel strongly about, from a different angle.

Messenger: Who will speak for you? People are more likely to listen to someone they can relate to. There are many potential messengers considered credible by a specific target audience: youth, trusted community leaders, such as religious leaders, family members, former extremists, celebrities or influencers, or community peers. Your target audience determines who is credible for them.

Media: How can you reach your audience? To reach your target audience directly, you need to know which media or other means they use to communicate with each other and how they receive information. Directing your target audience to your preferred platform is an option, but it is much more effective to address them where they are.

Action: What do you want your audience to do? Your campaign should offer concrete calls to action to channel emotions and ideas into productive measures. Learn about what key issues your audience cares about and tailor from there. Call to actions could include buzz words such as “donate,” “volunteer,” “talk to a peer,” to name a few.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Is your campaign effective? Including monitoring and evaluation from the start will be of benefit in a number of ways. It will allow you to adjust and improve your campaign, based on the feedback and data you collect. Moreover, you will be able to demonstrate the reach, performance and impact of your campaign to third parties. This may be key when you apply for funding or seek to convince stakeholders to scale up your campaign.



Mapping Your Target Audience

In order to map your target audience for your campaign, you must first examine the possible stakeholders. A **stakeholder is a person or entity with an interest or concern in an issue area.** The prevention of terrorism is a shared responsibility among individuals and communities at all levels. Stakeholders may help to drive attention to your campaign, offer advice, disseminate messages or just be an ally in advancing your goals and objectives.

So, who could be a stakeholder?

- **Formerly radicalized individuals, or ‘formers.’** Formers can be credible messengers for a counter or alternative narrative campaign. ‘Formers’ are often well placed to discredit extremist propaganda, prevent radicalization, contribute to disengagement and deradicalization, and through reliance-building, support those who chose to leave a violent extremist movement.
- **Informal actors, such as family members, friends and neighbors.** Individuals at risk of radicalization, or who are already radicalized, tend to receive messages better when they come from people from their direct social environment. Therefore, informal actors can be credible messengers for counter- and alternative narratives.



- **Local communities.** There is a wide acceptance amongst P/CVE practitioners that building meaningful relationships with local communities and working together on the problem is important. Not only online advertisements and political campaigns, for example, but also violent extremists are using more and more localized approaches. Where violent extremists try to exploit local vulnerabilities, efforts to counter or prevent this should try to leverage local resilience and fill the gaps where they are found.
- **The voices of victims of terrorism.** Their voices can be a powerful alternative to extremist narratives.
- **The media.** The media plays a big role in the communication of a certain narrative, especially after a highly sensitive moment like a terrorist attack.

It is important to also consider your stakeholders familiarity with the topic and the ability to communicate without inadvertently producing unintended consequences for your campaign. For instance, ‘media’ can be a strong stakeholder that can help to create more external awareness around your campaign or messaging. However, **PAVE research found that the media had been prone to incite radicalization through misinformation, poor editorial practices and sensational reporting.** It is important to provide sensitivity training to mitigate any unintentional consequences.

Take a moment to think about who else in your community may be best positioned to champion your work!

After considering who your possible stakeholders are, you can then decide on who your target audience will be. For instance, people who you want to leave extremist organizations are very different from people who you want to prevent from joining extremist organizations. Think about those in communities that may identify as vulnerable to violent extremism. These communities could be geographically based (i.e. a local community in a country), or globally based (i.e. online, social media etc.). Don't forget that communities might also include those who feel connected to a war or conflict in a foreign country, regardless of the individuals' country of origin or nationality.

Identifying the right target audience for a counter or alternative narrative campaign is the first important consideration. For example, you might want to:

- **Create a preventative campaign educating a broader audience.** This could be targeted at parents, teachers, religious leaders or other members of civil society.
- **Reach a more specific age or gender group,** such as young women aged 18-25, or teenagers aged 14-18 who are actively watching or searching for extremist content online.
- **Influence members of online extremist groups or followers** of known extremist accounts to deter from viewing and engaging with the content.

Campaigns can attempt to reach more than one audience; however, it is important not to be too ambitious and try to reach everyone. Be as specific as possible when thinking about exactly who the right audience is. Once you have identified your target audience, you need to conduct a basic mapping to learn a bit more about them in order to craft and disseminate the most impactful messaging.

Questions to Consider:

- Does my target audience fall under the "**upstream**," "**midstream**," "**downstream**," or "**bystander**" approach?

- Where does your audience **spend their time** (both online and offline)?

■ What do they **value**, or what do they see as morally good?

■ How do they **communicate**, or how do they use language?

■ Who do they **respect**, or who else influences them?

■ Which campaigns are they **already involved in**?

■ Which campaigns are already **targeting them**?

After identifying who your stakeholders and primary audience are, it is critical to think about who you should be partnering with to make your campaign as impactful and effective as possible within your community. It is only through engaging all of society that we can effectively eliminate radicalization. Policy makers, faith leaders and institutions and civil society are three key groups that can play an imperative role to develop and implement a campaign. Remember, a multi-stakeholder approach is more likely to be effective and sustainable if the stakeholders involved have a common understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities and acknowledge their own strengths and limitations. Such an approach can bring together the entities and expertise necessary to effectively address the availability and accessibility of violent extremist and terrorist content on the Internet.

How is Our Target Audience Currently Interacting with Extremist Content?

Your target audience's engagement with extremist content may vary. Some may be an active online user and regularly engage with extremist content, while some may have never come in contact with it. After understanding their level of engagement, you can identify in which your audience falls under the four following categories. Understanding where your target audience is positioned in relation to extremist narratives and recruitment tactics will help you determine the best message and delivery approach to reach your intended goal.

Upstream: Upstream approaches are generally preventative and aimed at a broader audience. This can include building resilience to a violent extremist narrative or promoting social norms, such as the value of collective human identity. They can also focus on raising awareness or addressing widely-held grievances. For example, EXIT U.K.'s creation of short video stories addressed how day-to-day deprivations and grievances can be compounded and preyed upon by radical right extremist organizations.

Midstream: Midstream approaches aim at a narrower group of individuals, typically those who are more at risk of radicalization, but not yet recruited to a violent extremist organization or radicalized violence. Methods within this approach include addressing vulnerabilities, building resilience, providing alternative narratives and pathways and undermining confidence in the group, ideology and its leaders. Example: Nigeria United Football team hosted a Facebook and offline campaign in Maiduguri for those vulnerable to Boko Haram recruitment. The campaign showcased Muslim and Christian cooperation through football and facilitating football activities.

Downstream: Downstream approaches aim to directly rebut, refute or counter narratives of violent extremism or terrorist groups. They also aim to counter the justification, incitement, or glorification of terrorist acts. Multiple downstream campaigns have encouraged engagement with disengagement services.



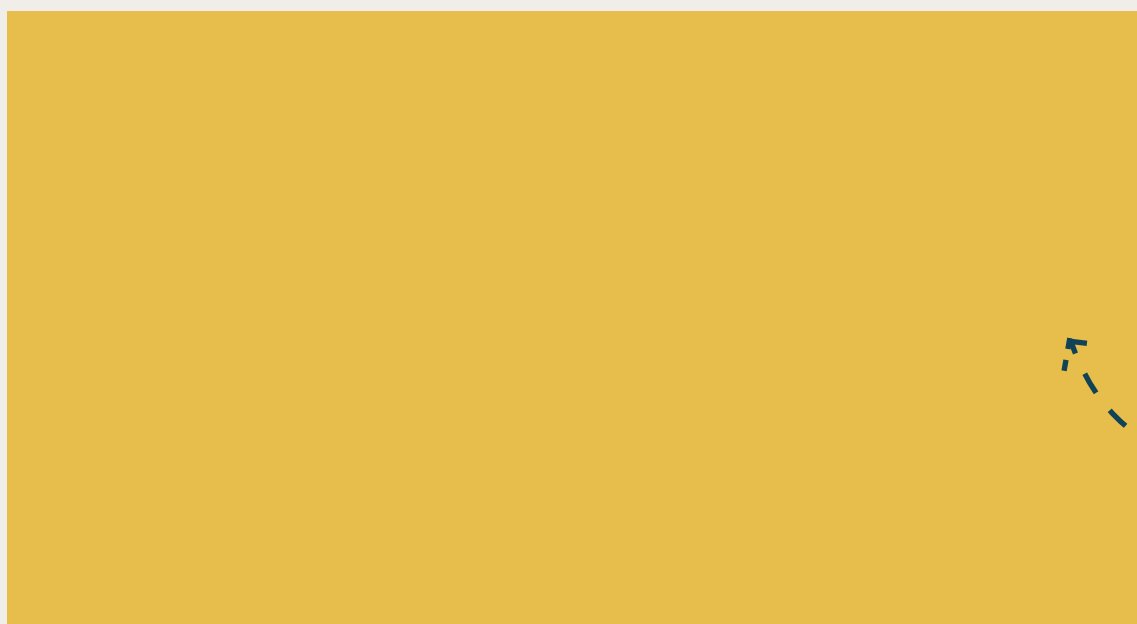
De-escalation: the user journey

How our digital campaigns sought to counter and reduce the threat of election-related violence.



