#telladifferentstory

Leaders Telling a Different Story

Outcome Document





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FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce this Outcome Document of our World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid (WLACdM) ´s Preventing Violent Extremism: Leaders Telling a Different Story project. This project, supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), has aimed to support and strengthen national and regional responses to violent extremist threat by formulating evidence-based policy recommendations on the delivery of alternative or counter narratives that can effectively challenge the mindset and character of vulnerable groups and ultimately reduce recruitment and radicalization.

Current policy debate is increasingly looking at counter-narrative strategies as the soft component of the preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) agenda, addressing underlying drivers of violence, as opposed to hard law enforcement and military. In practice, however, it has been difficult to deliver this counter messaging in a comprehensive and credible fashion, addressing the vulnerabilities and underlying motivations behind enlistment in extremist groups and, most importantly, obtaining tangible impact on influencing behavioral change.

As highlighted in our Global Consensus document, it is crucial to build and engage operative partnerships with local actors, including religious and cultural communities. We need to move beyond past mistakes and stop promoting a "them and us" approach in countering extremism. We need to both behave and act differently moving forward. The current geopolitical landscape demands effective counter-narrative strategies and messaging.

A new form of policymaking, willing and able to achieve more inclusive, peaceful and shared societies, can foster a comprehensive P/CVE framework. If we are set to face the struggle against violent extremism, a democracy that delivers and leaves no one behind is a relevant part of the picture.

Against this background, the WLA-CdM is proud to present the conclusions and policy recommendations

resulting from evidence-based research and a series of strategic national and regional debates focused on how to develop and deliver more effective counter-narratives and messaging to challenge violent extremism.

The Members of the WLA-CdM call for a bolder and smarter way to address this pressing challenge. Governments cannot respond to this phenomenon alone. Governments and their institutions must serve as "facilitators" or "organizers", while communities – including youth, women and traditional and religious leaders -, often perceived as credible and better equipped actors, must lead interventions aimed at addressing underlying drivers of the phenomenon.

We call for imagination and the continuous re-examination of our own assumptions and, in some cases, major policy changes. Reversing the spread of violent extremism will take foresight, patience, political will and long-term commitment from governments and civil society alike.

We need leaders in government, international and civil society organizations, the media, and tech companies committed to building tools and mechanisms appropriate to fostering inclusion, good governance and accountability to prevent radicalization and curb extremist violence.



Vaira Vike-Freiberga World Leadership Alliance – Club de Madrid President President of Latvia (1999-2007)

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND METHODOLOGY



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, violent extremism of all kinds has been on the rise, killing innocent people and exploiting technology to spread its propaganda, ideology and recruitment. The world is in shock at the surge of violent acts by homegrown, domestic extremist groups, and by foreign fighters who are willing to give up their lives for radical views. These actions divide societies, undermine political transitions, hinder economic growth and create instability and fear.

While this is a global and interrelated phenomenon, the emergence of violent extremist groups such as Daesh, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, among others, and the motivating factors for joining them, are locally rooted, complex and diverse. Extremists have managed to interlink the global terrorism agenda with local clashes and conflict in their regions, cities and communities, which has enabled them to exploit local and individual grievances, and succeed in their efforts to recruit.

Extremist narratives are increasingly widespread in postmodern societies. Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) practitioners and policy makers seem to be very interested in narrative, and promote the idea of fighting violent extremism with counter-narrative or alternative narrative strategies and policies. Despite international efforts, existing P/CVE strategies continue to be insufficient, uncoordinated, and often outdated considering the evolving *modus operandi* of recent terrorist attacks. Moreover, most of the projects lack an analytical framework that brings together the various positive narrative efforts, sheds light on complementarities of the work done in this area and provides an understanding of the dynamics of how an individual receives and perceives the messages.

Most counter-narrative campaigns lack a specific target audience; nor do they have a global or regional framework of action to effectively create and disseminate these messages.



Delivering a counter-narrative to challenge violent extremist propaganda is vital, but alternatives must also be provided, such as opening spaces for frank dialogue, finding innovative ways of engaging with communities, embracing diversity and strengthening critical thinking to avoid feelings of frustration and marginalization, particularly among the younger generation.

This initiative identified coordination as a major gap in P/CVE responses. WLA-CdM members advocated for the need to improve and enhance coordination at several levels, within and between state actors, vertically and horizontally; civil society and other non-state actors; and donor and international development partners. State and non-state actors need to establish effective coordination mechanisms to foster synergy, amplify impact and enhance scope and coverage.

Counter-narrative and communication campaigns are not a panacea to violent extremism. Counter-radical messages are important, but in themselves are not enough.

There are multiple reasons why people feel attached to extremist narratives. In fact, the research study concluded that such messages are not key to recruitment, but a validation tool once a person has already been persuaded to join the ranks through interpersonal interactions. Hence, the need to empower local leaders based on their status in their communities was one of the main conclusions drawn.

Further considerations over certain consequences of extremism – including violation of human rights, negative impact on the gender agenda and limitations on civil society space – are also needed. In the long run, the success of P/CVE strategies will depend on how effectively the underlying causes of insecurity and instability are addressed, and how successfully measures that tackle the challenges of governance, social exclusion, marginalization and lack of opportunities are implemented.

2.

WLA-CDM APPROACH TO PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The WLA-CdM – which today has more than 100 experienced, democratically elected former presidents and prime ministers – aims to promote a vision of a world founded on democratic values and committed to effective cooperation in the fight against violent extremism. Since terrorism is a global phenomenon requiring a global response, the organization convened the **International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security** in March 2005, in commemoration of the terrorist attacks on the city of Madrid the year before. As a result of the Summit, WLA-CdM members created the **Madrid Agenda**, a plan of action to confront terrorism within a framework of democratic values.

In 2015, the WLA-CdM agreed that the challenges had evolved and a revision of its democratic response to violent extremism was needed. For this, the WLA-CdM convened the **Policy Dialogue** "Madrid+10: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism". The main outcome of the debate, the **Global Consensus**, constitutes the basis for a comprehensive, action-oriented framework that rejects one-sided and one-dimensional approaches to preventing radicalization and violent extremism.

At the global level, the WLA-CdM contributed to and supported the promotion and implementation of the recently adopted "Comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives" (S/2017/375), which emphasizes the need to take action in the field of strategic communication and social media. Building on the UN and EU recommendations on P/CVE and others' frameworks of action, our approach is to serve as a platform for debates on how governments and civil society actors can work together to develop communications and alternative narratives that counter the appeal of violence and extremist ideology.

Building on ongoing policy debates and the Global Consensus document, the WLA-CdM highlights the following elements as necessary for an effective framework for preventing and countering violent extremism:

- Better informed and evidence-based policy decisions on delivering effective narratives to prevent violent extremism. While there is a collection of tools to address the threats posed by extremist messaging, there is an urgent need to learn how to use them effectively, to tailor them to the specific context and situation, and to bring relevant stakeholders on board.
- Promotion of **shared and inclusive societies and the values of coexistence, pluralism and diversity**. It is also necessary to reflect further on some of the root causes underlying the appeal of violent extremism. This includes reflection on the importance of good governance in increasingly diverse and multicultural **Shared Societies**, as its absence appears to be a key driver of extremism.
- Support for moderate and positive voices. In connection with challenging current narratives that often prove to be counterproductive, we intend to empower and amplify positive voices and stories in order to strengthen communities' resilience to these threats.
- We live in an information age, and the "war on terror" has increasingly focused on battles over the information space. There is a need to further engage with traditional and new media in order to find better, more innovative ways to showcase positive stories to counter violent extremism. The online environment also plays a central role in allowing individuals to express their views freely on globally connected platforms, and in providing a credible and authentic voice for the community.
- Support for and promotion of spaces and platforms for youth and women's participation in preventing violent extremism. Young people and women play a significant role in generating trusted alternative narratives and sharing powerful stories that challenge the appeal of extremist messages.

3.

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: LEADERS TELLING A DIFFERENT STORY PROJECT

In view of the above, in 2016-17 the WLA-CdM, with the support of the **European Commission DG DEVCO**, implemented the project <u>"Preventing Violent Extremism: Leaders Telling a Different Story"</u>. The objective of this 12-month project was to strengthen counter-narratives and produce a multi-dimensional response to extremist messaging by channeling the collective expertise of policymakers, media representatives, experts and practitioners, and the experience of **WLA-CdM members**.

The project aimed to support national and regional responses to violent extremism threats by developing policy recommendations on how to deliver more effective alternatives/counter-narratives that can effectively challenge the mentality of vulnerable people and ultimately reduce recruitment to extremist groups. The recommendations grew out of evidence-based analysis of focus groups, high-level policy and technical dialogue, and analysis of the messages of radical groups in **three countries** that are particularly exposed to extremist violence: **Nigeria, Tunisia and Lebanon**. WLA-CdM members will present these alternative narratives and advocate for their inclusion in national action plans and global strategies for the prevention of violent extremism.



People across the target countries and regions agreed that there is a problem of legitimacy that results in an unfavorable perception of the nation-state. This condition is further aggravated by perceived violations of the social contract between those who govern and those who are governed. As social justice and economic development are not always viable, the expectations of the population are often unmet, leading to the emergence of radical movements that challenge the status quo.

The project found that countermessaging should be considered part of a comprehensive approach to the threat of violent extremism, but will not be able to solve the issue alone. P/CVE policies will only have a positive effect when coupled with good governance policies – including fair access to the rule of law, anti-corruption efforts, the development of socioeconomically underdeveloped areas and engagement with at-risk communities.

THERE IS A PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY THAT RESULTS IN AN UNFAVORABLE PERCEPTION OF THE NATION-STATE. THIS CONDITION IS FURTHER AGGRAVATED BY PERCEIVED VIOLATIONS OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT.

The process of telling stories is a powerful tool to transform social conflict. It engages both the teller and the listener, making a case for delivering truthful and real messages while challenging misconceptions, prejudice, misrepresentation and propaganda. The methodology used enabled the project team to examine how public and private actors could challenge and disrupt violent extremist messaging and, most importantly, to consider the best approach to scale up credible and positive stories (narratives) and design alternative pathways.

4 METHODOLOGY

Analysis of extremist messages

The project's content/media expert, **Javier Lesaca**, analysed the social media and engagement communication strategies of Daesh and Boko Haram. The feedback and conclusions of the qualitative research and content analysis provided the launch pad for the discussions during the regional forums, WLA-CdM high-level missions and this Final Outcome document.

Analyzing citizens' perceptions in the focus group discussions in Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon

The WLA-CdM, in collaboration with the Samir Kassir Foundation (SKF), conducted a qualitative research study in Lebanon, Tunisia and Nigeria, focusing on how citizens understand, receive and perceive messages of radical groups, and the most effective channels for such messages. The aim was to provide evidence-based findings and policy recommendations which take into account local realities, the needs of target groups, the most-used channels of communication, and the analysis of extremist groups' actual messages. The study also carried out an assessment of the language, themes and cultural images contained in the body of these messages in order to explain their appeal to and influence on the target group.

The qualitative research led by SKF involved 213 interviews in Tunisia, Lebanon and Nigeria, countries where

violent and extremist groups have implemented very successful communication campaigns and strategies to win the hearts and minds of younger generations. The analysis is based on opinion and media consumption research, conducted from January to June 2017, with Sunni male and female participants of various ages who were residents of urban and rural locations.

In January 2017, research was carried out with Nigerian audiences who resided in urban and rural areas but were interviewed in Abuja. In March, focus groups were conducted in Saida and Denniyeh in South and North Lebanon; and in April, data was collected in Siliana and in Tunisia. Analysis of the focus group discussions provided the opportunity to define (with a scientific base) the perceptions that citizens from Tunisia, Lebanon and Nigeria have about their public institutions

and about the messages released by violent extremist groups. This study provides a better understanding of certain population groups and their vulnerability to radical messages, which can inform the production and dissemination of possible alternative messages. It also provides a practical tool for governments and policy makers to use in developing and delivering an engagement strategy with their target audiences.

<u>Technical and policy dialogue: in-country high-level</u> <u>missions and national and regional consultations on P/CVE</u>

In order to accomplish the project's goals, the WLA-CdM facilitated national and regional consultations with key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, organized a MENA regional forum held in Tunisia, a national workshop in Nigeria, as well as WLA-CdM member-led missions and bilateral meetings in the three target countries. The results of the focus group discussions informed the design of the in-country strategies and were integrated into the national debates.

The **methodology** used during the high-level missions **has** been developed over the years by the WLA-CdM in different national scenarios in order to support policy reform efforts. It includes:

- i) peer-to-peer counsel
- **ii)** targeted consultations with key stakeholders
- **iii)** participation in consultative and dialogue meetings with national political and civil society leaders

Using track II public diplomacy, the project aimed to transfer knowledge and expertise to strengthen existing capacities; provide country-specific, tailor-made counsel; and advocate for political commitment for a comprehensive P/CVE strategy. The WLA-CdM sought to contribute to the ongoing national debates on how to deliver more effective counter-narrative strategies, and to support efforts under the National Action Plans and P/CVE policies in the target countries.

During the in-country missions and consultations, WLA-CdM members used their experience and leadership to foster constructive dialogue and bridge the gap between government officials and non-state actors, and to work collaboratively towards developing effective counter-narratives against violent extremism. The high-level missions provided

WLA-CDM MEMBERS USED THEIR EXPERIENCE AND LEADERSHIP TO FOSTER CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AND BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND NON-STATE ACTORS.

visibility to key issues and challenges among diverse constituencies, increased civil society's access to decision making in the political spheres, and had the convening power to bring different actors together in a neutral, non-partisan space for open and inclusive dialogue:

✓ In Tunisia, the high-level mission took place on 2-3 May, two days before the regional meeting. The mission was led by WLA-CdM members Prime Minister Sadig Al Mahdi of Sudan and Prime Minister Petre **Roman** of Romania. Both members have been in Tunisia before and have a strong knowledge of the country's democratic processes and the challenges posed by terrorism. The WLA-CdM delegation met with relevant government representatives – including Ms. Faten **Kallel**, Secretary of State to the Ministry of Youth and Sports responsible for Youth, the General Director of the National Youth Observatory, and members of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee – to discuss national P/CVE dynamics and the findings of the focus group discussions in the country. The mission also benefited from the leadership and contribution of WLA-CdM member Prime Minister Hamadi **Jebali**, who also took part in the MENA regional forum.