Example of Downstream Communication. Photo source: Moonshot, January 2021. "From Shitposting to Sedition." <https://moonshotteam.com/resource/from-shitposting-to-sedition-2020-us-elections-report/>

Bystanders: Campaigns can also target the peer network or broader community (bystanders) that surrounds at-risk individuals. The aim is generally to encourage bystander interventions on an individual believed to be at risk of radicalization and/or recruitment. For example, the Stabilization Network Women in Syria Program CVE created online communities and spaces for vulnerable individuals and bystanders to interact safely within. The Stabilization Network's Women in Syria Program created such a community which aimed to solidify an online community that was resilient to extremism and challenged some of the gender stereotypes found in extremist messaging. This group was highly active with up to 1000+ of user generated media per month. Having traditionally been left out of discussions about how to combat extremism, women reported feeling more confident in intervening to protect their children from violent extremist manipulation. As the content is user generated, these kinds of online communities are sustainable once the initial campaign has run its course.



Who is your target audience and how are they currently interacting with extremist content?

How to Craft Your Counter or Alternative Message

Once you've decided on your target audience and understand where they spend time, **you need to craft a message that will best resonate with them - a message with a purpose!** Whatever narrative you decide to use, make sure that you are able to make your message persuasive to help change or influence attitudes. In order to be successful, keep in mind that **you are not talking TO your audience, rather, you are engaging WITH.**

No one wants to be told what to do or feel like they are being lectured or antagonized. People want to feel as though they are in a space to engage in dialogue and their own critical thinking. For example, creating a message that says “your belief is wrong” or “engaging with extremists is bad” without offering a positive alternative or a well-thought-out explanation is unlikely to have a strong or lasting impact. **Consider also how you want your audience to react.** Do you want them to see the message and personally reflect or bring awareness to a cause or issue? For instance, strategic messaging on social media communicated to the rest of the world what was happening on the ground during the Arab Spring uprisings. Or do you want your message to convey a “call to action”. **A call to action asks audiences to do something immediately in response to your message and makes it clear why it is important.** This could be as simple as getting them to share a video, sign a petition, or get involved more directly in the campaign or cause. Calls to action should be creative but also realistic.

For example, the Hours Against Hate was a US State Department-led campaign that aims to promote pluralism across society through offline social activism and online awareness-raising. The campaign urges youth to volunteer their time by pledging one hour to do something for someone different to them and encouraging others to do the same.

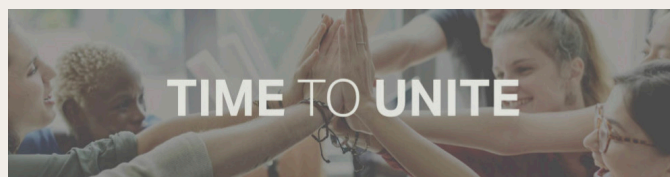
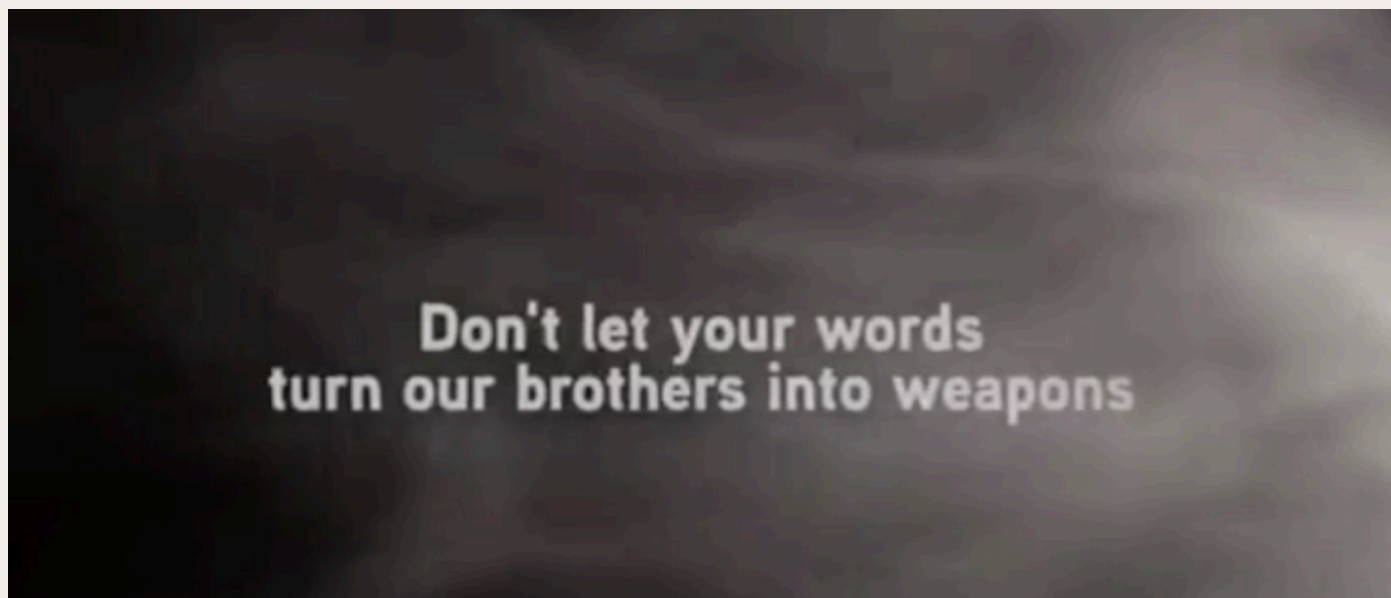


Photo Source: Hours Against Hate. <https://www.hoursagainsthate.com/>.

So, what elements could your message include?

- **Facts from credible sources** to deconstruct, discredit and demystify extremist messages. This can include using community, religious, political or other influencers who are trusted by your target audience to share or reiterate the facts.
- **Emotional appeals** highlighting the impact of extremism and violence. For example, **#NotAnotherBrother** was a counter-speech campaign aimed to reach potential foreign terrorist fighters, and their networks, in order to dissuade from extremism and terrorism by challenging ISIS' utopia narrative.

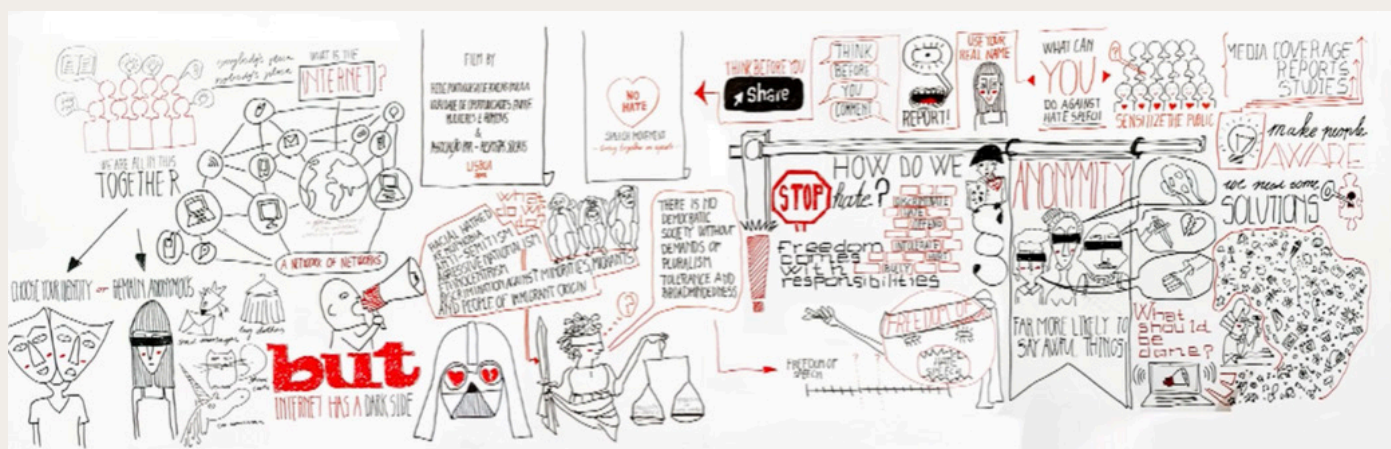
You can find the campaign video here: <https://youtu.be/ljIQ0ctzyZE>.



Source: Not Another Brother. “#NotAnotherBrother.” August 3, 2015. <https://youtu.be/ljIQ0ctzyZE>

Satire and humor to deglamorize and undermine the rebellious appeal of extremist groups. For example, a project in Portugal under the name “No Hate Ninja’s” produced a five-minute video: “No Hate Ninja Project – A Story About Cats, Unicorns and Hate Speech”, explaining why hate speech spreads so easily online and why that is a problem.

You can find the campaign video here: <https://www.coe.int/web/no-hate-campaign/videos1>.



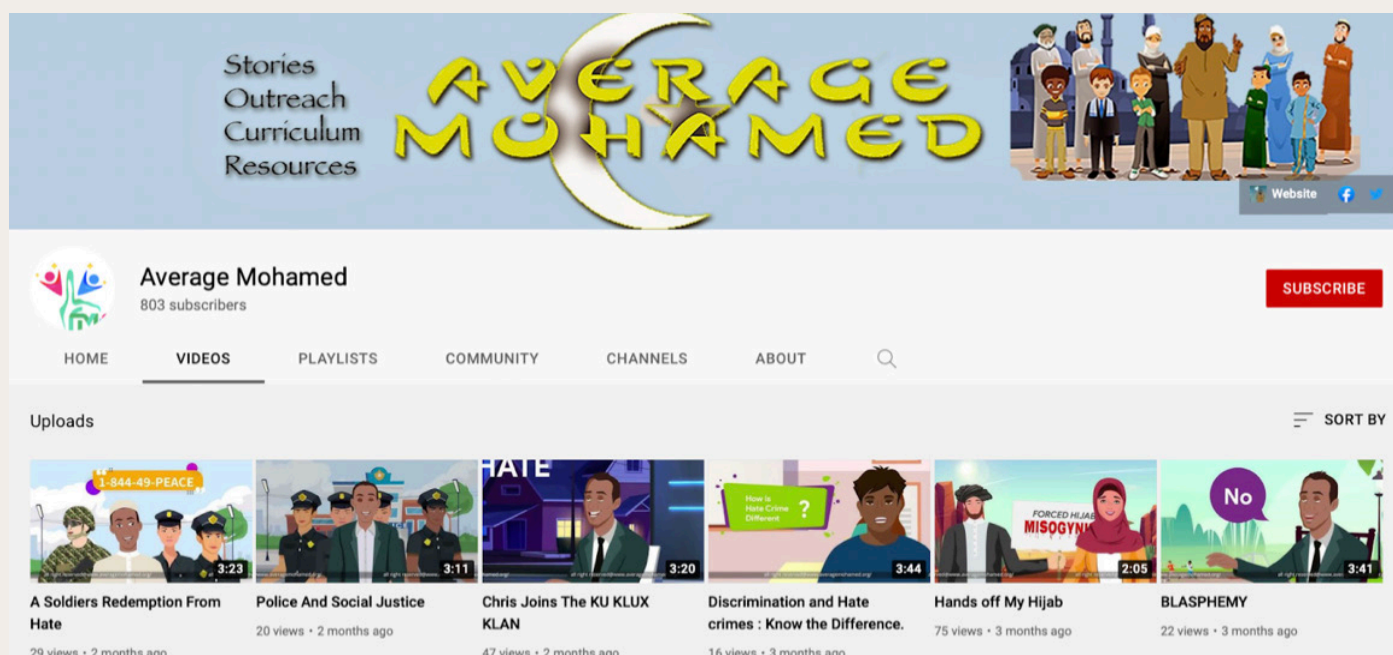
Source: Council of Europe. “Ninja Project.” <https://www.coe.int/web/no-hate-campaign/videos1>.

Positive stories and messages from people within your audience, or for whom the audience admires.

This can include emphasizing positive values such as diversity and acceptance. For example, average Mohammed is an animated video campaign created by Mohamed Amin Ahmed, a Somali-American living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The short cartoons are targeted to young Muslims in order to build resilience early and counteract the narratives of Islamic extremism. The videos cover a wide range of topics including violent extremism, identity, religious tolerance, and being Muslim in the West.

You can find the campaign video series here:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/AverageMohamedForPeace/videos>.



Source: Average Mohamed. “Stories Outreach Curriculum Resources.” <https://www.youtube.com/c/AverageMohamedForPeace/videos>.

Question for Participants:

In reflecting on all of the videos, which of these tactics resonated with you most - either using emotional appeals, humor or positive messaging? Why may some of these appeals be stronger to use than others?

Write
down your
thoughts!

A large, solid yellow rectangular area intended for participants to write their thoughts in response to the question.

Tactics to Disseminate Your Campaign Messages

Now that you have identified your target audience and thought about how you will craft your message, we need to determine the best way to **amplify your message to your target audiences**. From your research, you should already know where your audience spends their time online and offline and how they consume information. **Remember, audiences will not come to you - you need to go to them.** Make sure you are making it easy for them to see your campaign.

A counter or alternative narrative campaign could come from one or more mediums. Examples include:

- **Videos:** Short films or animations
- **Text:** Slogans or hashtags
- **Audio:** Podcasts or interviews
- **Images:** Photos or memes
- **Online content:** Social media posts, blogs, petitions or opinion pieces
- **All forms of art or creative expression**

Question to Participants:

Have you seen any other creative mechanisms or campaigns that you found to be creative and impactful?

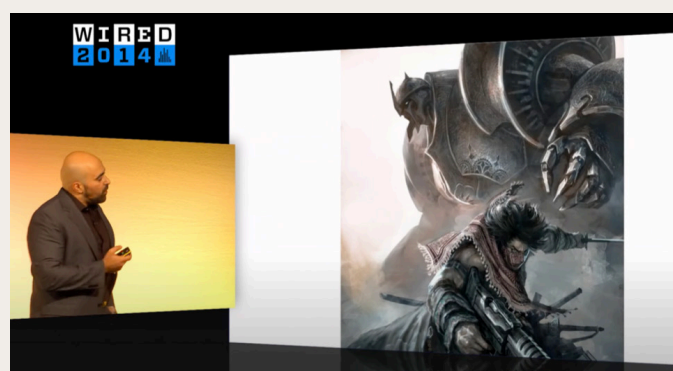


Write down your thoughts!

GET CREATIVE!

For example, through comic books! Suleiman Bahkit is the creator of “Hero Factor,” a graphic novel about fighting terrorism. It competes with terrorist propaganda for its young audience’s attention. Terrorists often emphasize adventure, heroism, identity and history as tools of recruitment, as they know these are appealing factors to many young people. Suleiman Bahkit is also using these, but instead to fight extremism. “The number one reason that terrorists join a cause is to be heroes in their life. They want to matter, they want to be part of something bigger than themselves,” Bahkit says. “The only way to counter this is with stories that feature heroes based on hope, tolerance, gender equality and acceptance.” His comic creations, featuring heroes such as Princess Heart and Element Zero, proved so popular that they are now being handed out to Jordanian school children as textbooks.

Watch this video to learn more: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5CSRdQ_H7U.



Source: Wired UK. “Suleiman Bahkit: Fighting ISIS with Comic Books.” November 3, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5CSRdQ_H7U.

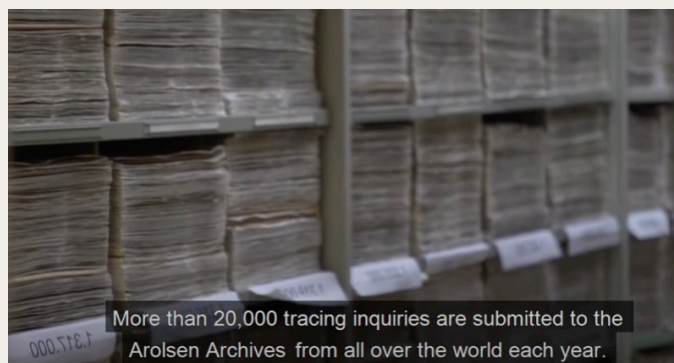
You are not only trying to counter content coming from extremists, but also trying to break through the noise of all other content available on the internet. **Whatever your content is, it needs to be attention grabbing.** Your first sentence, photo or few seconds of video need to make your audience curious.

Remember: No campaign will have the need or the resources to be on every social media platform!

Here are a few additional thoughts to consider:

- **What platform(s) does your target audience spend the most time on?**
- **Why you want to use each platform and what specifically it will add to your campaign.** What does it offer that other platforms don't?
- **How do people engage with content** on a specific platform?
- If you are using more than one platform, **how will they complement each other?**
- Do you have the **knowledge or understanding to effectively use a platform?**

Be mindful of which platforms are popular or highly regulated or banned in the countries you are trying to reach your target audience. Then consider who is delivering your message.



It's important to have a messenger that your audience finds credible. Think of the messenger and message like a song. The lyrics might be powerful, but the singer also needs a good voice. Consider who your audience is likely to trust, be inspired by or listen to. This may include:

- **Former extremists;**
- **Survivors of extremism;**
- **Respected organizations, charities, or projects** relevant to who you want to reach;
- **Individuals who your audience respects** such as sporting figures, musicians or actors; or
- **Influential and respected faith, community, women or youth leaders and activists.**

See this last example, #everynamecounts

(<https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/arolsen-archives/every-name-counts?language=en#:~:text=With%20the%20initiative%20%23%20everynamecounts%20the,and%20put%20faces%20to%20history.>),

The Aroslen Archives aim to establish a digital memorial to the people persecuted by the Nazis. Future generations should be able to remember the names and identities of the victims and put faces to history. Not only does it show examples of the past, but sheds light on what can happen when racism, antisemitism and discrimination becomes a narrative within a society.

Learn more about the Aroslen Archives here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=131&v=10Bv2rl9vPc&feature=emb_logo.

Source: Aroslen Archives. "Jeder Name zählt: Digitales Crowdsourcing-Projekt der Aroslen Archives." May 7, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=131&v=10Bv2rl9vPc&feature=emb_logo.

Create Your Own Meme Activity



Suggested Time:
20 minutes

To Prep:

- To reflect on the information learned and to think creatively, participants will have 10 minutes to create their own meme and then share it with the group. The meme can be in relation to anything discussed thus far in the course. Print out enough blank memes via (<https://imgflip.com/memegenerator/21366389/Blank>) or any similar website for each participant. Print a variety to allow for diversity.

Materials:

- A meme sheet for each participant

Start the Activity:

- Background to read to participants:
 - Memes can help to translate complex ideas into short-form cultural commentaries that construct social narratives. They can be used to target specific groups to help build and solidify a shared narrative. They are also a simple and creative way to quickly disseminate a point on social media.

Example:



Your Counter or Alternative Narrative Campaign is Launched - Now What?



Reevaluate your Message

Continue to refer back to your original campaign plan to ensure your content stays on message, on budget and in the decided timeline.

Audience Engagement

Engage with your audience even after you launched your campaign! This could be answering their questions, connecting them to additional resources, thanking them for participating or resharing their relevant content. You can also use surveys or audience feedback to know if your content is effective or if/how they have responded to your campaign.