✓ In Lebanon, a high-level mission led by WLA-CdM member Prime Minister Zlatko Lagumdzija of Bosnia and Herzegovina was organized on 29-30 May in Beirut. The mission was highly visible and the delegation met with the highest level of government, including Prime Minister of Lebanon Saad Al Hariri, Minister of State for Refugee Affairs Moueen Merrabi, Lebanon's Grand Mufti Abdel-Latif Deryan, and Minister of Interior and Municipalities Nohad Machnouk. The mission also included meetings with WLA-CdM members in Lebanon, Prime Minister Fouad **Siniora** and President Amin **Gemayel**. Meeting discussions were fruitful and reflected the need for a more evidence-based type of research. The focus group findings were received positively and resonated with similar experiences in the country. The mission was also an opportunity to share and discuss some of the main recommendations and discussions from the MENA regional meeting, which took place two weeks before, in Tunisia.

In Nigeria, the WLA-CdM organized a national workshop, Preventing Violent Extremism in Nigeria: Effective Narratives and Messaging, chaired and hosted by WLA-CdM member President Olusegun Obasanjo in Abuja on 23-24 May 2017, in collaboration with the Office of the



National Security Advisor to the President (ONSA).

The Government of Nigeria showed strong engagement and support. An important outcome of the *Civil Society Working Group*, organized within the national workshop in Nigeria, is the Civil Society Declaration on Processes towards Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Nigeria. CSOs had the opportunity to directly present and discuss their views with government representatives. Both CSOs and government representatives highly valued this opportunity, and thanked WLA-CdM for convening the meeting. Frank and open debates between government and civil society, and active participation of civil society – including youth leaders from different parts of the country – were recorded as the main contributions to the process.

Following up on the Nigeria national workshop, the WLA-CdM conducted a high-level mission led by members President Festus **Mogae** (Botswana) and President Cassam **Uteem** (Mauritius). The delegation presented the conclusions and key messages from the national workshop to the **Acting President of Nigeria**, Professor Yemi **Osinbajo**.

"I am pleased you are taking it [P/CVE] on. It is a very complex problem for those of us who have to deal with it on a daily basis, and you are doing an excellent job."

Professor Yemi Osinbajo, Acting President of Nigeria

At the regional level, a **MENA regional forum** brought together WLA-CdM members with key regional and national policy makers and P/CVE practitioners, to discuss how to reframe the narrative debate through the development of evidence-based recommendations on effective communication strategies, messaging and counternarratives. More than 60 high-powered participants from multilateral regional organizations, governments and civil society discussed project findings, shared experiences and best practices, and strengthened networks.

Structure of the report

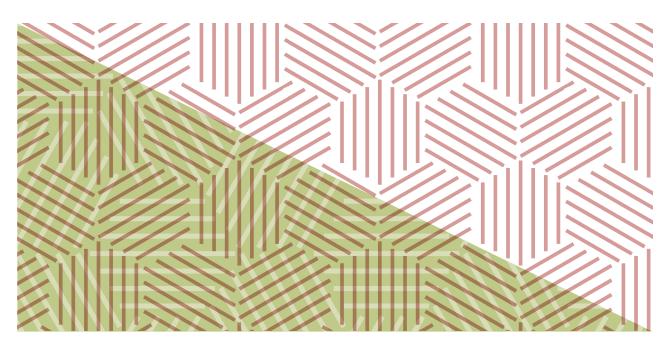
This Outcome Document of the Preventing Violent Extremism: Leaders Telling a Different Story project is a contribution to the P/CVE debate, which has become a focal point of policy intervention and research of governments and NGOs worldwide.

Following this chapter in which the project, study aims and methodology are introduced, Chapter II, written by the project's content/media expert Javier Lesaca, describes the historical and sociological context that has generated a new wave of violent extremism around the world. It also addresses how the economic and social crisis suffered by millions has seriously damaged citizens' trust in their public institutions. The democratization of communications technologies has empowered people and sub-national groups; it has given them the capability to communicate directly with their target audiences, with no need for the "mediation" of traditional media. This double crisis has created a completely new context in terms of how public opinion is configured and how citizen mobilization occurs, which needs to be explained and defined.

The analysis of violent extremist groups' communication strategies shows the complexity of postmodernity in all its magnitude. Evidence suggests that the rise and advance of Daesh and other violent extremist groups is not the result of a "clash of civilizations"; rather, it is a social phenomenon that assumes and universalizes much of the modern tradition, but mutates towards a political project focused on demolishing this modern inheritance.

Chapter III presents the methodological framework used to analyse the complexity of the postmodern world and the root causes of violent extremism, and presents the main findings and recommendations of the analysis of extremist messages and the focus group discussions in Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon. Although the issue of violent extremism is within the field of social sciences, the multiple variables that shape radicalism required the use of methodologies applied in other fields. Focus groups, big data analysis and system dynamics thinking enabled the research team to gather the necessary information to understand radical messages and narratives and develop policy recommendations on how to respond.

In Chapter IV, the document presents a proposal for countering violent extremism and extremist narratives. First, it outlines the conclusions and recommendations from the technical and policy dialogue and consultations in Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon, along with the common findings and recommendations for P/CVE drawn from the focus group discussions in these countries. This is followed by a conclusion and evidence-based recommendations, which offer a series of guiding points for public and private institutions, societies and international organizations on how to build an effective strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism.



CHAPTER II:

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE CONTEXT OF POSTMODERNITY

by Javier Lesaca



1.

CONTEMPORARY VIOLENT EXTREMISM: A GLOBAL REBELLION AGAINST THE MODERN WORLD

Art expresses the cultural, political and social evolution of humanity. The personalization of the faces of the sculptures of the Roman era reflects a society concerned with the existence, dignity and legitimacy of the private life of individuals. The grandiose and majestic figures of the Romanesque period show the omnipresence of the Christian worldview of the European Middle Ages and the supremacy of symbolic elements. The "modern" was born as an artistic concept in the Florence of the Medici, with Brunelleschi's discovery of perspective around 1420. The works of the European geniuses of the Renaissance, such as Michelangelo and Galileo, symbolize a political conception of society that gives pre-eminence to objective and precise fact, in contrast with the subjective perceptions that dominated earlier years.

The search for perspective, accuracy and reason shaped the beginning of a political and cultural era that transformed first the West, and then the rest of the world, forever, and that has come down to the present day in the political form of the nation-state. This administrative tool has made it possible to consolidate liberal democracies and the rule of law not only in the West, but also in countries and societies of the five continents.



¹ Nemo, Philippe. What is the West? Duquesne University Press. 2004. P. 27

² Ballesteros, Jesús. Postmodernidad: decadencia o resistencia. Tecnos. 1989. P. 17

³ Ibid. P. 18

The adverse (and varied) reactions to modernity will shape the evolution of art and political history in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century. These heterogeneous, even contradictory, manifestations reflect a confusing and complex political, cultural and social panorama that has been defined as "postmodernity", and which threatens not only ideas that have remained hegemonic for centuries (reason, objectivity, perspective), but also the political and administrative expression of these ideas: the nation-state and, consequently, liberal democracies and the rule of law itself.

Feelings, perceptions, supra and sub-national collective identities, myths and legends compete again, both in the cultural and the political field, to leave behind the era of reason, objectivity and perspective, and lead to a new historical period which has not yet been defined or concretized, but which is irreversibly eroding modern institutions and the pillars on which they were founded and sustained.

The violent and extremist group Daesh, among others, is a paradigmatic manifestation of this confusing postmodern era. The first public evidence of Daesh activity in the Sunni areas of Iraq and Syria dates from the middle of 2013. In just four years, until the summer of 2017, this identity-based, ultraviolent and reactionary movement has seduced and attracted more than 30,000 young people from 100 different countries that have joined its ranks. In less than five years, Daesh has managed to set itself up as one of the main ideological references of violent and radical Islamism, an ideological current with more than a century of tradition. It has even managed to compete directly (even with violence) with other groups like Al-Qaeda in the struggle to champion the radical Islamist cause worldwide.

DAESH IS A
PARADIGMATIC
MANIFESTATION OF
THIS CONFUSING
POSTMODERN ERA.

⁴ Counter-Terrorism Committee. Security Council. United Nations. https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/foreign-terrorist-fighters/

It is debatable whether it is possible to say categorically that Daesh has succeeded politically. On the one hand, it is fair to recognize that the military defeats it suffered during 2016 and 2017 have prevented Daesh from establishing its main project: the creation of a physical "caliphate" joining the Sunni regions of Iraq and Syria, which have been separated since 1917 by borders established by the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

However, the political project of Daesh is not limited to controlling the terrain of Iraqi and Syrian Sunni regions. Much of the terrorist group's strategy has been aimed at winning the hearts and minds of Sunni Iraqi and Syrian citizens who have felt marginalized and abandoned politically over the last decade.

Daesh has been successful in channelling this political and social unrest, and has managed to ensure that it is perceived by some of the Sunni population as "the lesser evil" compared to other THE TERRORIST GROUP'S STRATEGY HAS BEEN AIMED AT WINNING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF SUNNI IRAQI AND SYRIAN CITIZENS WHO HAVE FELT MARGINALIZED AND ABANDONED POLITICALLY OVER THE LAST DECADE.

political alternatives. The initial social and political success of Daesh among the Sunni community in Iraq and Syria has served as an inspiring example for other violent and extremist groups in other regions of the Middle East and Africa. In the case of Nigeria, the Boko Haram terrorist group has managed to compete with and supplant the state in large areas of the north of the country, not only by using terror and violence but also by creating a network of alliances.

Thus, the sudden rise of Daesh is not an isolated fact. The "end of history" described by **Francis Fukuyama**⁵ is turning out to be more convulsive and less tedious than some historians predicted after the end of the Cold War.

The crisis of modernity has fostered what Mark Juergensmeyer defines as a "global rebellion" of "ethnic or religious alliances with strong passions" against the "secular state".

According to **Juergensmeyer**, one of the leading experts in the WLA-CdM 2005 Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, the groups that are part of this global rebellion "know what they are fighting against, but they do not know what they are proposing".' Isaiah Berlin agrees that "what we are seeing is a worldwide reaction against the central doctrines of liberal rationalism; a confused effort to return to an ancient morality".8

⁵ Fukuyama, Francis. The End of History and the Last Man. Avon Books. 1992

⁶ Juergensmeyer, Mark. Global Rebellion. Religious Challenges to the Secular State, From Christian Militias to Al Qaeda. University of California Press. 2008. P. 2

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Berlin, Isaiah. The Crooked Timber of Humanity. Princeton University Press. 2013. P. 270

2.

UNIVERSAL CIVILIZATION OR A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS? THE IDEOLOGICAL HETEROGENEITY OF ANTI-MODERN MOVEMENTS



Modernity is intrinsically linked to what is known as the West. **Philippe Nemo** associates "Western civilization" with terms like constitutional status, democracy, intellectual freedom, critical rational thinking, science, liberal economy and private property, all of which belong to the modern era. Nemo believes that these elements, typical of modernity, have been universalized in all corners of the planet, leading humanity to "converge on a single story", saying: "We can observe a final convergence of human groups that gives individuals the feeling that they now belong to the same humanity that lives on the same planet. This is the greatest achievement of modernity, and the West has been its precursor." Other authors share this theory, such as V.S. Naipaul, who considers that humanity is approaching a "universal civilization". 11

⁹ Nemo, Philippe. What is the West? Duquesne University Press. 2004. P. 3

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Naipaul, V.S. Our Universal Civilization. The 1990 Wriston Lecture, the Manhattan Institute, New York Review of Books, 30 October 1990. P. 20

Thinkers like former President of the Czech Republic and WLA-CdM member, Vaclav Havel, agreed with this statement, albeit with nuances. According to Havel, "we now live in a single planetary civilization, which is, however, nothing more than a tenuous varnish that covers or conceals the immense variety of cultures, peoples, religious worlds, historical traditions and attitudes historically forged".12

On the other hand, there is another current of thought led by Samuel P. Huntington that denies the creation of a common civilization and defends the existence of different civilizations (Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist and Japanese). 13 These civilizations are not only clearly differentiated, they are doomed to collide with and confront each other. The scientific analysis of public communications and the cultural production of postmodern groups such as Daesh and Boko Haram, which allegedly fight the principles of modernity and the West, can provide valuable information in the debate between the advocates of a "single civilization" and those who bet on the "clash of civilizations".

According to the pre-deterministic classification of civilizations proposed by **Huntington**, Daesh should be included within the categorization "Islamic civilization". However, the analysis of the messages disseminated by this violent terrorist group evidences Huntington's limitations in understanding the complexity of the contemporary postmodern movement.

> There are at least three typical elements in Daesh's cultural production and discourse that suggest that this group is not an alien and antagonistic element of modernity and the West, but part of the same evolution of the modern world. These three elements are: the defence of the concept of nation-state; the application of scientific and technological thought and the universality of the rule of law; and the complete assimilation of Western culture and aesthetics. Each of these elements is analysed in more detail below.

¹² Havel, Vaclav, Civilization's Thin Veneer, Harvard Magazine 97. July-August 1995. P. 32

Huntington, Samuel P. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. Paidós. 2006. P. 30-31

The claim of the nation-state

The "modern" element most prominent in the dialectic of Daesh is its appropriation of the concept of nationstate. Since its genesis, the Islamic world has claimed its membership in a collective community: the "Islamic ummah", understood as the community of believers around the world. **Benedict Anderson** believes that the concept of

ummah, like that of other religious communities, shares with the nation-state the fact of being an "imagined community". However, as Anderson himself explains, these "imagined" religious communities differ from the modern state in that they conceive themselves as "cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a super terrestrial order of power". 14

However, Daesh goes beyond the ummah and claims control over an administration with a modern spirit and aspect, legitimized not only by a "super terrestrial order", but also by an earthly legality. "This is a message to all Muslims: doctors, engineers, academics and specialists. We call on experts in Islamic jurisprudence and judges, as well as people with military, administrative, public service, doctors, medical and engineering expertise in all specialties. We remind them that they must fear God and consider the obligation of emigration (Hijra), in order to respond to the needs of the Muslims". 15 Daesh published this advertisement in English in the first issue of Dabig magazine on 5 July 2014; the group was already building its nation-state in modern and secular terms, not just religious ones.

> "There is an urgent need for radical reforms and radical social change to support the legitimacy of the nation-state."

Sadig Al Mahdi: CdM Member, Prime **Minister of Sudan** (1966-1967; 1986-1989)

In October 2014, four months after the call to hire experts to build their administration, jihadists already boasted of having their first public institutions in full operation: "Daesh soldiers came to the lands of lihad to fulfill their oath before God, sacrificing their lives and shedding their blood for their

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. Verso. 2006. P. 12

Dabiq, no. 1, 5 July 2014

cause. And while they are willing to take part in the battle against unbelief and its many faces in search of shahadah (martyrdom), they have come to understand that a state cannot be established and maintained without making sure that a part of the soldiers take care of the worldly affairs of Muslims. So they have dealt with administrative work and have set out to establish, support and maintain numerous institutions that Muslims need for their daily lives." This is an excerpt from an article entitled "Services for Muslims", which was released with a photograph of a girl suffering from cancer being treated by a doctor at Mosul Hospital, and another image reflecting the work of a cleaning brigade in the streets of Mosul.16

The defence of the nation-state by Daesh is the culmination of a process and an internal debate experienced within the Islamist movement since its founding, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to the present day. Islamism has evolved from the absolute rejection of the nationstate to its defence and implementation. In that sense, it could be said that in the last century Islamism has been "modernized".

Al Qaeda's Egyptian intellectual leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, went a step further at the beginning of the twenty-first century and openly advocated the creation of a modern state: "Armies achieve victory only when the infantry take over the land. Similarly, the mujahideen of the Islamic movement will not triumph against the global coalition until they have a fundamental base in the heart of the Islamic world. All the means and plans that we have created to mobilize our nation will be in the air if no tangible gain or benefit is achieved, or unless they lead to the establishment

of the State of the Caliphate in the heart of the Islamic world... The establishment of the Muslim state in the heart of the Islamic world is not an easy task or a goal that is within reach. But it is the hope of the Muslim nation to reinstate the fallen caliphate and regain glory." 17

According to **Hans Khon**, "the nation was the favourite word of the champions of constitutionalism, secularization, equality and centralization, of those who wanted to modernize society and rationalize its administrative structure". 18 The "nation", however, has also become a favourite word of those who want to end constitutionalism, secularization and equality.

ISLAMISM HAS EVOLVED FROM THE ABSOLUTE REJECTION OF THE NATION-STATE TO ITS DEFENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION. IT COULD BE SAID THAT IN THE LAST CENTURY ISLAMISM HAS BEEN "MODERNIZED".

¹⁶ *Dabiq*, no. 4, 12 October 2014

¹⁷ Mansfield, Laura. His Own Words. Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri. TLG Publications. 2006. P.214

¹⁸ Khon, Hans, The Idea of Nationalism. Transaction Publishers. 1961

Scientific thinking and the rule of law

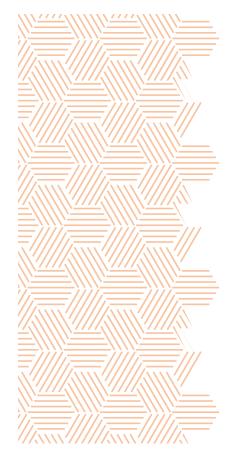
The assimilation of the concept of nationstate is not the only concession that socalled "Islamic civilization" has made to the supposed "Western civilization"; other essential elements of Western civilization inherited from Greek and Roman times

such as science, school or the rule of law, 19 have also been assumed as transcendental elements of the postmodern political project of Daesh.

The caliphate's call in 2014 for "doctors, engineers, academics and specialists" to build its state demonstrates the **confidence** that this movement, theoretically opposed to modernity, has in modern scientific thinking. Daesh did not call for imams, clerics and reciters of the Quran to build its society; the group specifically called for its political project to be built by scientists.

On 21 May 2015, Dabig magazine published a threepage English report entitled "The Health System in the Caliphate", in which it assured all Muslims of the existence of a "comprehensive health system consisting of a network of hospitals and clinics in all cities". The text indicated that this network offered "broad coverage of medical services," ranging from "complex operations" to "specific services such as cupping," adding that, "the entire health service of the Caliphate is supervised by qualified and trained professionals.²¹ Dabig also announced the creation of two new medical colleges in Al Raga and Mosul, "with the aim of ensuring the quality of service in the future with qualified medical personnel". The publication also reported on the curriculum of the medical studies of the caliphate, which would last three years and cover "the areas of surgery, orthopedics, gynecology and obstetrics, cardiology, pediatrics, emergency medicine, ophthalmology, urology, thoracic surgery and vascular [surgery/medicine]".22

Another fundamental modern element in "Western civilization" is the importance placed on education and school in shaping society. This principle is also assumed by the heads of Daesh. In fact, the Caliphate Diwan (ministry) of Teaching was the first ministry created by Daesh after it gained control of its first zones in Iraq and Syria. This



ministry is responsible for designing the academic programme of schools in the areas under Daesh control, including recruiting and training teachers, and designing educational materials. It was established at the beginning of 2014, even before the caliphate was officially established.

Nemo, Philippe. What is the West? Duquesne University Press. 2004. P. 12-16 and 17-23

Dabiq, no. 1, 5 July 2014

Dabiq, no. 9, 21 May 2015 21

Ibid.

In the moments before the emergence of Daesh, the lack of security, order and justice was one of the main complaints of the citizens of Sunni communities in Iraq and Syria. The inability of the Iragi and Syrian states to enforce the law and establish order in these areas fostered legal and personal insecurity that harmed citizens' quality of life and community life. The establishment of a particular rule of law accompanied the military and administrative control of Daesh in these regions: the application of Sharia law, Islamic courts, moral police (Hisba) and ministries of public security and public morality. The application of this legal order also affects administrative law, tribal disputes, protection of private property, family registration and even the tax and finance system itself. Daesh has even created its own security system and financial system, which includes the creation of a new currency of legal use.

This favourable and open attitude towards scientific. educational and legislative advances is not a novelty in the so-called Islamic civilization. On the contrary, the Islamist movement's main precursors defended from the outset advances in these fields. Hassan Al Bana acknowledged in his writings that Western civilization "was brilliant for its virtue and perfection in the field of science for many years and that its states and nations subjugated the whole world thanks to the results of science".23 Isaiah Berlin does not see this phenomenon as contradictory: "people in developing countries can protest against the use of these methods (technical and scientific) in the self-interest of their internal or external enemies. But they do not protest against the technological implementation itself, and in fact they bet on adapting and perfecting it for the promotion of their own interests." 24

Western culture and aesthetics

Another "modern" element with which Daesh has surprised public opinion has been the complete assimilation of the popular cultural

elements of so-called Western civilization. One of the earliestknown official Daesh spokesmen was Mohammed Emwazi, a young British citizen known worldwide as "Jihadi John" or "John the Jihadist". He was not a student of the Quran, nor the cleric of a well-known mosque, nor a spiritual or political leader. Jihadi John was a frustrated Hip-Hop singer from the outskirts of London. He spoke and dressed in accordance with the Western subculture of which he was part – a way of talking, dressing and singing with which tens of thousands of young people of the same generation identified.

OVER 50 PERCENT OF DAESH'S VIDEOS SHOWING EXPLICIT VIOLENCE ARE DIRECTLY INSPIRED BY AND COPY FROM THE MOST POPULAR MOVIES, VIDEO GAMES AND MUSIC VIDEOS IN THE GLOBAL CULTURE.25

²³ Kaplan, Roy H. Understanding Conflict and Change in a Multicultural World. Rowman & Littlefield. 2014. P. 156

²⁴ Berlin, Isaiah. The Crooked Timber of Humanity. Princeton University Press. 2013. P. 273

Lesaca Javier. Armas de Seducción Masiva. Ediciones Península. June 2017. P. 230

Jihadi John embodied a strategy consciously adopted by Daesh, namely speaking the same cultural language as its potential audiences. Over 50 percent of Daesh's videos showing explicit violence are directly inspired by and copy from the most popular movies, video games and music videos in the global culture.25 Daesh believes that there is a global culture, at least in aesthetic terms, and this global culture or aesthetic has its creative source in Western countries.

Samuel P. Huntington himself recognized at the end of the twentieth century the existence of a "universal popular culture". According to Huntingdon, "US control of the world's film, television and video industries surpasses even its dominance of the aeronautical industry. Of the 100 films most viewed worldwide in 1993, eighty-eight were American, and two US and two European organizations dominate the distribution of news on a global scale."26 However, Huntington doubts that the taste for "Western aesthetics" means there is support for its values and principles. This author believes that "there is little or no evidence to support the assumption that the emergence of generalized planetary communications is creating a significant convergence in attitudes and beliefs". 27 In fact, he considers that "non-Western" civilizations can understand this Western cultural hegemony as a form of aggression. "Communications on a planetary scale are one of the most important contemporary manifestations of Western power. However, this Western hegemony moves populist politicians from non-Western societies to condemn Western cultural imperialism and to bring together their supporters to defend the survival and integrity of their native culture. The extent to which the West dominates planetary communications is, therefore, an important source of the resentment and hostility of non-Western peoples against the West."28

However, this study's scientific analysis of the communications of Daesh shows the very opposite. It is not the case that the "cultural hegemony of the West" generates rejection. On the contrary, it generates fascination and provides the inspiration for cultural products designed to convince audiences to adopt a set of values that is contrary to the founding principles of modernity.

THE "CULTURAL HEGEMONY OF THE WEST" GENERATES FASCINATION AND PROVIDES THE INSPIRATION FOR **CULTURAL PRODUCTS** DESIGNED TO CONVINCE **AUDIENCES TO ADOPT A** SET OF VALUES THAT IS CONTRARY TO THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF MODERNITY.



Huntington, Samuel P. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. Paidós. 2006. P. 25

²⁷

Ibid.

Daesh's cultural and dialectical analysis shows us the complexity of postmodernity in all its magnitude. Evidence suggests that Daesh is not the result of a "clash of civilizations"; rather, it is the result of a Western civilization that has been assumed and universalized by all corners of the planet. However, how can it be explained that an evolution of modernity itself generates a movement that attacks modernity's fundamental principles? Perhaps the best way to define this phenomenon is to find a metaphor in the field of medical science. Cancer is a mutation produced by the body that generates malignant cells that attack its own organs. The rise and advance of Daesh and other violent and extremist groups could be considered in the same way: a social phenomenon that inherits much of the modern tradition, but mutates towards a political project focused on demolishing this modern inheritance.

3.

A POSTMODERN REACTION TO THE FRUSTRATION GENERATED BY MODERNITY



The **frustration** generated by unfulfilled expectations has been the **worst enemy of modernity**. Progress and development linked to modernity are beyond doubt. As Nemo points out, the increase in world population over the last three centuries is the best reflection of "the great step that has taken place in the evolution of the species". However, this progress is not always perceived positively, due to the nonfulfillment of expectations. Progress can be measured objectively, while expectations and frustrations are subjective and therefore much more difficult to measure and manage.

Mark Juergensmeyer points out that it is "experiences" and "frustrations" that trigger

violence and extremism: "I do not believe that social and economic inequalities automatically lead to violence, considering that practically every person on the planet has had experiences of economic problems and social complications during our lifetime. In the cases examined, there is a combination of factors that make the difference: the intensity with which these factors have been experienced and the availability of a political dialectic that articulates the frustrations. Also important is the intimacy and intensity with which the humiliation is felt and the degree to which the person feels damaged his honor and his respectability."³⁰

²⁹ Nemo, Philippe. What is the West? Duquesne University Press. 2004. P. 91

³⁰ Juergensmeyer, Mark. Terror in the Mind of God. University of California Press. 2001. P. 198

The context in which Daesh and other postmodern violent movements of the twenty-first century have arisen has many similarities to previous crises undergone by modernity in the last three centuries. The economic, political and institutional crisis that shocked the world in 2008 has severely eroded the credibility of public institutions.

"The youth in the region are not satisfied and barely survive the situation because they are not fully digested into society. There is a kind of rejection, they feel marginalized."

Sadig Al Mahdi, Prime Minister of Sudan and Club de Madrid Member

This crisis of confidence in the state has affected both developed and developing countries. In the case of Europe, for example, Eurobarometer surveys show that European citizens have experienced a great loss of confidence in their institutions. For example, in early 2007, citizens' confidence in the EU was 57 percent. Five years later, in the spring of 2012, confidence in the same institution was 31 percent. This figure remained unchanged during 2013 and 2014. In the case of the national governments of the EU, confidence in spring 2007 was 43 percent. By October 2013, it had plummeted to just 23 percent.³¹

In the case of countries in the Middle East, loss of public confidence in their institutions has also become more pronounced in the last decade. Iraq and Syria (the two countries where Daesh is established) are clear examples of this institutional and political crisis. Iraq is perceived to be the seventh most corrupt country in the world, 32 while Syria occupies the fourteenth position, 33 according to Transparency International's corruption perception index, which measures a total of 168 countries.

The greatest enemy of modernity throughout its history has been the frustration generated by the breach of its promises: the failure of a social contract that is based on the idea of an unlimited and endless welfare state. This frustration has been channelled by various anti-modern movements: romanticism, nationalism, populism and religious extremism; all of them generated by "Western civilization" itself, but which attack its basic principles, acting as a social metastasis.

Violent extremism must be understood in this context of frustration, nonfulfillment of expectations and the breaking of the social contract between citizens and public institutions, a frustration that has been fuelled by the new means of creating and shaping public opinion. The technological revolution in the communications sector has created the ideal conditions to exponentially increase perceptions and feelings of frustration among citizens in all corners of the world.

³¹ Eurobarometer EB 82.