Here are a few ways to bolster audience engagement with your content:

- 1. Engage in social listening.** Find existing conversations online about your campaign or even the broader P/CVE space and join in on the conversation! This could include replying to posts, sharing resources in the comments section and even liking posts.
- 2. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders.** The more entities and people you collaborate with, especially with whom hold influence, the more likely your message will be seen by a larger audience. Encourage your collaborator to post and reshare your content and related information.
- 3. If you have the capacity, set up a chatbot on your website to encourage live chat.** Live chat has become a preferred method of communication for many users to get their questions answered. By also adding in the functionality of a chatbot, you'll have the ability to immediately engage with your audience 24/7.
- 4. Get creative on your social media!** Use the 'live' feature on Facebook and TikTok, set up quizzes and polls on Twitter or create a snapchat filter for audiences to use. There are lots of ways to be creative on common social media channels - all at little or no cost.
- 5. Add more visual content to your posts!** Check out the stats on how visuals can enhance your content engagement.

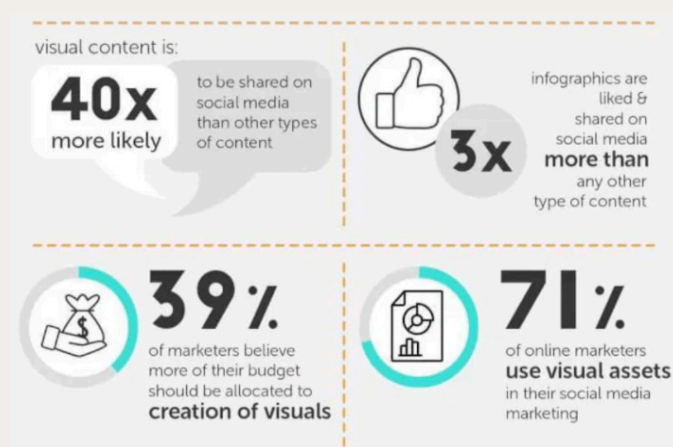


Photo Source: *10 Ways to Boost Your Audience Engagement.* AimTell. <https://aimtell.com/blog/10-ways-engage-audience-boost-engagement>.

Evaluating Your Counter or Alternative Narrative Campaign

Evaluation is a critical but often neglected component of communication efforts. It provides valuable information about what is working and what is not so you can adjust your strategy for future engagements. Refer to the goals of the campaign that you formulated at the planning stage. The more clearly your goals are set, the easier it will be for you to evaluate your success.

Checklist for evaluating your campaign based on the GAMMA+ Model:

Campaign element	Planning	Monitoring	Evaluation
G Goal	<p><i>What is your goal?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help yourself by being very SMART when formulating your goal. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound). SMART goal-setting introduces structure and trackability into your goal. It is easier to evaluate this way. - Define at least 2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for reaching your goal. 	<p>Monitoring questions to ask when the campaign is running:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are we on the right track? Does our goal still seem attainable? 2. Is our campaign starting to contribute to the campaign goal? If yes, why? If not (yet), why not? 3. Check the SMART aspects of your goal. If they are not clear, review them. 	<p>Questions to answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did we achieve our goal? Break this answer down into the different SMART elements and elaborate briefly per element. 2. Did we achieve the KPIs? Use the KPIs you formulated before the campaign started.
A Audience	<p><i>What is your target audience?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hyper target your audience, be as specific as you can be. <p>One of the biggest mistakes to make is trying to appeal to everyone with your campaign. Think about a game of darts: you have to aim in order to hit the board. Be specific about age, gender, geographical location, interests and affiliations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Estimate the total size of your target audience and define how many of them in numbers or in terms of a percentage that you want to reach. (Audience KPI) <p>Tip: Create an 'audience persona', this is a prototype of the person whom your campaign targets. Describe age, hobbies, what he/she is concerned with etc. By creating a real person in your mind, it is</p>	<p>Monitoring questions to ask when the campaign is running:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are we reaching with our campaign? Does this fit our target audience? If not, adjust. <p>Tip: Twitter (Twitter Analytics), Facebook (Facebook Insight) and YouTube (Google Analytics) and other social media platforms all provide options for checking how you are doing.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Who is reacting to our campaign message? Our target audience? If not, adjust. If yes, keep going and try to engage even more people from your target audience! 	<p>Questions to answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did we reach our target audience? Start by repeating the characteristics of your target audience and then reflect on who you have reached, who reacted and who took action. Add screenshots of the graphics produced by social media analytics in your report, but only a few. Too many graphs will only create fog. Tip: Use examples like quotes from the campaign. You can present them in small text boxes in the evaluation report. 2. Did we reach our Audience KPI? Just compare the numbers. If you reached the KPI, write down two reasons why you think you were successful. If not, write down 2 reasons why you think you did not reach them. This will help you or your colleagues when planning the next campaign.

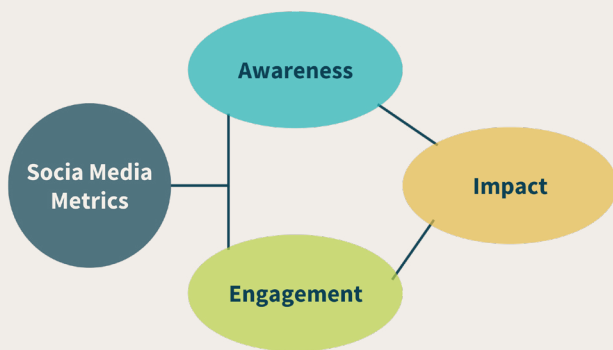
Photo source: RAN Network. (February 2017). Ex Post Paper RAN C&N meeting: How to measure the impact of your online counter or alternative narrative campaign. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2017-07/201702_ran_how_to_measure_impact_of_online_campaign_en.pdf

Campaign element	Planning	Monitoring	Evaluation
	easier to get a feeling for your target audience.		
M Message	<p><i>What is your message?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be clear about what the content of the message is that you want to get across to the target audience. 2. Formulate the message in a sentence and in words that fit with the language your target audience uses. 3. Check if your message still fits with the goal of the campaign. 	<p>Monitoring question to ask when the campaign is running:</p> <p>Do a check – does our message resonate with the target audience? Check the comments, discussions and reactions around the message. Analyse them. If the message does not resonate, adjust it. You can ask people from your target audience for help and input on this, even on the platform you are using to get your campaign message across. If so, keep going!</p>	<p>Questions to answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did our message come across? Check the comments and discussions about your message on the platforms that you used. What do they tell you? Tip: Use quotes in your evaluation report. 2. Are we still fully confident about the message attributed to the campaign goal? If so, write down two reasons why it fits the goal. If you would do it differently next time, write down the improved message and the reasons why this would have been better. You'll benefit from these insights in the next campaign.
M Messenger	<p><i>Who is your messenger?</i></p> <p>The person(s) delivering the message should be a credible voice for your target audience.</p> <p>Tip: Break down the elements of why the messenger(s) is credible (peer group, experience, well known, hero etc.)</p> <p>Tip: Check, if possible, with at least two people from the target audience as to how they perceive your messenger(s).</p>	<p>Monitoring question to ask when the campaign is running:</p> <p>Does the messenger(s) seem to be accepted and believed by the target audience? Check for comments about the messenger(s) on the platform that you are using. If there are comments, analyse them.</p>	<p>Questions to answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What were the main reactions to the messenger? Check whether there were comments on the messenger. 2. Are we still convinced this was the right messenger? If so, write down two reasons why she/he was the right person. And think of other people who might have also been credible messengers. If not, brainstorm on how to do even better next time.

Campaign element	Planning	Monitoring	Evaluation
M Media	<p>What is your medium?</p> <p>The medium (platform) that you are using should be the platform where your target audience is.</p> <p>Tip: Do not assume they are on Facebook or Twitter just because you are. Check with 2-3 people from your target audience or at least someone in the same age group.</p>	<p>Monitoring question to ask when the campaign is running:</p> <p>- Are the right people e.g. people from your target group reading/watching your message? You can check this via comments and via the analytics sections of the social media platforms. (NB: Twitter Analytics, Facebook Insight, Google Analytics.)</p>	<p>Questions to answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was the medium/platform we used indeed the best platform(s) to use for the target audience? Elaborate on how many persons you reached and how they reacted. List two reasons why you have concluded that this was the right platform. And list at least one other platform you could have used as well. This will be interesting when planning the next campaign.
A Action	<p>What is your call to action?</p> <p>- Be as specific as possible in defining your call to action. Describe what kind of action you are aiming for (general awareness, likes, shares, discussions, meetings organised, videos made, selfies etc.)</p> <p>- Try to formulate at least two KPIs</p> <p>- Estimate the total size of your target audience and define how many of them in hard numbers or in terms of a percentage you want to engage (Action Audience KPI)</p> <p>Tip: Be realistic. Choose an attainable call to action. Fit with what your target audience likes to do and choose an action which is manageable in time and effort.</p>	<p>Monitoring question to ask when the campaign is running:</p> <p>Are we getting any action? Check comments/discussions about your campaign.</p> <p>If so, keep going! And if you have time, brainstorm about how to get even more engagement/action.</p> <p>If not, check if your call to action is specific enough. Do people understand what you want from them?</p> <p>Tip: You could ask your messenger(s) to specifically promote the call to action from their own social media account.</p>	<p>Questions to answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did the call to action lead to the desired action? Describe the actions taken by your target audience during the campaign. Tip: Use examples of actions taken by your target audience 2. Did we meet our Action Audience KPI? Check how much engagement your campaign led to and whether this corresponds to the level of action/engagement you wanted. Give two reasons why you reached the KPI. If the engagement or action differs from what you expected, write down two reasons why you think (in hindsight) the audience acted differently to expected.