³² Transparency International. Iraq, http://www.transparency.org/country#IRQ

³³ Transparency International. Syria, http://www.transparency.org/country#SYR

4.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION AND THE BATTLE OF IMAGES, PERCEPTIONS AND APPROACHES



In the same way that the birth of the printing press was the trigger for the profound political, religious and social changes that have taken place in Europe since the fifteenth century, especially the rise of the nation-state,³⁴ the eruption of new communications technologies may be triggering a new social and political phenomenon which has implications for the very roots of democracy and the nation-state.³⁵ **Peter Dahlgren** warned in 2005 of the complex implications of the Internet for democracies.³⁶ Four years later, **Manuel Castells** warned that "the process of formation and exercise of power relations is transformed radically into the new organizational and technological context derived from the rise of global digital communication networks".³⁷

³⁴ Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. Verso. London. 1983

³⁵ Dahlgren, Peter. Media and Political Engagement. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 2009

³⁶ Dahlgren, Peter. «The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation». http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10584600590933160. 2005

³⁷ Castells, Manuel. Comunicación y poder. Alianza Editorial. Madrid. 2009

The crisis of credibility of public institutions has coincided with an **unprecedented technological empowerment** that has spread to all corners of the world, with practically no exceptions. In Iraq, for example, the country where Daesh emerged at the end of 2013, a survey carried out in 2015 showed that 92.2 percent of adults had a mobile phone; one-third of citizens (34.1 percent) had used their mobile to connect to the Internet during the previous week; 40.3 percent of citizens surveyed acknowledged having connected to the Internet during the previous week; and 73.9 percent of Internet users said they frequently watched television programmes, news, video clips, sports and movies. Thirty percent of respondents also acknowledged having used social networks during the previous week.³⁸

This technological revolution has provided many citizens with tools that enable them, with greater ease than ever, to influence the process of shaping public opinion "without having to go through the doors of the traditional media", ³⁹ as explained by Nacos in 2002. In 2009, Manuel Castells defined this as "mass self-communication", a phenomenon "that decisively increases autonomy in the sense that users become emitters and receivers of the message". ⁴⁰

These two circumstances, **crisis of credibility** and technological empowerment, have eroded the traditional process of creating and shaping public opinion, while weakening governments' ability to generate and vertically transmit hegemonic approaches and frameworks. This situation is exploited by sub-national (including some extremist and violent) postmodern groups, social movements and lobby groups (identified or undercover), which can now communicate directly with their audiences

UNLIKE TRADITIONAL MEDIA, THE NEW COMMUNICATIONS SCENARIO IS NOT BASED ON THE TRANSMISSION OF DATA AND FACTS, BUT ON THE EFFECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF EMOTIVE STORIES, SUBJECTIVITIES AND FEELINGS.

and influence public opinion through novel and effective marketing techniques. Unlike traditional media, the new communications scenario is not based on the transmission of data and facts, but on the effective dissemination of emotive stories, subjectivities and feelings, which makes public opinion less informed and easier to manipulate.

³⁸ Gallup, «Broadcasting Board of Governors. Media Use in Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan». https://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2015/03/Iraq-brief-FINAL.pdf. March 2015

³⁹ Nacos, Brigitte L. Mass-Mediated Terrorism. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Inc. New York. 2002

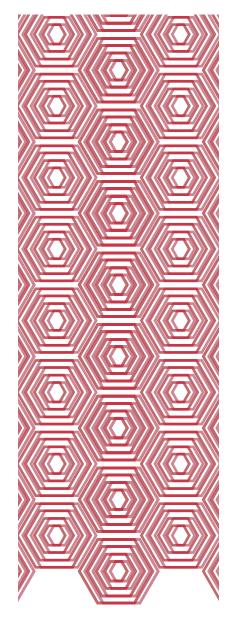
⁴⁰ Castells, Manuel. Alianza Editorial. Madrid. 2009

The facts suggest that the use of the Internet, digital social platforms and direct digital marketing techniques has reconfigured how public opinion is created, and has altered the roles traditionally assigned to political and administrative institutions, the media and citizens. This change in the way public opinion is constructed has had direct effects on public policy, governance and – as shown by the communications strategy launched by Daesh in the summer of 2014 – on the realm of modernity itself.

A communications strategy based on a transmedia narrative⁴¹ that is attractive and directly distributed to potential audiences can strengthen allegiance to a violent and extremist sub-national group. The quality and quantity of these allegiances can even become a threat to the legitimacy of a nation-state by competing directly with it. Iraq and Syria are cases in point.

Before the rise of the Internet and social media, the public, government officials and the mass media formed a "triangle" of related interests that contributed to the formation of public opinion.42 The relationship between these actors and the way in which news frames were generated and distributed was reflected in the cascade activation model described by Robert M. Entman, who describes the process of construction of reality by "framing" messages in terms of meanings and interpretations; these frames are distributed or "cascaded" from the highest levels of political administration down to the public and citizens, with the complicity of the media. 43

The printing press favored the creation of modernity. It enabled states to have a monopoly on creating hegemonic images, frames and stereotypes to define themselves and others, and to build imagined communities based on reason, enlightenment, scientific thinking, individual freedom and the rule of law. The twenty-first century's technological revolution has broken the nation-state's monopoly on forming public opinion and enabled postmodern violent and extremist groups, whose agenda is to break with the heritage of modernity, to create effective images, frames and approaches that resonate with and shape public opinion.



⁴¹ Lesaca, Javier. Armas de seducción Masiva. Ediciones Península. June 2017

⁴² Nacos, Brigitte L. Mass-Mediated Terrorism. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. New York. 2002

Entman, Robert M. Projections of Power. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 2004.

5.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE EVOLUTION OF THE STORY



Daesh embodies the complexity of contemporary postmodernism. It is a political and social movement that virulently attacks the principles and values that make up modernity: enlightened thinking, liberal democracy and the nation-state. However, it is also true that this group has not arisen from a civilization alien to the West. On the contrary, it **has emerged as a reaction to modernity, from within modernity**; a social metastasis generated by so-called Western civilization.

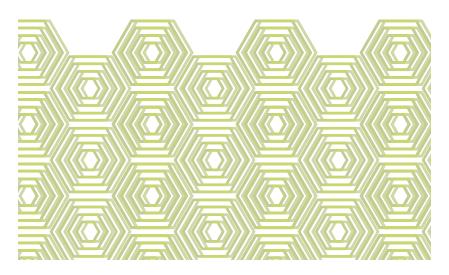
Daesh and other violent and extremist groups share several characteristics with other postmodern groups which, over the last two centuries, have risen against modernity, especially with certain romantic and nationalist movements that generated an unprecedented wave of violence in twentieth-century Europe. The frustration generated by the unfulfilled expectations of modernity was the catalyst for the romantic nationalism that led Europe to two world wars. That same frustration also roused radical Islamist movements in countries like Egypt in the early twentieth century.

The social and economic crisis that was experienced globally in the first decade of the twenty-first century has generated a deep crisis of confidence between the citizens of Europe and the Arab countries towards their public institutions, creating civil unrest. This civil unrest increased exponentially due to the new context of shaping public opinion that caused institutions to lose their monopoly in the creation of images and hegemonic messages in society. This has generated a social context favourable to the emergence of diverse postmodern groups that have been able to channel citizens' frustration to attack nation-states and the bases of modernity (in this regard, Daesh has been particularly successful).

DAESH IS A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT THAT VIRULENTLY ATTACKS THE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES THAT MAKE UP MODERNITY: ENLIGHTENED THINKING, LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND THE NATION-STATE.

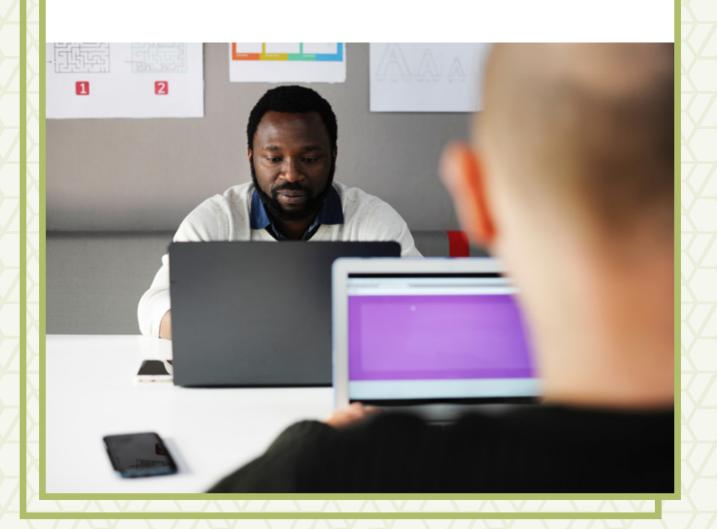
Analysing the main socio-economic drivers in countries like Nigeria, Tunisia and Lebanon, as well as the perceptions of the citizens of those countries, might improve understanding of the context in which radical and extremist messages are formed and adopted. Exploring the cultural products of violent extremist groups such as Daesh can result in an in-depth understanding of the dialectics, representations, approaches and messages that these postmodern groups have generated in order to channel public frustration towards their own interests and objectives.

The lessons learned from the scientific analysis of these groups may be useful in generating an effective antidote to the current weak points of the nation-state by reinforcing new principles and identities, and proposing new forms of governance, open democracies and more inclusive societies.



CHAPTER III:

FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS OF EXTREMIST MESSAGES AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS



xtremist and violent groups are aware that much of their success depends on winning the battle of public opinion.
Therefore, these organizations dedicate abundant resources to winning the hearts and minds of their potential audiences, and seducing younger generations with messages that exalt and justify violence.

The construction of public opinion in the second decade of the twenty-first century is shaped by a phenomenon known as "post-truth". This concept defines how perceptions and feelings have displaced objective data as key elements in the construction of public opinion.

This chapter defines how violent and extremist groups seduce their audiences through messages based on feelings and perceptions in countries such as Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon. For this, a double analysis was carried out in each country, in addition to the high-level technical and policy dialogue (the findings of which are presented in the following chapter):

"POST-TRUTH". THIS
CONCEPT DEFINES HOW
PERCEPTIONS AND FEELINGS
HAVE DISPLACED OBJECTIVE
DATA AS KEY ELEMENTS
IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF
PUBLIC OPINION.



First, this chapter offers an analysis of the digital messages that violent and extremist groups launched in Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon from January 2014 to April 2017. This research tries to define some key elements used by extremist groups to engage with their potential audiences.



It then presents the results of the focus groups conducted in each of these countries in an attempt to understand how citizens perceive the messages of violent and extremist groups as well as the counter-radical messages released by their countries' media and public institutions.

1.

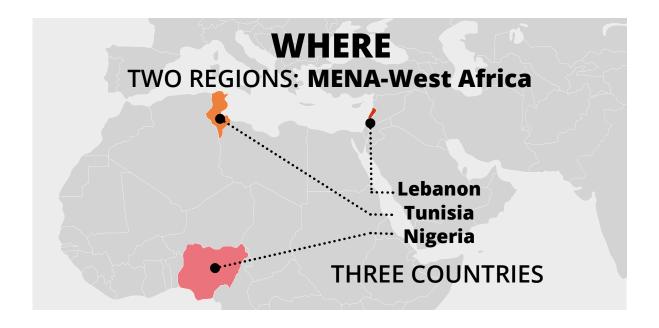
METHODOLOGY OF THE FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH IN TUNISIA, NIGERIA AND LEBANON

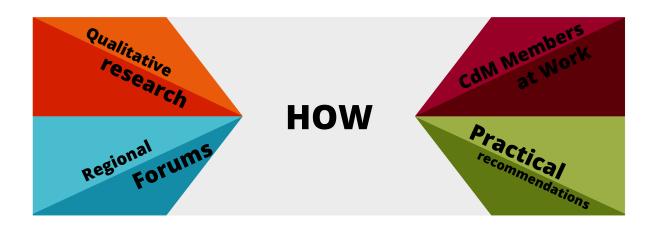
This research was conducted by academic and policy consultant Dr. Drew Mikhael and SKF Executive Director Ayman Mhanna, between January and June 2017. It consisted of a number of distinct and interrelated aspects that sought to draw together a comprehensive research strategy:

- ✓ **Contextual analysis.** It was crucial to understand the current and individual contexts of each case study country to enable the accurate mapping of the key issues around violent extremism, in order to gain full insight into how radical and counter-radical messaging affects the day-to-day life of citizens and the security of these countries.
- ✓ **Discussion with implementing partners**⁴⁴ **in Nigeria, Lebanon and Tunisia** to fully inform the organizations which recruited participants for focus group exercises and collected radical and counter-radical messages for the discussion guide to be used in the focus groups (see below). It was important that implementing partners had a detailed understanding of the guiding methodology, so they could select messages that were most appropriate to their context and recruit participants effectively.
- ✓ **Developing and testing a discussion guide** to be used in focus groups to collect data. Messages to be tested were selected from a range of options given to the SKF team by the implementation teams to ensure primacy of local contexts.
- ▲ Recruiting focus group participants and facilitators. Local facilitators were recruited to ensure that there would be no misinterpretation during discussions. After each focus group, a detailed debrief took place with the principal investigator, Dr. Drew Mikhael, to complete field notes to use for the analysis.

⁴⁴ Implementing partners: Neem Foundation (Nigeria), NOVACT – International Institute for Nonviolent Action (Tunisia) and Samir Kassir Foundation (Lebanon)

Analysing the findings. Focus groups were thematically transcribed and translated into English by the facilitators to ensure accuracy. Transcripts were then analysed by the principal investigator, noting differences in opinions between age groups and genders, and ensuring that the cross-cutting opinions were triangulated in each focus group. The findings that are highlighted in this report are based on at least three participants having described the same phenomena. Each case study country was analysed individually, so that lessons and policy recommendations could be formulated taking into account the specific political and social context. For the purposes of this report, a **Common findings and recommendations** section is included in Chapter 4 so that the key phenomenon of radicalization through messaging can be understood across geographical areas.





To enable cross-country analysis, dependent variables were needed. This was achieved through the categorization of participants. The three case study countries have very different political histories, which would render most comparisons unwieldy; however, focusing on the socio-economic profile of focus group participants allows for reliable cross-comparison by age and gender, using the following categorization: young males in their twenties, young females in their twenties, male teenagers, and male and female heads of households

The purpose of the research was to test the efficacy of radical recruitment, so it was crucial that the participants were drawn from the primary target audience of radical messages, namely "at risk" Sunni communities. A typology of characteristics was needed to ensure commonality between the three case studies. Communities had the same socio-economic profile, were majority Sunni, had a recent history of inter-sectarian conflict, and had members of the community who had become radicalized. Throughout all the focus groups educational attainment was randomized and uneven, with Tunisia having the highest levels of education and Nigeria the lowest. These levels of achievement reflect the broader educational differences between the three countries. In addition, in all three countries a control focus group was run that had a different demographic from the other tested groups. The participants of these focus groups were selected from socially and politically relevant groups that would provide distinctly different viewpoints from the other focus groups, allowing us the views of other participants to be tested more thoroughly.

The discussion guide was developed using principles of interpretive qualitative design. As a result, **the aim** of the questions was not to usher respondents into providing answers but **to give them space to consider their own values and interpretations.** The areas

examined were covered with a set of baseline questions that would be asked for each of the messages shown, and a series of prompts were added to encourage unpacking of the subject matter. This meant that respondents' attitudes to the messages but also their own analysis of the wider issues of radical recruitment and counter-narratives could come to the fore. The messages themselves were selected from a shortlist by the SKF in Lebanon, the Neem Foundation in Nigeria and NOVACT (a non-governmental organization) in Tunisia. Messages were chosen to cover a range of media: radio, online videos, social media posts, newspaper articles, and television announcements and footage. The discussion guide was then tested and adjusted for clarity, prior to the first focus group, with the facilitators, the principal investigator and WLA-CdM representatives.

THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH WAS TO TEST THE EFFICACY OF RADICAL RECRUITMENT



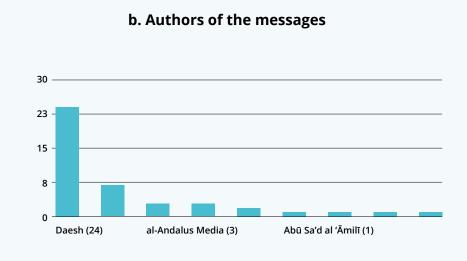
Due to the sensitive nature of the topic it was of utmost importance that careful consideration be paid to the ethical concerns of the research. To ensure adherence to ethical research practices, all participants were fully informed of the nature of the research, and reassured that any means of identifying them including their name, school (when applicable) and regional location would not be included in the study for any purposes other than to map who participated. All quotations have been anonymized.



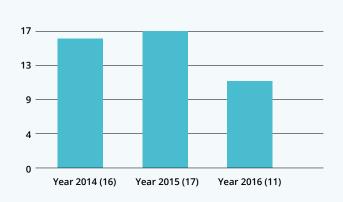
2.1 Quantitative and qualitative analysis of violent and extremist messages in Tunisia (2014-2017)

a. Total number of messages distributed by extremist groups to Tunisian audiences through social media since January 2014:

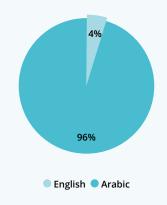
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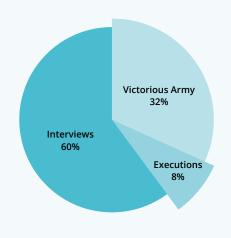
c. Evolution in the distribution of the messaging



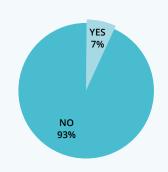
d. Language of the messages



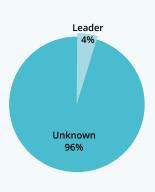
e. Thematic content of the messages



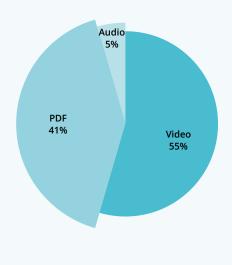
f. Popular cultural references in the messages



g. Spokespeople of the messages



h. Format of the messages



i. Average duration of the video messages:

11.2 MINUTES

j. Main findings of the analysis of violent and extremist messages in Tunisia

- The terrorist group Daesh is the main source of radical messages for the population of Tunisia. At least eight other institutions have been detected as issuing radical messages. However, none of these compares with Daesh in terms of either quantity or quality of messages released.
- Sixty percent of the messages distributed by radicals in Tunisia show young people explaining why they have joined the terrorist organization.

 Tunisia is this fifth most targeted country by Daesh communication campaigns, as shown in the graph in Appendix 1, demonstrating the group's great interest in engaging the audiences of that country.
- Video is the main platform used by violent and extremist groups to distribute its digital and online messages in Tunisia.

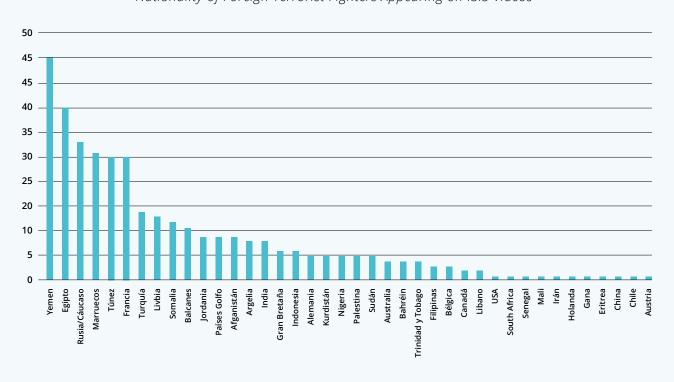
2.2 Recommendations to counter terrorist messages in Tunisia, according to the analysis of the videos

Tunisia is, after Iraq and Syria, the country where extremist and violent groups like ISIS are being more successful in seducing their younger audiences. According to a study published by the Center for American Progress in March 2016, between 6,000 and 7,000 young Tunisians had traveled to Syria and Iraq to join the ranks of the Islamic State⁴⁵. This figure places Tunisia as the foreign country with the largest number of citizens fighting in the ISIS ranks. It is followed by Saudi Arabia with a figure ranging between 2,000 and 2,500 citizens.

Violent and extremist groups know that there is an audience in Tunisia that is potentially susceptible to accepting their messages. It is no coincidence that this country is the fifth in the world that has received more messages from groups like ISIS. As shown in the following figure, 25 Tunisians have appeared on ISIS videos explaining why they have joined this group.

TUNISIA IS, AFTER IRAQ AND SYRIA, THE COUNTRY WHERE EXTREMIST AND VIOLENT GROUPS LIKE ISIS ARE BEING MORE SUCCESSFUL IN SEDUCING THEIR YOUNGER AUDIENCES.

Nationality of Foreign Terrorist Fighters Appearing on ISIS Videos



⁴⁵ Center for American Progress. The Flow of Foreign Fighters to the Islamic State. March 2016. https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/17132821/ForeignFighters-report.pdf

Given this situation, public institutions and Tunisian civil society have the challenge of generating an alternative narrative that competes in quantity and quality with that which violent and extremist groups spread.

The narrative analysis of the violent groups in Tunisia and specifically the research on the ISIS communication strategy suggest that some of the major councils that should be implemented would be the following:

Disruption with high magnitude and appropriate placing of the messages. The messages of violent and extremist groups in Tunisia are abundant and repetitive. Thus, it is of particular interest to detect in which platforms and in which digital conversations these messages are being disseminated to counteract and disrupt them with large-scale alternative narratives in the same conversations.

Audiovisual and multiplatform content. Violent and extremist groups in Tunisia are speaking to their audiences, in more than 50% of cases, with audiovisual languages in video format. In this way, disruption with alternative narratives should consider with special interest the use of audiovisual language that can be seen on mobile devices and shared through social networks.

Adapting the cultural language of the messages. Communication products that disseminate alternative narratives should speak the same cultural language as potential audiences receiving these messages. To this end, public institutions and civil society must count on the support of the vibrant and vivid audiovisual, artistic and entertainment sector of Tunisia. Potential radicalization audiences will only pay attention to alternative narratives if they speak the same cultural language. Terrorist groups like ISIS have put great emphasis on framing their communication products with scenes and popular cultural references from their potential audiences.

Find credible voices. The main theme used by violent organizations to seduce their audiences in Tunisia are interviews with young Tunisians explaining why they have joined extremist movements. This is one of the main challenges facing public institutions in Tunisia and civil society: finding credible voices within the country that disseminate alternative narratives to violence and extremism. It is urgent to find respected and admired young men and women in Tunisia who will become the visible face of the alternative to violence.

2.3 Focus group study findings in Tunisia

Among Middle East and North African states, Tunisia has experienced the highest number of citizens leaving the country to fight for radical groups in Syria, at 6,000.46 Given this figure, the terrorist attacks and ongoing recruitment in several Tunisian cities, including Sousse and the capital, Tunis, there is an urgent need to tackle the problem of extremism. The Tunisian government has opted to roll out a large P/CVE policy that includes counter-messaging programmes as well as a hard security response with the imposition of a state of emergency, which was extended in June 2017 for a further four months. 47 The terrorist attacks in Tunisia have contributed to the country's current economic crisis, as the tourism trade has significantly diminished.48 Moreover, the governmental response to attacks and the continuing fear among Tunisians over the shrinking space of civil liberties has crippled the country's progress post-Arab spring.49

The messages analysed for the Tunisian research reflected local dynamics; they included messages from the militia group Ansar Al-Sharia which has been operating in the country, as well as messages from Daesh. The local implementing partner, NOVACT (International Institute for Nonviolent Action), that works on the promotion of international peace building actions in conflict situations, was able to

ensure that the selected messages fit with the local reality and used its networks to recruit participants for the focus groups.

Urban participants for the focus groups were recruited from Tunis, and rural participants from Siliana. Tunis is currently considered a hotbed of extremist activity; over 1,000 indictments for terrorism offences have been made in a four-year period in the governorates composing the Grand-Tunis. 50 Siliana is a small rural town 127 km north-west of Tunis, and is classed as an area in need of development by the Tunisian government. In response to high levels of extremist recruitment activity, in the last few years the town has also been at the centre of the fight against extremist groups and counter-terrorist operations.⁵¹ As a control group, NOVACT recruited Libyan former prisoners now living in Tunisia.

⁴⁶ Benmelech, Efraim and Esteban F. Klor. *What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?*. No. w22190. National Bureau of Economic Research. 2016

⁴⁷ Middle East Eye. Tunisia extends state of emergency. 16.5.17. Available online at: http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/state-emergency-tunisia-extended-other-month-561936463, link working as of 25.6.17

⁴⁸ Saleh, Heba. Tunisia faces economic battle as ISIS drives tourists away'. Financial Times. 16.8.16. Available online at: https://www.ft.com/content/ac65c310-5faa-11e6-ae3f-77baadeb1c93?mhq5j=e2, link working as of 25.6.17

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch. Available online at: https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/tunisia, link working as of 25.6.17

⁵⁰ Tunisian centre for research and studies on terrorism launched in Tunis, 26.10.16. Available online at: https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Society/8361916-tunisian-centre-for-research-and, link working as of 25.6.17

⁵¹ The New Arab. Tunisian troops kill "suspected terrorist". 4.1.16. Available online at: https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/1/4/tunisian-troops-kill-suspected-terrorist, link working as of 25.6.17

Media consumption habits

Participants triangulated their news intake by watching and reading a variety of different media sources to verify information. This concept of confirmation was strongly stated across all groups due to the **general lack of trust in media**. As a Tunisian female in her twenties explained: "Media is like a conflict between people in power and between ideologies, plus media is not neutral." Even clearer was the lack of trust in Tunisian channels, especially privately owned channels, which all groups considered to only offer the viewpoint of the owner who holds personal political interests.

"When encountering news on the media we nevertrustitimmediately. We make conclusions only after comparing diverse information."

Tunisian male head of household

There was no clear generational gap in the use of social media, as different ages and genders used the Internet and social media to access news. Normally this was part of the triangulation process to verify what participants had seen or heard in traditional media. Two news channels came out as very popular among the different groups. The first of these was Mosaïque FM; the reason for its popularity is that it brings breaking news every hour, which helps legitimize the content because it makes news harder to "fake". In addition, as a male from Siliana in his twenties described: "It can be trusted because it reports news from every part of the country as it has a big number of reporters." However, selective reporting was a source of complaint, usually framed as editorial bias due to private ownership. The second popular channel was Al-Watania. As a public channel, it was generally considered more trustworthy; however, a number of participants pointed out that this was not due to the quality of reporting, but to its history. As a male in his twenties from Tunis described: "It's a traditional habit, as it used to be the only TV channel in Tunisia."

A key emergent theme that was highly prevalent across all age groups and genders was the context of a lack of critical thinking skills. Participants explained **that the education system in Tunisia did a poor job of preparing people to understand the differences between opinions and facts**. As a male head of household in Siliana stated: "Consciousness is what matters and the receiver of information should be aware and intelligent enough to distinguish between right and wrong and to understand the unsaid" (including biases of certain media channels).

The **concept of lack of critical thinking was further developed**; one female head of household from Tunis shared deep misgivings about what children do online, claiming that **not enough parents have an understanding of their children's online habits.** This was considered dangerous: "the most dangerous media tool is Facebook and social media in general; it is so easy to manipulate people, and it diffuses a lot of false news. Some people can believe anything they see and hear, and the fact of sharing information via social media can affect a lot of people and make them misunderstand and create chaos among them." This point was countered by a number of younger participants who claimed that social media is also a method in which they can spread information quickly to help local inhabitants of those communities, through the creation of private Facebook groups.

Another key point regarding the use of social media was that a number of participants expressed fear about sharing information online, and exercised careful self-management of their social media presence. This was particularly highlighted by male teenagers from Tunis; one said that this group "does not share news concerning terrorist attacks to avoid troubles with the police, who have already arrested some people we know because they were sharing images and videos related to violent extremism." Young men in the urban and rural locations were very wary of sharing information due to fear of arrest or mistreatment at the hands of the security forces.

Reactions to and interpretations of radical messages

Several key reactions emerged when participants viewed the radical messages. The first was the rush to reject the idea that extremist groups are truly "Islamic" despite their use of Islamic pretexts. Two female teenagers from Tunis described their own journey in which they became close to a radical group (name omitted for safety purposes) through online curiosity that eventually led to them attending meetings

in person. One of the females explained the "pitch" to gain their interest: "Recruiters make their own way to seduce others, they make their acts beautiful and noble and they make you believe that killing in the name of Islam is preferred by God. They brainwash!"