Photo source: RAN Network. (February 2017). Ex Post Paper RAN C&N meeting: How to measure the impact of your online counter or alternative narrative campaign. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2017-07/201702_ran_how_to_measure_impact_of_online_campaign_en.pdf

The monitoring and evaluation of your online counter narrative campaign will also be strongly based on the analytics identified on the platforms used during your campaign. **Analytics can be used to determine how your message is (or is not) reaching and engaging with audiences.** This includes analytics from social media, newsletters, websites or any other platforms used, as well as interviews with targeted audiences in a digital form (Survey Monkey, Google Forms) or in person (either formal, with a specific set of predetermined



questions, or informal—seeking general feedback). Social media metrics can be drawn into two broad categories: **awareness and engagement.**

Question to Participants:

Can anyone share the difference between awareness and engagement? Is one more important than the other?

Awareness is the total number of people who view your campaign content (whether videos, ads, posts, websites or other digital content), and who those people are. It is important to consider awareness metrics which help you understand the characteristics of your audience: how, when and where they were exposed to your campaign, and which parts of the campaign reached them. There are two types of awareness metrics. The first relates to the scale of the audience: how many people saw or interacted with your campaign in any way. The second describes the nature of the audience in demographic or characteristic terms, such as gender, location, age, device type and so on.



<p>Social Reach</p>  <p>Think Exposure</p> <p>Total # of users exposed to your social content.</p> <p>Remember: Not all followers see your content.</p>	<p>vs.</p> <p>Social Impressions</p>  <p>Think Display</p> <p>Total # of times social content was displayed.</p> <p>Remember: Impressions will be higher than reach.</p>
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Photo source: The Difference Between Social Media Reach and Impressions. Reputation. https://reputation.com/resources/all-resources/reach-vs-impressions/?fbclid=IwAR2zb0gGY8YZ6mBs_66t7bq1MWWmjSvAlKJ_RcK6P4GZPG1vgy10ouKqR4.



Write down your thoughts!

Impressions are the total number of times social media browsers have shown your content. Impressions are different from reach because it doesn't count people who click or engage with your content, just those who are exposed to it. Therefore, it is entirely possible that an impression can take place without an individual even noticing your content. For this reason, it's important not to focus too much on impressions.

Reach is the total number of people who were exposed to your ad or content. If 50 people saw your content, then that content's reach was 50. However, unfortunately, if you have 50 followers, that does not mean all 50 will engage with your content. That's because popular social media sites use complex algorithms that determine who to show content to and when.

How are reach and impressions different?

To understand the difference between reach and impressions, **consider impressions as the number of times your content is *displayed* to your users and reach the total number of users who have viewed your content.**

METRIC	FACEBOOK	YOUTUBE	TWITTER
IMPRESSIONS	Facebook defines impressions as the number of times a post from your page is displayed in a news feed or sidebar.	YouTube defines impressions as the number of times your content or ad appears in an in-stream or in-display advertisement.	On Twitter, the number of impressions is defined as the number of times a promoted tweet appears in a user's feed.
REACH	Facebook defines reach as the number of people who received impressions of a page post.	On YouTube's advertising function, AdWords, reach is determined as 'unique viewers by cookie.' This means that reach is calculated by the number of unique cookies (which store individual's preferences and useful information on their browsers) that show a video.	There is no way to measure reach through Twitter's in-built analytics, and therefore no Twitter definition of reach. However, reach can be calculated or approximated through third-party tools, such as Tweetreach or Hashtracking.
VIEWS	For Facebook, a view of a video counts if the video runs on autoplay for a minimum of three seconds. Facebook autoplay is muted, but even if the viewer doesn't click to engage audio, it still counts as a view. Facebook also displays metrics for video views at 25%, 50%, 75%, and 95%, as alternative ways of counting views or calculating drop-off.	For YouTube, a view of a video is only counted if that video is watched for more than thirty seconds. For videos under this length, a view is counted as a percentage of the video's length.	For Twitter, a view is counted when a video plays for three seconds, with the condition that the video is 100% visible on a user's screen for at least three seconds.

This table above presents an overview of how different social media platforms define different metrics. Source: Reynolds, L. and Tuck, H. (2016). The Counter Narrative Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CN-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-Handbook.pdf>.

Engagement on the other hand, is defined as the volume and types of interaction between audience members, campaigners or campaign materials. Engagements can include everything from likes and shares to email responses and can be positive or negative. The number and nature of engagements can help campaigners understand their audience's reactions to the campaign or its content. These metrics can be combined and analyzed to build a comprehensive picture of a counter or alternative narrative campaign's performance, and help campaigners understand the impact they are having. They provide an indication of the quality and frequency of interactions between audiences and a campaign. Combined with awareness metrics they contribute to an evaluator's understanding of the impact of a campaign. **Several types of engagement are conducive to qualitative evaluation, which can provide insight into how a campaign is received.** Most obviously, comments, or other text-based reactions are such data. Other types of engagement, including likes, favorites or other sorts of responses (such as the emoji list available on Facebook reaction tabs) can also be analyzed to reveal how content is received.

Clicks are the number of times people have clicked on your ad or a link in your posts. This is a useful indicator of the number of individuals who have made a proactive decision to engage with your counter narrative content. **Sustained engagements** are interactions between campaigners and users that go on for an extended period of time. Frequently, sustained engagements take the form of conversations, for example, they may be conducted through comment feeds, direct messages or email. While sustained engagements consist of an exchange or exchanges of multiple messages, there is no formal definition of what constitutes a sustained engagement. While engagement may be viewed as more 'substantive' data, it does take a user longer to type a comment than like a post. Not all of your active viewers will want to take the time, or find the need, to like or comment on your post.

Impact is a measurable change in the audience's knowledge, attitudes or behavior that can be attributed to exposure to or engagement with counter or alternative narrative content. Awareness and engagement metrics, when properly analyzed, can be brought together to help evaluators understand the impact of their campaign. Additional indicators, such as evidence of offline action, or the qualitative evaluation of online comments, can contribute to the overall impact picture. The measurement of impact and ultimately the answer to the question of whether a campaign succeeded or failed will be defined by the goals and objectives set at the very start of the project.

Now It's Your Turn to Make a Counter Narrative Campaign!

Create Your Own Counter-Narrative Exercise

Estimated Time:

1 hour

To Prep:

- Split Participants into groups of 3-4 to create their own counter narrative campaign. Everyone will have the same scenario and present to the entire group at the end of the session. It is recommended that participants have at least an hour to complete. Time may be adjusted based on facilitators guidance.

Materials:

- Scenario printed or displayed in the front of the room for participants to read and revert back to
- Several pieces of paper, including a large piece of paper, ie - flipchart
- Different colored pens, pencils or highlighters

Scenario:

- A local community has struggled to regain socio-economic opportunities since the government collapsed. As a result, many youths have been skipping school and/or work and spend more time posting and scrolling on social media. Recently, it became public news that five youth (two girls, three boys) with ages ranging from 15-26 affirmed their allegiance to an extremist group. The local community has been grappling with the recent events and have worked with local authorities and community stakeholders to conduct an investigation to determine how the youth began interactions with extremist members and how they ultimately became radicalized and recruited by this group.

It was determined that the youth met the extremists on Facebook and from there, began regular communication over the past 10 months. In records of their chat, it appears that the extremists utilized language and cultural phenomena that appealed to the youth, including discussing the upcoming World Cup, expressing sentiments that school is a waste of time, and utilizing memes in which feature celebrities and influencers.

Community stakeholders, government and law enforcement do not have an efficient strategy for combating extremists and their engagement in online spaces. Therefore, as you are a leading youth empowerment organization in the community who has supported in CVE efforts, local officials have reached out to you to help them craft an effective counter narrative campaign to mitigate the number of youths who are radicalized and recruited online, recognizing that radicalization is an extremely nuanced process. You accept the task, excited for the opportunity to utilize innovative ideas to develop and disseminate powerful counter narratives with the goal to keep your community safe.

Start the Activity:

1. GOAL: List here your goal for the counter narrative campaign. Remember, your goal should be specific and comprehensive. You must be clear about what you want to achieve. To make sure it is an effective goal, reflect on the goal you just created.

2. Stakeholders: Think through the following questions to **list all potential stakeholders** that could take interest in your campaign. Self-check: Did you list any stakeholders that could be a potential partner as you create and disseminate your campaign?

Create Your Own Counter-Narrative Exercise continued...



3. Partners: Go back to the stakeholder sheet you just created. Out of the stakeholders listed, what individual, community or government entity that may serve as an effective partner in designing and developing your campaign?

Choose a different color and highlight all potential partners. Of those, list out three people/entities you believe will make the strongest partners:

1.

2.

3.

Self-check: Of the potential partners you listed, do you have a working-relationship with them? Or are you going to need to spend time building trust and collaboration between the two entities prior to collaborating on a counter narrative campaign?

Create Your Own Counter-Narrative Exercise continued...



Mapping Your Community

Think through the following questions and note down your responses:

1. On a single sheet of paper (the larger the better or within the space below) draw a rough outline of what you take to be your local community. Leave enough space inside and outside of the boundary to write.

2. Now, focus on the inside of the boundary.

a. Where are the major landmarks? What institutions exist (places of worship, schools, etc.)?

b. What types of businesses are in the community and where are they located? What youth organizations, associations or community clubs exist? Place all of these on your map.

c. How does the space change at particular times of the year, around specific events or when certain things happen?