The concept and term of "brainwashing" featured in many of the focus groups, and it was important to understand this further by trying to unpack the meaning as it related to religion and the use of Islamic precepts. Participants explained that the use of Islamic doctrine was the basis on which radical groups can reshape the way the viewer sees religion, as a gateway to radicalization.

"Violent groups are using religion to brainwash and recruit people; religion is a sensitive subject and can influence easily, especially when there is a huge lack of awareness."

Female head of household from Siliana

Radical groups have cleverly employed Islamic principles not only to establish a rapport with the viewer, but also as a tool to create further division between citizens and government, as a female teenager in Siliana described: "Violent groups want us to believe that the police and army are non-believers because they don't abide with what God said; they should be killed, and that's a method recruiters use to seduce youngsters, especially since there is already a huge gap between them and the police."

It was stated several times that the **use of threatening language by radical groups comes across as self-confidence** because they have been able to commit acts of violence against Tunisians. In a group in Siliana, males in their twenties pointed out that radical groups were always (in person and in messages) "trying to show that they are an example of success. The government is to blame for being absent while these campaigns were taking place."

The second important concept to emerge consistently from the focus groups was participants' **unprompted connection between radical groups and the Tunisian**

government's lack of service provision. When comparing radical and counter-radical messages, participants would note that radical groups portray themselves as caring in the absence of the government.

Radical groups take advantage of the lack of service provision, stepping into the vacuum left by the government and ensuring that they are seen as looking after local interests. A Tunisbased female in her twenties described how the extremist group Ansar Al-Sharia would organise events in her village, ostensibly to help homeless and poor families but actually in order "to seduce marginalized and poor people". Another female participant also witnessed an event where "Hizb ut-Tahrir put a tent in a popular neighbourhood and started distributing food to people, and in each food bag were flyers and documents supporting their ideologies and convincing people to join them."

Another point worth noting is the strength with which older participants, both male and female, pointed to the **normalization of violent actions**, groups and their messages through traditional media outlets.

The ready access to material was an issue of concern; as a mother from Tunis stated: "These types of videos are targeting youth and encouraging them to join Daesh... you find these videos on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter... and youth is the number one target. Social media is the first source of information for them. Now you find a 12-year-old with a smartphone and Facebook account, and it has a major impact on them."

Younger participants said that **radical groups target them for recruitment on a personal basis,** and explained the lengths that recruiters go to: "Some violent extremist groups used to meet students in front of their primary schools. They did not ask them to join any group, but they kept asking and trying to convince them to start going to the mosques, to worship God as a way to salvation and purgation of the soul. They succeeded in convincing and recruiting them; one of the students joined Daesh in less than eight months." It is worth noting that young people who participated in the study showed awareness that their demographic was a prime target, and highlighted the rationale of radical groups clearly; as a teenage female from Siliana pointed out: "Extremist groups are focusing on marginalized groups, poor people, and those who are against the state. It depends on the awareness of the person; they're focusing on youth because they're still in the process of building their personality and beliefs. For the poor, they seduce them with money and power."

"Now, after the Tunisian Revolution, and especially after hearing about a lot of the attacks and witnessing some, this type of news is not so shocking anymore... it's becoming normal."

Tunis-based mother

Reactions to and interpretations of counter-radical messages

It was clear from the discussion with the participants that the potential for a **positive effect of counter-radical messages would be limited if it was the only measure taken;** as a male head of household from Siliana said: "Fighting terrorism via media is an illusion. Such a measure ought to be taken as part of a wider context bringing together many techniques and many parts." As another male head of household from Siliana explained: "The images are not enough to fulfill the goal. These images should be inserted in a whole system of rebuilding awareness inside Tunisian society."

The theme of unity as a method of building a social contract that draws the whole of Tunisian society together was repeated throughout focus groups. As a mother from Siliana stated: "[It] is the best counter-radical messaging, since it shows that all categories of the society are uniting to fight violence and extremists, and it also encourages everybody and enables them to be more resilient."

No matter how inspiring a particular message may or may not be, the central focus of measures to tackle radicalization would be for the government to provide better services, thereby limiting the spaces in which radical groups can operate and the weaknesses they can exploit. Participants pointed to the security situation in Siliana, where there is less government presence and freer movement of radical groups.

"The [Interior] Ministry is not doing its job; they are letting these terrorists go in and out of the country and they are part of what's going on and what we're suffering from... The Interior Ministry's campaign should address that. They need to do their job so that we will be safe."

Female in her twenties describing the situation on the ground

The effectiveness of radical groups in showing themselves as stepping in to supply services in the absence of public services is a central problem, and all participants acknowledged that the government needs to do more. One Libyan ex-prisoner, who had shared a jail with members of radical Islamic groups, used the following analogy after viewing the messages: "Imagine I have two neighbours, a strong one and a weak one. I would choose the strong neighbour as a friend. The government is the weak neighbour, and this weakness is clearly shown in these media materials."

Simply put, participants did not feel the state to be a positive influence in their lives. When the Tunisian government was mentioned in focus groups, the discussion was invariably critical. The relationship between citizens and the security forces (and in particular, the police) was alarming. A range of negative comments and discussions were noted across all genders and ages groups, including a number of accusations of sexual harassment, extortion, poor performance and fear of any type of interaction. One ex-prisoner went so far as to state: "Why should we care if a radical kills a police officer?"

2.4 Specific recommendations based on the findings of the focus groups in Tunisia

The following recommendations take into consideration the context of Tunisia and the information drawn from the participants. The overarching message from focus groups in this country was that counter-radical messages are not a panacea – the primary concerns of the citizens must also be addressed. The discussions gathered a great deal of evidence on how to build and deliver a new narrative effectively:

- Seriously engage in security sector reform to build trust between the legal authority of the state and the people. Focus on community policing and anti-corruption. Public trust in the police is very low, and no credible counter-terrorist operation can work without buy-in from ordinary Tunisians. Addressing the trust deficit through substantial security sector reform will be a crucial step to rebuilding a working relationship between legitimate state authorities and the people they are protecting.
- Establish medium and long-term counter-terrorism approaches that are not reliant on curtaining civil liberties. Instituting a national strategy that allows Tunisians the chance to live as normal life as possible while still being secure is not an easy task, but these conditions are not mutually exclusive. Having a citizenry that is able to enjoy its freedom and work with police rather than fear them is a fundamental step in achieving the working relationship between security forces and people that is needed to help tackle extremism in the long-term.
- Address the gap in the establishment of the rule of law in all areas of the country. Citizens need to see and feel a positive influence of the state on their day-to-day lives, which will also limit the physical locations in which extremist groups can operate. Without this daily presence of the state, Tunisians will naturally look to any surrogate that can offer them services, especially in terms of protection.
- Address disparity in economic development. Uneven development, especially in rural areas, feeds the narrative that central government authorities exists to serve the interests of urban elites.



Reform education to move away from rote-based teaching to help create critical thinking skills among students. The education system in Tunisia does not encourage students to critically engage with the world around them. Even in third-level education, Tunisians are rarely given the opportunity through their formal education to debate and discuss issues that affect their lives. Encouraging an open society that tackles the issues of the day helps to empower citizens and builds their resilience against groups who offer another vision of the world. One female teacher from Tunis said: "One of the major flaws is the educational system; it is a poor system and there are no cultural aspects in it, there are no artistic aspects, it's black and white for them, they don't see colours. They hate school and education."



Counter-radical messages should be tailored to reflect local contexts. Messages get stale very quickly, and if they are too general they are not appealing. Counter-radical messages must show the realities of the problems facing Tunisians in different areas, and what the government is doing to address these issues. Messages should have high production values and feature interesting visuals; and they should be produced by sources that are trusted. Messages should be changed frequently to keep them fresh, topical and interesting.

3. NIGERIA

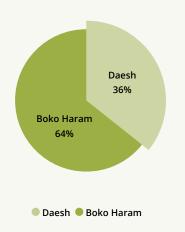
3.1 Quantitative and qualitative analysis of violent and extremist messages in Nigeria (2012-2017)

a. Total number of messages distributed through social media:

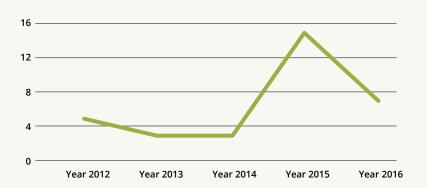
39

(all of the messages were in video format)

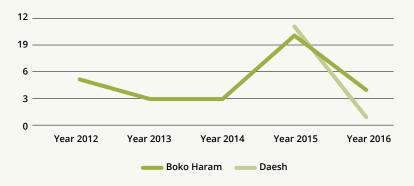
b. Authors of the videos

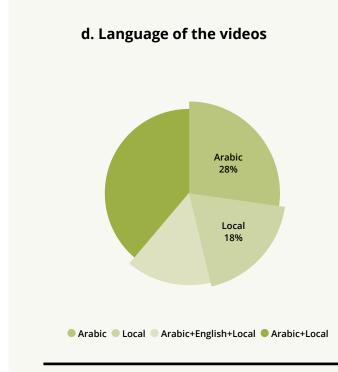


c. Evolution in the distribution of the videos



Evolution in distribution of extremist videos in Nigeria, by group

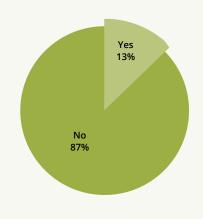




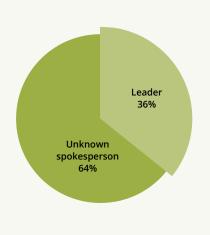




f. Popular cultural references in the videos



g. Spokespeople in the videos



h. Average duration of the videos

17.6 MINUTES

i. Main findings of the analysis of violent extremist messages in Nigeria

- Communication officers of **Daesh and Boko Haram in Nigeria have insufficient skills, resources and imagination to create a sophisticated and seductive narrative**. Only 4 of the 39 videos distributed by extremist groups since 2012 make use of familiar cultural references for their potential audiences, and none of the 39 videos has a positive or constructive message.
- Another weakness of the videos, particularly those of Boko Haram, are their **excessive dependence on the leader as a spokesperson**. Thirty percent of extremist videos in Nigeria star Boko Haram leader, Amir Imam Abu Bakr Shekau. Younger generations may not feel attracted to an organization that appears overly hierarchical; the approach also makes the messages seem monotonous, old-fashioned and egocentric.
- The story of abducted girls is probably one of the most poignant and potent stories of all those related to Boko Haram and Daesh in Nigeria. Boko Haram has published two videos referring to this subject.
- Finally, the videos by both Daesh and Boko Haram in Nigeria are **relatively long**. The average duration of the 39 videos analysed is 17.6 minutes, which is likely to reduce their appeal and effectiveness.

3.2 Specific recommendations to counter terrorist messages in Nigeria, according to the analysis of the videos

The narrative distributed by the violent extremist groups in Nigeria is elaborated without taking into account thematic diversity or care for aesthetics. This reveals significant gaps and lack of knowledge. Nigeria's public institutions have the opportunity to initiate communication campaigns targeted Muslim-based audiences in the north of the country highlighting progress in public service management, implementation of justice and security, or the fight against corruption. These messages should be accompanied by efforts to build alliances with communities, media and local and religious leaders. These groups have

the legitimacy to convey the message to public opinion effectively.

Similarly, Nigerian authorities should promote alliances with the country's entertainment, marketing and cultural sectors to adapt the narratives to the cultural language of the population of Northern Nigeria, which is more vulnerable to radicalization. Violent extremist groups maintain obsolete aesthetic and audiovisual languages. In this sense, a strategy with the aforementioned sectors would allow to generate narratives more seductive than those of the extremist groups.

The messages that violent and extremist groups carry out in Nigeria stand out because of the importance they attach to the leader. This may challenge their credibilty and create an opportunity to develop alternative strategies. **Community leaders**, young people of Sunni origin in the north of the country, women victims of abuse and violence by extremist organizations may prove more credible than leaders of violent groups. Nigerian public institutions and civil society should systematize the search for these actors and compile their testimonies to counterprogram the messages of extremist leaders.

Violent
extremist
groups maintain
obsolete
aesthetic and
audiovisual
languages in
Nigeria.

3.3 Focus group study findings in Nigeria

Since 2009, Boko Haram has led an insurgency against the government of Nigeria in the North East region of the country, resulting in the deaths of over 20,000 people and the internal displacement of over two million people. 52 In addition to the violence and destruction of property which has severely disrupted economic activity and daily life, the insurgency has caused a division in Nigerian society, fracturing relations across tribes and sects and leading to a critically damaged social contract.⁵³ Boko Haram's violent campaign has not just been about territorial conquest, but is as much about offering a different vision of society: one that is focused on **anti-Western values** (primarily anti-science education), anti-Shia

sentiment, and limiting the role of women and girls.⁵⁴

It was crucial that Boko Haram's core ideology was present in the radical messages included in the discussion guide to ensure that the research was contextually accurate. To achieve this, SKF relied heavily on the Neem Foundation, an organization that works with those directly affected by the insurgency to prevent violence through building inclusive communities and raising the standard of education and psychosocial care⁵⁵ The Neem Foundation was fundamental in using local insight, with its expert staff and over 30 years of cumulative experience in P/CVE and community engagement, to ensure

⁵² Anderson, Mark. 'Nigeria suffers highest number civilian deaths in African war zone'. *The Guardian*. 23.1.15. Available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/23/boko-haram-nigeria-civilian-death-toll-highest-acled-african-war-zones, link working as of 25.6.17

⁵³ Langer, Arnim, Amélie Godefroidt and Bart Meuleman. "Killing people, dividing a nation? Analyzing student perceptions of the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria." Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 40.5 (2017): 419-438

A basic profile of Boko Haram can be found on BBC News, available online at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501, link working as of 25.6.17. Boko Haram has targeted Nigerian Shia consistently, such as with the suicide bomb in Kano: Osborne, Samuel and Buchanan Troup, Rose, "Kano blast: Boko Haram leaves 21 dead as Shia Muslim procession attacked in Nigeria". 27-11-15. *The Independent*. Available online at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/kano-blast-suicide-bomb-leaves-many-dead-as-shia-muslim-procession-attacked-in-nigeria-a6751866.html, link working as of 25.6.17

⁵⁵ http://www.neemfoundation.org.ng/who-we-are/about-neem

the highest standards and quality in selecting appropriate messages and recruiting focus group participants.

The Neem Foundation recruited 63 participants to take part in the focus groups. Unlike in Tunisia and Lebanon, where the rural focus group participants came from one town, participants in Nigeria came from different areas in the North East, the region most affected by the

insurgency. While this is a weakness insofar as it cannot provide a deeper understanding of one community, it did allow for a snapshot of wider perspectives that could be compared and contrasted in the focus groups. For the urban setting, participants from all six Area Councils of the Abuja Federal Capital Territory were present. One additional focus group was conducted with teenage students from an Abuja-based Islamic school.

Media consumption habits

Each focus group started with a set of baseline questions that examined the respondents' media consumption habits as well as their levels of trust in news programmes. These questions provided a sense of participants' engagement with news programmes, levels of media literacy, and an understanding of what issues they found important.

There was a **striking level of uniformity in the distrust of the media**, with participants from all gender and age groups expressing general scepticism towards the media "There is some information that you come across and you know it is a lie; on the radio and the television not everything you hear is true." The primary solution to this problem was to gain a snapshot of different media from different sources to ascertain the accuracy of a particular story. As a male rural teenager said, once the same message was repeated across different media outlets it became verified: "You can cross-check on other channels or platforms; if you hear the same information, you have to believe in it." Similarly, a rural female in her twenties stated that news could not be trusted until it had been repeated across different outlets: "[Then] I agree with them because they all give news and they tend to duplicate each other, which shows what they are saying is true."

Differences in the type of media most widely used were along generational, not gender lines. Generally, older females and males showed distrust in social media platforms. As a male head of household from Abuja claimed, lack of ethics in social media meant that it was less trustworthy: "If they [traditional media] spread a lie there are punishments or consequences, unlike social media." Both female and male heads of households stated they were aware that their children used social media but said they were not interested in policing their children's presence online. Despite younger participants using social media more than older groups, they were not uncritical towards it.

"Social media is not always accurate. We can never expect it to be accurate because the people disseminating this information are human beings like me and you."

A rural male in his twenties

What was very significant in the Nigerian context was that the preferred choice of media was largely based on convenience; an urban female in her twenties, when asked why she used the Internet to obtain her information, said: "First of all, it is easy, accessible. I'm always with my phone 24 hours, so when the news comes in I read it, before I even get to TV." Use of radio was widespread among older females and males, who favoured it for ease of maintenance and its portable nature; as a rural male head of household explained: "The reason I do not really bother with other sources is because I do not have the time to read newspapers, or to be browsing; the radio allows you to continue with whatever you like to do, for example if you are farming or have a store you can work and listen to the radio, and you can continue listening while you are doing other things." Similarly, an urban female head of household said: "I like radio because for me it's convenient when I am doing the work that I have to do." Both older males and females also expressed that their experience of growing up with radio was an important factor in why they continued to use the medium.

Accuracy of news was of paramount importance among all groups in terms of their preference for a particular media source, with a number of factors also highlighted as important. An urban female in her twenties said that she prefers to consume media that looks to "bring together different types of people; Hausas, Igbos, different dialects together". The importance of language was underlined by all focus groups, with participants expressing more trust in news in their own dialect. As one head of household stated: "The radio operators know we listen and it is tailored to us, that's why we listen more, because most of what they say is in Hausa and we are Hausa speakers." Both females and males of all ages expressed that **news sources** with journalists who are local mean that the news is more accurate: an urban male in his twenties stated: "One of the reasons I trust the BBC radio is because they have reporters on the ground, who listen to the news like everyone else and are also part of certain communities, so they know what is happening." A history of accuracy based on reporting was vital in building a reputation for trustworthiness that was then rewarded with the loyalty of viewers and readers.

There was a culture of sharing and debating news and current events on an inter-personal basis, and seeking a personal understanding of current affairs by creating consensus with friends and family. An urban female head of household described watching unfolding events and coming to a shared understanding: "When there is any breaking news we deliberate this with my son until we reach a compromise on what is the latest." Males of different generations stated that if they see news in certain locations they will call friends in the area to discuss the truthfulness of the report. Both young males and females also said that they read and share information online; however, females were more discerning with regard to sharing articles. As an urban female teenager stated: "You do not know who the information comes from." Both female and male younger generations read and sometimes take part in online discussions to understand wider views on issues, with males taking part more often than females.

News that was considered to be most important tended to focus on issues regarding security and the ongoing insurgency. Participants were keen to be updated on the progress, or lack of it, of the government's and the military's actions against Boko Haram, the status of the kidnapped Chibok girls and other major stories on security issues. Rural male teenagers described their use of Facebook and WhatsApp for a range of reasons, from sharing information on security concerns to complaining about the state of politics.

"Security is very important. At the height of the insurgency, when we were all afraid, there was this group on WhatsApp that I joined that shared tips on staying safe, but with reduced Boko Haram attacks we do not contribute much in the group anymore,"

Male participant from a rural area

A gendered difference is that **females tended to need more confirmation than males for them to believe news**. When asking for confirmation among the family, females would nearly always ask a male, be it a brother, father, cousin or uncle. Most female participants did not even think to ask a female member of her family to confirm the news, as highlighted by this young urban female: "NTA [Nigerian Television Authority] reported on the Chibok girls and the 21 that were released, and they showed us the 21 girls. From there I asked my husband for verification of news stories if I was still confused or sceptical." There was disagreement about the most trustworthy sources, with **females tending to prefer television reporting over radio, due to the presence of visuals that added layers of authenticity**. Among younger females who used social media more than older females, the presence of visuals was again seen as a confirmation of accuracy.

Reactions to and interpretations of radical messages

It was interesting that, when presented with the radical messages, there was a clear gender divide. Males, both younger and older, were decidedly more reticent and in some cases stated that they had not seen any of the materials shown, nor any messages similar to them. This was an interesting dynamic in and of itself, because the female participants said that they frequently came across the radical messages on social media.

Reflecting on the radical messages, participants expressed the view that **Boko Haram's** content was designed to cause fear and chaos; as one young male student described when reading a radical speech by Abubakar Shekau: "He is trying to make false alarm, trying to give everyone heart attack. As I read this message I'm getting scared now... we just have to be security conscious." The group's ability to promote fear is magnified among females, who are acutely vulnerable; as a teenage rural female explained: "I was scared. There was a rumour that Boko Haram threatened our school

once, saying they will come to kidnap girls, and after I heard that, from then on I would never sit in the middle of class, I would sit close to windows so if necessary I could jump out and run."

Despite the recent decrease in the intensity of violence, fear among participants remained high due to perceptions of Boko Haram's ability: "Boko Haram have ammunition that the government doesn't have. And if they [Boko Haram] don't have funding, how can they be so well equipped? And they use such sophisticated material; if they are uneducated, how do they know how to use it and what it does?" The other reason for this continuing fear is lack of confidence in the government's ability to protect citizens; as one urban mother stated: "A lot of people, especially girls in boarding school, felt that the government could not protect them anymore."

Charisma was considered an important asset; as a young urban male stated: "The way you convince people matters; you see I can take water in a bottle and say to people, 'Come, this water will do this and that if you follow me.' It depends on my powers of persuasion." All focus groups admitted that the way messages are delivered is important, because the videos of Boko Haram would raise the interest of participants much more than the counter-radical messages.

Fierce regionalism was apparent during the focus groups, with participants seeking to highlight the "deficiencies" of regional "others" as the reason for radicalization. As older male from rural Nigeria stated: "Any sensible Northerner can differentiate easily between a good message and a bad one, and he will then dissect the information or message and analyse its source or messenger, [and decide whether] is it a respectable voice or not." The focus on a regional attitude can lead to negative consequences, as a younger rural male explained: "In the North we are too concerned about our religion, and that is one of the easiest ways for terrorist groups to penetrate, by the means of religious manipulation/exploitation. From seeing a man with a turban and beard, you then run to him and say 'Mallam,⁵⁵ I want to learn from you,' without knowing his ideology. Before you know it, it is too late and you are gone." Reflecting the divisions in Nigerian society today, a number of the participants drew a parallel between the extremist views of Boko Haram and those of Nigerian Shia. One young rural male said: "In some aspects the ideology of the Shiites and Boko Haram are related, like when it comes to jihad and killing, Shiites and Shekau [Boko Haram leader] have the same ideology. Shiites say, 'kill them immediately'." Regional rivalries and sectarian tensions heighten the level of discord in Nigerian society. The insurgency, coupled by the inability of central government to effectively manage the growing divisions, has fostered an increasingly polarized citizenry.

Reactions to and interpretations of counter-radical messages

Trust in Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari was high among participants. This is not surprising, because Nigerians have a history of supporting presidents who appear to represent the interests of the regions where they were born. This was reflected in the views of an older male from the rural area: "Personally [speaking], the president is ours and he is just, and we see that whatever he says is truthful, and that is why I subscribe to his message of peace." **Who the leader is perceived to represent is crucial to the message's potential impact**, as shown in this statement by another older male from Abuja: "We follow our president because he is our leader and his messages are more effective to us. As for those who follow those other people, the messenger is their leader and his messages are effective to them."

"Proper" Islamic schooling was seen as of paramount importance. Older participants often pointed to "improper" upbringing as an important underlying factor in radicalization.

⁵⁶ In the Nigerian context, 'Mallam' is an Islamic teacher

After viewing an address by Shekau, an older male from Abuja stated: "Anyone who follows this message is ignorant, jobless and he wasn't raised well. Since he was a child his parents did not raise him well, and if he encounters something like this, he will oblige. People who like the message like it because they have nothing in their lives; no education, no family." Compared to the focus group studies in Tunisia and Nigeria, participants were more willing to admit that there was more than one valid interpretation of Islam. One older rural male stated: "The major reason his [one person's] message aligns with some people is because he is misinterpreting the Quran. Everyone's religion is different, and the interpretation derived from religious texts always differs."

Education was considered to be one of the most important factors in dealing with radicalization. A young Islamic male student said: "Western education has given us opportunity to learn, to go to school, but some people are still not able to go to school so they see it as useless to them." The issue of education centred heavily on the need for "proper Islamic schooling"; however, a major problem was described by an urban male teenager as follows: "It's just unfortunate that now we have Mallams everywhere; in the past Mallams had a process of learning. No one could just wake up and go to the public and start reciting verses and claim to be a Mallam." The poor quality of education, especially in Islamic schools, was underlined by the views of an urban female head of household, who stated: "I have changed my child's Islamiyya [religious school] because I didn't agree with how they were teaching. Some of the Mallams just teach at random." All focus groups blamed the poor quality of teaching as an important underlying driver of radicalization.

Another key part of Boko Haram's recruitment was not conducted through messaging or convincing recruitment campaigns, but through hard, straightforward coercion. One younger male from a rural area explained his experience in an area under Boko Haram influence: "They held children as captives from a very young age, and they also have a working relationship with some respected people in the society, so they offer money and food, [and then] poison your mind. Kidnapping and sometimes poverty will just force you to join." He believed that coercive tactics employed by Boko Haram were further exacerbated by corruption within the Nigerian government, continuing: "From information I am getting, just recently a House of Representatives member was suspected of assisting Boko Haram financially in exchange for political gains."

Gender inequality is highly significant when it comes to tackling extremism. The societal constraints on Nigerian females constitute an important risk factor and make them a key target in Boko Haram's campaign, not only through kidnapping but also due to beliefs about marriage. Rejection of divorced females by their families is common due to strictly held religious beliefs. As this female in her twenties described: "Once you leave your father's house, you have to follow your husband. The Sharia that comes from Allah dictates this. You have to do this, it is compulsory." Boko Haram uses various methods to takes advantage of this situation, as shown in this testimony from another rural female in her twenties: "Sometimes they [Boko Haram members] hide their identity; it's after they marry that they will bring it up and say you have to accept. For some women, in terms of Islam, once you are married you're meant to have patience and perseverance." Many of the female participants related stories that they had heard from friends, neighbours and relatives of women who ended up in this situation and were unable to walk away due to strict codes of honour. The consequences were explained by this mother from Abuja: "If you do not have somewhere strong to go back to, some shoulder to fall back on, it is difficult not to depend on your husband, and you will have to obey him in whatever way."

3.4 Specific recommendations based on the findings of the focus groups in Nigeria

- Counter-radical messages alone are not going to solve the core issues in Nigeria regarding recruitment to extremist groups. The issues that would have the most positive impact in Nigeria (ending the insurgency and establishing state control over the entire territory) are long-term objectives. By defeating Boko Haram, the main group responsible for radicalization would be gone, but this does not mean that the issues that led to the group's rise would disappear.
- It is necessary to address the lack of public service provision. Without the establishment of a consistent democratic rule, Nigeria lacks a binding social contract to tie citizens to the central state. As a result, intense rivalries and conflicts break out when regions believe they are being left out of the political process, which will continue to cause more conflict and the growth of sub-national armed groups. Nigeria thus needs to commit to the plan of deep political reform, whether it be a form of power-sharing that represents all groups in a central government, or administrative decentralization.⁵⁷
- It is also necessary to address the serious societal and structural inequalities faced by females in Nigeria. Boko Haram has correctly identified that females in Nigeria are a vulnerable sector of society that the group they can exploit. The stigma faced by women who are or were married to Boko Haram members, coupled with the lack of assertive roles for females in public life, makes women more vulnerable to predatory groups. Literature has shown that women have an important role in tackling radicalization, and has demonstrated that if females are empowered they can positively influence their societies. The Nigerian government needs to use its political capital to adopt and implement significant policies to address the gender inequalities that currently exist.