Based on Building Democracy with Young People in Contested Spaces: A Handbook for Critically Reflective Practice that challenges cultures of violence by Ross Velure Roholt, Laura McFall, Michael Baizerman, and Paul Smyth (2008)

3. Pick a color and circle/highlight all the names, entities, etc. who could be a stakeholder in your counter-narrative campaign.

4. Target Audience: WHO do you want your campaign to reach? Look back at your map and reflect on your goal. Who would be the most strategic audience to target to help you reach your goal.

■ *Remember, it's important not to be too ambitious and try to reach everyone. Be as specific as possible when thinking about exactly who the right audience is.*

5. Get to know your target audience!

■ Where does your audience spend their time (both online and offline)?

■ What do they value, or what do they see as morally good?

■ How do they communicate, or how do they use language?

■ Who do they respect, or who else influences them?

■ Which campaigns are they already involved in?

- Which campaigns are already targeting them?

**6. What approach is needed, based on how your audience engages with extremist content?
(Check all that apply)**

- **Upstream** – preventative approach, with a broader audience.
- **Midstream** – target audience of a narrower group of individuals, typically those who are more at risk of radicalization, but not yet recruited to a violent extremist organization or radicalized violence.
- **Downstream** – aim to directly rebut, refute or counter narratives of violent extremism or terrorist groups.
- **Bystanders** – target the peer network or broader community that surrounds at-risk individuals.

7. Crafting your message – based on the task at hand, and understanding what target audience you are going to reach, **what are going to be three counter narrative messages?** *Self-Check: Your aim is to stimulate people's thoughts and feelings, and maybe even elicit a shift in their opinions and behavior. Your narrative needs to resonate with the target audience. There is a lot of online content already - why would they want to listen to your message? Your message has to pull people in, and make people think 'This makes sense to me' or 'I want to do that.'*

1.

2.

3.

8. What elements did you include in your message to make it impactful and resonate with your target audience? (Check all that apply)

- Facts from credible sources
- Emotional appeals
- Satire and humor
- Positive stories and messages from people within your audience – or whom they admire
- Call to action

9. Disseminate your message – what mediums are you going to choose? (Check all that apply)

- Videos - short films or animations
- Text - Slogans or hashtags
- Audio - podcasts or interviews
- Images - photos or memes
- Online content - social media posts, blogs, petitions or opinion pieces
- All forms of art or creative expression
- Other _____
- What other creative/innovative mechanisms could you use to reach and engage your target audience? _____

10. What platforms should we use to disseminate your message? *Remember: Going back to the mapping, where does your audience spend the most time? Why you want to use each platform and what specifically it will add to your campaign. What does it offer that other platforms don't? How do people engage with content on that specific platform? If you are using more than one platform, how will they complement each other? Do you have the knowledge or understanding to effectively use a platform?*

Self-check: Are you the most credible person or entity to disseminate the message? Are there any other stakeholders or partners who may be better suited to directly engage with your target audience?

Let's launch your campaign!

11. Your campaign has been launched for over a month with no youth pledging allegiance to a terrorist group. However, you still have a lot of time left in your campaign timeline. **What do you do next?**

- Call the campaign a success and end it
 - Reevaluate your tactics and determine how to improve your messaging
 - Reach out to the extremist group to see if your counter narrative is effective
- Answer: Reevaluate your tactics and determine how to improve your messaging!

Remember, your campaign can always be improved. Use your platform's analytics and metrics to better reach your target audience for maximum impact and change.

12. Time to measure your efforts! What metrics should you prioritize?

Additional Resources for Session 2



Creating a Counter Narrative Campaign

- Bakrania, S. (August 2014). Strategic communications and foreign fighters. GDCRS Applied Knowledge Service. <http://www.gsdcrc.org/docs/open/hdq1139.pdf>
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- Comerford, M. and Dukic, S. (July 2020). Online Extremism: Challenges and Opportunities in the Western Balkans. Resolve Network. https://www.resolve.net.org/system/files/2020-07/RSVE_PolicyNote_WB_ComerfordDukic_July2020.pdf
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- Policy Brief: Drivers of Self- Radicalization and Digital Sociability. DARE Project. https://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d5.4_policy_brief_drivers_of_self-radicalization_and_digital_sociability.pdf
- Promoting Online Voices for Countering Violent Extremism. (2013). Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR130/RAND_RR130.pdf
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- Reed, A. Dr., Ingrim, H. Dr. and Whittaker, J. (2017). Countering Terrorist Narratives. Directorate General for Internal Policies, European Commission. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596829/IPOL_STU\(2017\)596829_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596829/IPOL_STU(2017)596829_EN.pdf)
- Ritzmann, A. (31 December 2017). RAN guidelines for effective alternative and counter narrative campaigns (GAMMA+). RAN Network. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/ran_cn_guidelines_effective_alternative_counter_narrative_campaigns_31_12_2017_en.pdf
- Tuck, H. and Silverman, T. (2016). Counter Narrative Handbook. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/counter_narrative-Handbook_1.pdf
- We Can! Taking Action against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives. (2017). Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/wecan-eng-final-23052017-web/168071ba08>

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Hedayah (2018). Evaluate your CVE Results. Projecting your Impact. <http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-16720189339.pdf>.
- Radicalization Awareness Network (2017). How to measure the impact of your online counter- or alternative narrative campaign. RAN Ex post paper C&N, February 2017. https://ec.europa.eu/homeaffairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/docs/pages/201702_ran_how_to_measure_impact_of_online_campaign_en.pdf.
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SESSION 3: Online Safety and Risk Mitigation

Objective

The third session will explore ways in which online users can stay safe when using online spaces and conducting counter or alternative narrative campaigns and other situations where they may be at risk for exploitation.

Expected Results

The expected results of the third session will be that participants will have an introductory understanding of how to mitigate risks while using online platforms.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 3: 1 hour

Agenda

PG. 86 – Being Safe When Using Online Spaces

PG. 92 – Safety Through An Inclusive Lens

PG. 94 – What if Someone I know is Talking to an Unsafe Person?

PG. 95 – Key Considerations for Building Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Trust to Prevent Online Radicalization and Recruitment

PG. 98 – Module Certificate

Being Safe When Using Online Spaces



Question for Participants:

Why is security important to consider when creating and disseminating counter narrative campaigns? What can be some of the consequences when not considered in planning?

Unfortunately, counter or alternative narrative campaigning can have security implications. Activities connected to countering violent extremism carry some degree of risk because of the subject matter and the audiences you may be targeting. Online activities could raise your profile and cause you to be targeted for your work. Avoid antagonizing or simply being controversial for the sake of it. Make sure you consider whether you need to take any safety measures to protect those working on or contributing to your campaign, including your messenger. If you plan to reach out to members of extreme groups, consider how sophisticated the extremist group is. Are they capable of identifying your involvement? Do you have contingency plans in place if you receive a direct threat online? Also remember, humor may be objective to the eye of the beholder and may be misunderstood. It is important to consider how your message can be misunderstood or misperceived by stakeholders.

When preparing a counter narrative, it is crucial that human rights values, principles and characteristics are ensured throughout the action. The oppressive narrative should not be combated by reproducing it or using other oppressive narratives.

So, what are common security concerns when creating a counter or alternative narrative campaign?

SECURITY CONCERN	SECURITY RESPONSE
Are you happy for your counter-narrative to be directly linked back to you or your organization? If not...	<p>Avoid using personal email accounts when setting up social media profiles.</p> <p>Use secure passwords for all platforms and email addresses.</p> <p>Create new Facebook profile before you create the Facebook page for your campaign.</p> <p>Do not respond to comments and responses using your personal accounts.</p> <p>If you have a website make sure you have hidden the ownership of your domain and WHO IS information.</p>
Are you okay with your organizations' location being publicly available online? If not...	<p>Some social media platforms may include your location when you post. Make sure to turn off any geo-location or geo-tagging settings on all platforms you use.</p> <p>Do not include location of organization in the "About" sections of any of your social media platforms.</p>
Are you prepared for members of extremist groups contacting your profile pages? If not...	<p>Use a qualified interventionist to engage with extremists who contact your profiles.</p> <p>Avoid giving any personal details about your or your organization that may put you at risk.</p>

Source: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. "The Counter Narrative Handbook" Institute for Strategic Dialogue." 2016. https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf

Staying Safe on Social Media

It is nearly impossible to completely rely on social media platforms to keep all of your information safe and to remove potential predatory accounts. Developers, IT workers, marketers, and countless other people can see even your most intimate messages and media. And because most of these companies store big data indefinitely, your conversations today or yesterday can still be threatened years in the future.

It is becoming more common for adverse users to **impersonate your profile, using your name, profile images and personal information**. When someone uses your images on fake profiles, others may attribute anything found on that profile to you. This could be in the forms of scams, fraudulent offers, pornographic material, requests for money, catfishing accounts, or online trolls. The worrying part is that all of these undesirable actions are under the umbrella of your face and image!

Other fake accounts want to embarrass the person whose photos they're stealing with hateful or disturbing comments. Families and relationships can be ripped apart when one spouse thinks another is cheating all because someone stole their partner's identity on social media accounts!

What to do when someone created a fake account with your information?

Contact the Website: While you could just immediately block the fake account, don't. First, report the page or account to the website host. Explain that someone has created a fake account with your photographs/images. If the site or app contacts you to verify your information, respond promptly.

Save the Fake Account's Username or Link: Make sure that you cut/copy the link (if it's a Facebook account, for instance) or the username for Instagram, Twitter, etc. That way you can search it out and see if the account has been removed.

Search: You can search your photographs through websites such as Berify (<https://berify.com/>) or Google Images. This will scan the entire web and all major search engines. This can be helpful to see whether someone has created any other accounts. Once a scammer uses your photographs, they may set up multiple fake accounts and give you a web trail you didn't intend.

Here are 10 additional ways to your data safe:

- 1. Don't share personal information**
- 2. Double-check and verify links**
- 3. Use secure public Wi-Fi**
- 4. Use a Virtual Private Network (VPN)**
- 5. Only log into sites that start with https://**
- 6. Be careful who you chat with**
- 7. Turn off your Bluetooth**
- 8. Use antivirus software**
- 9. Use secure passwords**, meaning one that is hard for a user or program to try to guess. Try creating a complex, long password instead of using a birthday, anniversary, pet name, etc.
- 10. Backup your data** to prevent accidental data loss, corruption, and unauthorized access.

Browse Safely and Anonymously

Websites that you visit collect data such as demographics, intimate interests and tastes, personal habits and hobbies. This enormous amount of personal data could include sensitive information like credit card data, physical location, sexual preferences, religion, health and others. **To mitigate data collection, browse anonymously online - this can include using HTTP encryption** (<https://https.cio.gov/faq/>). Cookies are files created by websites you visit. They make your online experience easier by saving browsing information. With cookies, sites can keep you signed in, remember your site preferences, and give you locally relevant content. While you probably want to allow some of the useful cookies on shopping portals and other websites, it's definitely a good idea to block all third-party cookies. Left unchecked, your cookies will feed personal data to private companies. Cookie settings can be changed directly in your browser settings.

Be conscious of potential risks in any given context online. One of the best things to ask yourself is **“If this was hacked, how would it impact my life?”** **Thinking along these lines mean that YOU can dictate the security and privacy of your digital life.** A majority of hacking incidents do not require highly technical skills. Malicious people often rely on simple schemes to trick people in giving up their information, including passwords, emails and other private information. While we know that websites sometimes require you to enter information to gain access, think critically about what information is needed versus what information is too much. Don't be afraid to make up information either!

What about **doxing**? Doxing is a term derived from the phrase ‘document-sharing.’ **Doxing is revealing personal or identifying documents or details online about someone without their consent.** This can include personal information such as a person’s home address, real name, children’s names, phone numbers and email address. A violation of a person’s privacy, the aim of doxing is to distress, panic and otherwise cause alarm.

Here are some tips to prevent hacking:

1. **Do not login to websites from a link in an email**
2. **Always install software updates as soon as possible**
3. **Try not to login to websites via Facebook, Twitter, or Google**
4. **Do not trust emails asking for personal information, survey data, or anything else that could reveal info about you, no matter how professional they look**
5. **Be careful using public WIFI**

Be aware of the presence of online ‘bots’. A bot, short for robot and also called an internet bot, is a computer program that operates as an agent (decision making entity) for a user or other program or to simulate a human activity. Bots are normally used to automate certain tasks, meaning they can run without specific instructions from humans. These may skew results and give a misleading picture of impact and reach.

Question for Participants:

How do you know if you are interacting with a bot? Can you think of any recent examples where ‘bots’ made an impact in the way people view and perceive a topic or event?



Write down
your notes!

While it is not always possible to know, here are some signs that you may be interacting with a bot:

1. User profile: The most common way to tell if an account is fake is to check out the profile. The most rudimentary bots lack a photo, a link, or any bio. More sophisticated ones might use a photo stolen from the web, or an automatically generated account name.

2. Syntax: Using human language is still incredibly hard for machines. A bot's posts may reveal its algorithmic logic - they may be formulaic or repetitive or use responses common in chatbot programs. Missing an obvious joke and rapidly changing the subject are other telltale traits (unfortunately, they are also quite common among human social media users).

3. Post semantics: Bots are usually created with a particular end in mind, so they may be overly obsessed with a particular topic, perhaps reposting the same link again and again or posting about little else.

4. Temporal behavior: Looking at tweets over time can also be revealing. If an account posts at an impossible rate, at unlikely times, or even too regularly, that can be a good sign that it's fake. Researchers also found that fake accounts often betray an inconsistent attitude toward topics over time.

5. Network features: Network dynamics aren't visible to most users, but they can reveal a lot about an account. Bots may follow only a few accounts or be followed by many other bots. The tone of a bot's posts may also be incongruous with those of its connections, suggesting a lack of any real social interaction.



Write
down any
thoughts
you may
have!

Watch Out for Your Opponents Activity



Estimated Time:
30 minutes

To Prep:

- Ask participants to brainstorm what is an opponent and why do they matter when creating a counter-narrative campaign?
- Split Participants into groups of 3-4 and ask them to reflect on what may be some tactics to address an opponent and if needed, what safety measures may be required to successfully do so. Time may be adjusted based on facilitators guidance.

Example Responses:

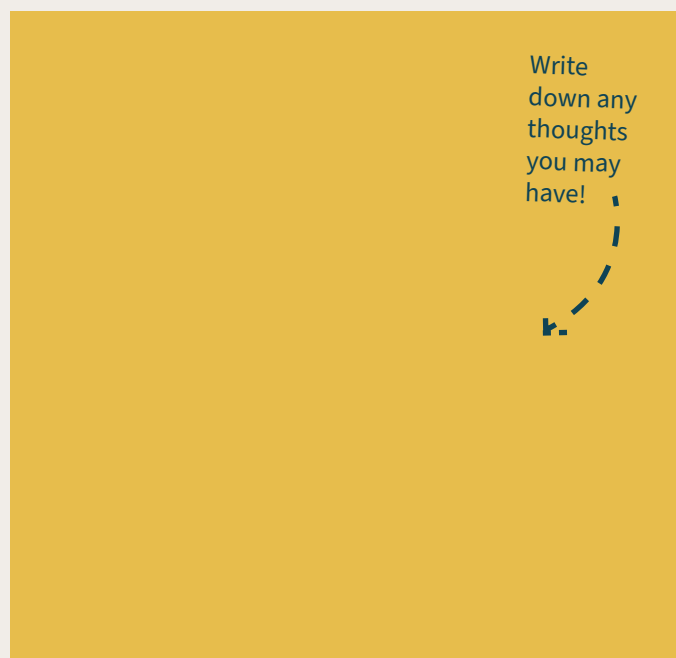
- Meet with your opponent: recognize in advance who your opponents may be and engage them in dialogue. This option should only be considered if you know your opponent and know you will have a safe meeting. If you are going to meet in person, the location must be in a public setting during the day. No one should go alone.
- Develop win-win solutions: focus on a solution that meets your shared beliefs.
- Turn negatives into positives: utilize counter narratives to negate what your opponent is saying.
- Label your opponents tactics: in recognizing your opponents tactics, making external audiences aware can help to refocus audiences towards your information.
- Frame the debate on your terms: try not to always be on the defense. Ensure your perspectives are externally disseminated.
- Balance and illusion: respond to your opponents with a variety of strategies so they do not always have time to anticipate and prepare for your moves.

There will be people who oppose your counter-narrative campaign and work. As a result, they may try to serve as a disrupter to your work, including through many of the ways listed above. It is essential to take specific safety measures to ensure your opponents cannot disrupt your campaign - or cause a safety concern to you and those around you.

Safety Through An Inclusive Lens

Question for Participants:

Do you think one group of individuals is more susceptible to online dangers? Who could those groups be? Why do you think some groups are more susceptible than others?



Everyone has the right to use online platforms in a safe manner; however, the internet is often a platform for sexist, racist, homophobic and other violent types of behavior and content that disproportionately affects women and young women. An Amnesty International report found (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/what-is-online-violence-and-abuse-against-women/>) that women of color, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, trans women and women at the intersection of forms of oppression are even more targeted. Violence and abuse against women and young women, including technology-facilitated abuse, is increasingly serving as a barrier to gender equality and may impact women's work in areas that require a

significant online presence, including politics, journalism or public advocacy.

Women and young women may encounter:

- Threats
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Doxing
- Sharing sexual or private images without consent

More broadly speaking, youth also face a plethora of online risks that can impact both their psychological and physical safety.

Three categories of risks could include:

Content risks

For youth, these risks include coming across material that they might find upsetting, disgusting or otherwise uncomfortable, especially if they encounter it accidentally including: pornography or sexually explicit content in music videos, movies or online games; real or simulated violence; hate sites; terrorist sites; fake news that seems believable; or harmful user-generated content like sites about drug use, self-harm, suicide or negative body image.



Photo Source: Safety Net Project. "Cyber Safety for Survivors of Domestic Violence." <https://www.techsafety.org/blog/2019/10/31/cyber-safety-for-survivors-of-domestic-violence>.

Contact risks

These risks include coming into contact with adults posing as children online, strangers who persuade teenagers to meet them in real life, and online scammers.

Conduct risks

Conduct risks include behaving in inappropriate or hurtful ways or being the victim of this kind of behavior. Examples include: cyberbullying; sexting; misusing people's passwords and impersonating people online; making unauthorized purchases using other people's financial details; creating content that reveals information about other people; or having trouble regulating online time, which can develop into problem internet use.

Every age group has unique vulnerabilities in addition to general Internet risks, **and seniors are no exception.** Few entirely new types of scams are created to target seniors; the issue lies in how existing scams are tailored specifically to exploit older Internet users. Though many seniors are very computer savvy, many more are not. Often their computers are not properly secured. Even when you have installed security software, it is critical that they set up automatic updates, turn on a firewall, use secure passwords, etc. If seniors are not comfortable setting up their computer, oftentimes, computer companies have trainings specifically designed for seniors to effectively set up their devices.

Seniors who use **social networking sites** that cater to older users are targeted with quizzes and surveys that often have very invasive questions about your health, wealth, and personal lives. Quizzes are created for revenue. Ask yourself who profits from you answering the questions and who else gets to see your answers. Understand that any

information posted in these quizzes is likely to be used by many companies. Answer a medical quiz and you may find your insurance claims, even your ability to get insurance, are affected. Quizzes can also generate targeted spam 'offers' based on your answers.

Cyberbullying is not just a problem among young people; seniors are also affected. One clear difference is that, whether you want to face it or not, cyberbullying of seniors is most often done by family members.

Cyberbullying of seniors can take several forms, but the most common are:

- **Emotional abuse** with rage, threats, accusations and belittling comments, often followed with periods of silence or ignoring the target.
- **Financial abuse** aimed at finding their account information, setting up online access to their accounts, and stealing their money.

All users need to be aware of contract risks, which include signing up for unfair contracts, terms or conditions that they aren't aware of or don't fully understand. Oftentimes, the elderly may be more susceptible to these scams. As a result, users may: be open to identity theft or fraud; get inappropriate digital marketing messages or scam emails; or have their personal data collected from apps and devices like fitness trackers.



What if Someone I know is Talking to an Unsafe Person?

The process of radicalization can happen over a long period of time, or it can happen much quicker. There may be any given number of signs that someone is becoming radicalized, or it may be nearly impossible to spot. **There is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ to understanding when, why and how someone may become radicalized.** It is all relevant based on the individual.

Signs that may indicate someone is being radicalized through internet platforms may include:

- **Increase secretiveness**, especially around internet use
- **Changing online identity** - or having multiple online identities
- **Spending a lot of time on the internet**
- **Accessing extremist online content**
- **Isolating themselves** from friends and family
- **Unwillingness or inability to listen** or discuss views or emotions
- **Increased levels of irritability or anger**, even feeling persecuted

It is important to reassure the person you are concerned for that they can trust you and that you are there to listen and support them.

When we speak to children, we talk about finding a 'trusted adult'. Trusted doesn't necessarily mean a police officer or a teacher, but preferably someone whom that person can talk to in a free and uninhibited way – someone who can support them and guide them. It is also important to help them find advice and support in understanding distressing events and feelings. Trust is also crucial

when it comes to helping adults – although it can be more difficult to cultivate. Signposting people to counseling and support groups, where they can talk openly and honestly without judgment, can be an important first step.

Check out your local resources. Communities may have organizations or government offices that can ensure the individual receives the support and guidance they need to deradicalize.

Question for Participants:

What can you do to prevent someone from being groomed or radicalized online?

Educate!

It is important to talk to family and friends about the importance of online safety, explain the danger and ensure social media accounts are secure. People may not necessarily view the people they met online as strangers, rather they are online friends. Media literacy is another key component to ensuring people are able to use the internet in a safe and responsible manner.



Photo Source: Lord, Kristin and Katya Vogt. "Strengthen Media Literacy to Win the Fight Against Misinformation." March 18, 2021. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/strengthen_media_literacy_to_win_the_fight_against_misinformation.

Key Considerations for Building Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Trust to Prevent Online Radicalization and Recruitment

Decreasing online vulnerability for recruitment and radicalization will only be effective if there is increased multi-stakeholder collaboration at the local, national and regional level. This is especially necessary as in most instances, governments are not effective messengers for counter or alternative narrative efforts; they lack credibility among the target audiences and may be slow to respond due to bureaucratic constraints. Therefore, civil society, including faith actors and institutions, are a key mechanism to prevent online radicalization and recruitment.

Continuity in the fight against radicalization and recruitment is required from politicians in financing education and prevention projects, especially by supporting civil society initiatives. For example, the federal program Living Democracy!, run by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in Germany, encourages communities to take action against hate on the internet, in addition to other efforts to promote democracy. Furthermore, information and education campaigns, on social media and in schools, universities and businesses are needed to reduce the consequences of online and offline discrimination. Increased literacy skills amongst civil society and policy makers will help to build awareness of violent extremism and the role of media.

This includes providing **sensitivity training** to media personnel to safely report on sensitive subjects and to ‘do not harm,’ within their reporting. Subsequently, this will support awareness raising on how reporting practices can support P/CVE efforts and prevent stigmatization of groups that hinder responses to violent extremism. This includes increasing their capacity on how to report on gender, faith communities, young people and other minority groups with more sensitivity to ensure no adverse consequences fall on these communities and mitigate the “us vs. them” persona. There are many tools around the world which support citizen activism in identifying and reporting hate speech.

Civil society and faith actors can advocate for the increased engagement of policy actors in this space and support legislation and accountability mechanisms to mitigate hate speech, extremist propaganda and violence. The PAVE project research did conclude that not all policy makers see the value in such legislation or even recognize there is a problem in the online space. There is a need to better understand this phenomenon and develop strategies to address them.

Policy makers and members of civil society must acknowledge and increase the meaningful engagement of women and youth in P/CVE efforts, especially in an online space. For example, the No Hate Speech Campaign (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign>) is a youth campaign led by the Council of Europe Youth Department in Germany that seeks to mobilize young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online. The official No Hate Speech Movement video explains the rationale of the campaign by providing examples of hate speech online and personal testimonies of young people. The video concludes with a short explanation of the main features of the campaign platform. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/videos1>.



Photo Source: No Hate Speech Youth Campaign Movement. (2022). Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign>

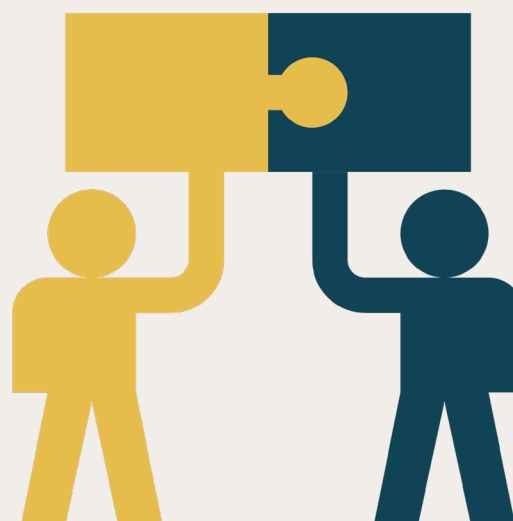
There are also many other ways for these multi-stakeholder groups to collaborate beyond counter or alternative narratives. The DARE project (<https://www.dare-h2020.org/whats-going-on.html>) has provided recommendations to advance dialogue between stakeholders outside of disseminating counter or alternative narratives or removing online content:

- Consider the use of educational toolkits. Awareness, courage, accountability and empathy, i.e. the skills required to promote moderation, need to be acquired by social

media users through training. The use of educational toolkits can contribute to this.

- Experiment with diversity and promote online contact between diverging views. Many initiatives show how bringing together different viewpoints can have a constructive effect in the real world, but online initiatives attempting to do the same are currently lagging. The Erasmus+ online platform <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-3/youth-together> that brings together youth from all sides of the Mediterranean can be considered a good practice in this context.

Many stakeholders are doing incredible work around the world on P/CVE efforts. However, there still remains coordination gaps in which are inhibiting stakeholders to collaboratively work together and strengthen/build upon their P/CVE efforts. Collaboration between state institutions, civil society and faith communities is strongly encouraged to increase resilience factors to radicalization and recruitment in online spaces.



Additional Resources for Session 3



Staying Safe Online

- ADL Cyber-Safety Action Guide. Anti-Defamation League. <https://www.adl.org/cyber-safety-action-guide#.VsiigPmLQgs>
Feminist Principles of the Internet. <https://feministinternet.org/en>
- Keeping Safe: How to Spot and Prevent Online Grooming and Radicalization. (2022). British Council. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/anyone-anywhere/explore/dark-side-web/online-grooming-radicalisatio>
- Knight, W. (2018). How to Tell if you are Interacting with a Bot? MIT Technology Review. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2018/07/18/141414/how-to-tell-if-youre-talking-to-a-bot/>
- Safe Sisters Guide. Safe Sisters. <https://safesisters.org/resources/>
- Surveillance Self-Defense: Tips, Tools and How-Tos for Safer Online Communities. Electronic Frontier Foundation. <https://ssd.eff.org/>
- Take Back the Tech. <https://takebackthetech.net/>
- What Do You Need to Protect? Security in a Box. <https://securityinabox.org/en/>

Pave Research

- Policy Briefs: Drivers of Self-Radicalization and Digital Sociability. (2021). DARE Project. https://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d5.4_policy_brief_drivers_of_self-radicalization_and_digital_sociability.pdf



The Network
for Religious
& Traditional
Peacemakers



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PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TRAINING

CERTIFICATE

**OF COMPLETION OF TRAINING MODULE 2:
HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS ONLINE FORMS
OF RECRUITMENT, PROPAGANDA AND INCITEMENT
TO VIOLENCE
TO:**

THIS CERTIFICATE IS PROUDLY PRESENTED BY

*PAVE Consortium and The Network for
Religious and Traditional Peacemakers*

Training and Learning Objectives of Module 2:

- Participants gain an understanding on key concepts and terms on how online platforms can be utilized to recruit and radicalize individuals and groups to share propaganda and incite violence, directed specifically towards youth, policymakers, civil society and religious actors and institutions.
- Participants gain an understanding on elements of a counter narrative campaign and how to create their own campaign based on their local context.
- Participants gain an understanding of how to mitigate risks while using online platforms.