⁵⁷ Elias, Peter, Olamide Afolayan and Olatunji Babatola. "Local Governments as Strategic Partners for Service Delivery in Nigeria". Journal of Research in National Development 12.2 (2014)

⁵⁸ Giscard d'Estaing, Sophie. "Engaging women in countering violent extremism: avoiding instrumentalisation and furthering agency". Gender & Development 25.1 (2017): 103-118

- Counter radical-messages should: use messengers who are considered trustworthy; downplay the image of organizational strength projected by Boko Haram; and highlight the realities of living under Boko Haram through broadcasted interviews with ex-members. Ensure that messages are broadcast regionally and reflect the realities of local communities as closely as possible, and are in the local language. Highlight what the government is doing successfully in terms of counter-insurgency and public service provision.
- The discussions showed that **Nigerians are open to messages that are credible and relate to their lived experiences**. If
 media organizations want to gain as much trust as possible, they
 must **employ local reporters and ensure wide coverage across the different regions in Nigeria**.

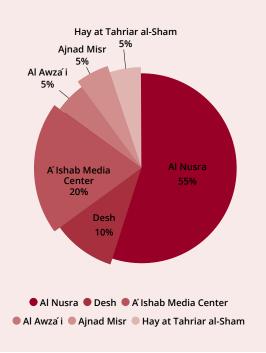


4.1 Quantitative and qualitative analysis of violent and extremist messages in Lebanon (2014-2017)

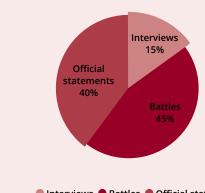
a. Total number of messages distributed through social media:

20

b. Authors of the videos

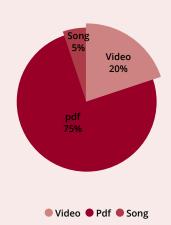


c. Thematic content of the messages



■ Interviews ■ Battles ■ Official statements

d. Format of the messages



<u>4.2 Main findings of the analysis of violent and extremist messages in Lebanon</u>

- Violent and extremist groups carry out fewer digital campaigns in Lebanon than in the other two countries in the study. The results highlight **that the terrorist group Daesh has little interest in influencing public opinion in Lebanon**, with only one video and one message (in pdf format) addressed to this audience in the last two years. The terrorist group Al Nusra (Al Qaeda) is the most active in this country, with 11 messages targeted to audiences in Lebanon in the last two years.
- Lebanon is also very poor. Most (eight) of the messages are official statements, with little editing. The next most frequent topic is the group claiming some type of terrorist act or violent action against Lebanon. Only three of the videos show citizens of Lebanon being interviewed. Two of these messages feature Shia citizens who are prisoners of the terrorist group Al Nusra. The only video showing terrorists from Lebanon was broadcast by Daesh.
- The **messages use unimaginative formats and are poorly produced**. The most commonly used communication format for disseminating messages is the pdf (15 messages). Only four of the messages analysed were videos, and one was a song.

4.3 Specific recommendations to counter terrorist messages in Lebanon, based on analysis of the videos

Lebanon is a country marked by sectarian violence. From 1975 to 1990 the country was plunged into a bloody civil war that caused more than 100,000 deaths and confronted and divided the Sunni and Shiite communities for generations. War tensions reopened in 2006 when the Israeli-Hizbollah war broke out.

The younger generations of Lebanese have lived in their own flesh the real consequences of violence and extremism. Perhaps this is the cause that explains why Lebanon is one of the Arab countries where fewer young people have joined the ranks of Islamic State. According to a report by the Center for American Progress, as of March 2016 between 500 and 1,000

Lebanese citizens had joined the ranks of the Caliphate. A figure similar to that of countries like Germany and the United Kingdom. This data is very far from other countries like Tunisia, where it is estimated that between 6,000 and 7,000 young people have joined the ranks of Islamic State⁵⁹.

Of the three countries analyzed (Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon), the latter is the country with the least digital communication campaigns received by violent and extremist groups. Perhaps violent and extremist organizations themselves are aware that their audiences in Lebanon are not the most receptive to messages of violence and extremism.

In any case, the Lebanese institutions still have the chance to anticipate the next movements of violent and extremist groups and to prevent their effects. The very testimonies of citizens whose childhood and youth was marked by war THE YOUNGER
GENERATIONS OF
LEBANESE HAVE LIVED
IN THEIR OWN FLESH THE
REAL CONSEQUENCES
OF VIOLENCE AND
EXTREMISM.

and violence are the best vaccine to prevent future cases of violence and extremism. The public administration and Lebanese civil society have the challenge of collecting these testimonies in a systematic way and generating communication products to be socialized through those channels and platforms where the audiences are at risk of radicalization.

Thus, Lebanon is a country where it is feasible to elaborate in the short term a narrative that competes with violent and extremist groups. So far, terrorist groups are not taking advantage of the potential for seduction offered by audiovisual communication. Lebanon is a modern country with high rates of penetration of internet and mobile telephony and whose youngsters are deeply familiar with the cultural references of the West. The alternative narrative to violent and extremist groups should be located in digital spaces with positive messages of social and political cohesion in the mouths of young Lebanese influencers.

LEBANON IS A COUNTRY
WHERE IT IS FEASIBLE
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⁵⁹ Center for American Progress. The Flow of Foreign Fighters to the Islamic State. March 2016. https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/17132821/ForeignFighters-report.pdf

4.4 Focus group study findings in Lebanon

Despite its proximity to Syria, the porous and insecure border, the presence of nearly 1.5 million refugees and occasional outbursts of violence, Lebanon has managed to avoid large-scale spill-over from the Syrian **conflict**. That said, Lebanon experienced intra-Lebanese strife that threatened to turn into nationwide violence in 2013, when adjacent Sunni and Alawite communities in Tripoli engaged in a conflict that, in the end, required the intervention of the Lebanese army. The conflict underlined that the peace Lebanon currently enjoys can evaporate at a moment's notice. In spite of the warning signs in Tripoli, the Lebanese government has still not instituted a P/CVE policy or overall strategy in the country.

The research took place in the southern city of Saida and northern district of Denniyeh, both of which are predominately Sunni with a relatively recent history of clashes between radical Sunni groups and the Lebanese army (in 2013 in Saida, and 2000 in Denniyeh). In total, 65 participants

took part in the focus groups organized by SKF's implementing partner, the Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA), on 4-5 March 2017. DPNA was able to recruit participants using its close ties to the local community through the programmes it runs in the region.

An additional focus group was made up of Palestinian refugees from the Ain al Helweh camp adjacent to Saida. As non-national residents who have a distinct identity, are nearly all Sunni and live in a camp that regularly experiences violence, the Palestinian focus group participants would be able to give a unique perceptive on the key issues examined in this study. Findings from this research project were compared and contrasted with the SKF pilot research project conducted in Lebanon in 2016, that also tested the reception and perception of radical messages. Comparing the recent data against the themes that emerged from the pilot project further cements the findings.

Media consumption habits

What was striking about the Lebanese case is that, regardless of age or gender, there is a uniformity of opinion on the lack of credibility of local news channels due to the politicized nature of media ownership.

All participants, regardless of gender or age, reported that they obtain their information through a variety of sources, including social media. As a young male from Denniyeh stated: "Based on our experience, we can evaaluate the authenticity of information, the rationality of a speech."

"Lebanese media have political purposes and affiliations that negatively impact their production of reliable information, so we do not trust any media 100 percent."

A mother from Saida

No participant expressed trust in one medium or media channel for information; rather a deep-seated sense of frustration with media was expressed. "The highly tensed competition between the TV stations is so annoying. They are addressing each other instead of addressing the public!" claimed a young female from Saida. The politicized nature of the media in Lebanon has led to a zero-sum game in which networks are in competition with one another, ratcheting up divisive political and religious sentiments. As a Palestinian participant put it: "The media in Lebanon is highly polarized politically and religiously; all this is lowering the authenticity and credibility of the information they are delivering, such as the information about the situation in Tripoli encouraging the Sunni to fight the Shia; and the news encouraging the Lebanese

THERE IS A UNIFORMITY OF OPINION ON THE LACK OF CREDIBILITY OF LOCAL NEWS CHANNELS DUE TO THE POLITICIZED NATURE OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP.

to hate and fight Palestinians." The net effect is that, depending on the media outlet, certain groups are stigmatized and marginalized, a message that is then "amplified over social media", according to a young female from Saida.

Social media was widely used, despite most participants expressing that it was harder to verify information posted online. Male participants in both Denniyeh and Saida mentioned the **creation of local Facebook and WhatsApp groups to share information about current affairs in their neighbourhoods** (two such pages on Facebook were <u>SaïdaCity</u> and <u>Saïda Online</u>). One older male from Saida described users of social media as "not just receivers of news but also sources of information". However, the dangers of anyone being able to become a content producer was not lost on our participants. Despite the deep frustration with Lebanese television channels, one pointed out: "on Facebook, for example, anyone can post anything. TV live coverage is somehow more credible."

Participants also expressed that traditional media outlets cannot keep up compared to social media platforms. As an older male from Denniyeh said: "The information you get from the newspaper is yesterday's news, not today's news. I am not interested in reading old news when I can get the news on the spot, instantly, from Facebook, WhatsApp and from the TV sites, plus news sites such as <u>Lebanon Files</u>."

The **sharing of news was almost strictly limited to local news about the area in which participants lived**, about anything from traffic jams to the security situation, but most people avoided discussing political topics online, except on very particular issues relating to social campaigns (for example, on violence against women, or on pensions). One young female from Saida explained why participation in online discussions is avoided: "We do not take part in political discussions on social media because the divides are deep and the discussions are harsh. This could affect our relationships with friends and colleagues."

Participants complained that **traditional media gives too much attention to radical groups,** believing that it is more likely to spread the ideology and alert more people to the messages instead of pushing them away.

"The way information related to terrorist groups is written, and the image of terrorist groups as it is 'drawn' in the media, are in favour of these groups' goals. The media must not keep on telling such news and airing such videos – evidently produced with a great deal of professionalism and technology – which deeply impact the minds and souls of the spectators."

A Palestinian male

Reactions to and interpretations of radical messages

When turning their attention to the radical messages, most participants had at some point seen these messages or similar ones presented through a variety of media outlets. The conversations around the messages, their content and the related outcomes were well developed, as the participants were used to discussing these issues among themselves.

There was clear constraint on participants' ability to discuss the key issues around extremist groups and radicalization in an open setting with others outside their sect and region. Participants were concerned with the potential societal backlash; as a young male from Saida explained, there is a "fear to talk openly about such issues" in case they are seen as terrorists or disbelievers ("kafer"). Furthermore, the lack of public space for Sunnis to discuss radicalization is in stark

contrast to the considerable airtime that extremist groups receive on traditional media. Again, participants felt that the media was in fact doing the work of the extremist groups, and said it should take responsibility for the free publicity it gives them.

"We must not get used to the messages and actions of the radical groups, and these messages and actions must not be spread by the media. Thus, the radical groups will not achieve their goals: frighten people and dominate them."

A young female from Denniyeh stated Since the emergence of Daesh, there has been a marked increase in general public access to extremist materials, which has resulted in the normalization of violence. Another young female from Denniyeh said: "The massacres perpetrated by extremists [Daesh] – though harsh and cruel – do not impress us anymore because they became familiar as daily scenes. These scenes are meant to frighten the people and therefore to control and dominate them."

To make matters worse, focus group participants detailed the palpable feeling of stigma attached to them as Sunnis from **certain areas**; as an older male from Saida explained: "If five or six men from Denniyeh rallied for Daesh, they should not count. Denniyeh has 80,000 inhabitants; why classify all the inhabitants of Denniyeh as extremists?" The resentment is further heightened because of what is seen as the unequal treatment of Sunnis. As the same participant said: "The problem is that in Lebanon, in the same state and under the same sky, one person [Sunni] goes to Syria and becomes an outlaw, while another person [Shia] goes to Syria and becomes a hero [fighting for Hezbollah]." This leaves Sunnis feeling that they will be treated as suspects when attempting to discuss issues around radicalization, and unable to speak out when they feel they are hypocritically denigrated. Such bias and group classification marginalizes individuals and narrows the space for nonviolent dissent. As another older male from Saida pointed out, it "drives people to become extremists".

It is no surprise that **extremist groups take advantage of any** disparate treatment, both real and imagined, to inspire **conflict**. As a young female from Saida described, the extremist preacher Ahmad Al-Assir initiated a conflict between his Sunni group and the Lebanese army in 2013: "Al-Assir addressed the Sunni as 'deprived of their rights', thus raising the confrontation level between Sunni and Shia." Under conditions of political and social asymmetry, the perceived domination of the Shia over Sunnis explains how "radical movements will flourish", according to an older female from Saida. Consequently, individuals like Al-Assir can take advantage of the situation and adopt other issues of local concern to spread dissent and win support, regardless of the validity of the argument. As a young female from Saida explained: "The speeches of Al-Assir rallied a lot of supporters, especially those who consider themselves as 'a marginalized category'. He played with their feelings and incited them to 'take action' [use violence and revolt] against all kinds of oppression."

The messaging style and content of the speeches is very important because it plays on existing grievances that place the Sunni community as an 'out-group', then uses those grievances to call them together towards violent action. The out-group is created using the common social and political identifier of the group: Sunnis in Lebanon. A young female from Saida stated: "The messages are very attractive to 'marginalized Muslim people' as these messages put religious values ahead and insist on taking strong actions aiming to empower Muslims." The significance of using Islamic precepts is that it helps to define the audience, i.e. those who are not only Sunni, but who are disenfranchised, marginalized and who have no recourse to change their situation.

The extremist message, after defining the audience using Islamic precepts, outlines the grievances of the group, then places agency with the audience by appearing to provide them with the opportunity to change the fortunes of their community. The final step is to try to create an 'other' who is responsible for the misfortunes of the community and to dehumanize them so violence seems an appropriate action.

As a young male from Saida explained when reading the text concerning "Ar-Rafida", which is a means to dehumanize any person who does not abide by the same faith (non-Sunni): "It is a means to denigrate the other; not to recognize him; not to accept him; to annihilate him." The political and social formation of Lebanon, which is organized along sect lines, plays into the hands of extremists who adopt language that, as a young male from Saida explained, uses "hate speech [...] to attract supporters and to rally adherents, contributing to the isolation of each community away from the others. Such a speech cultivates the fear of 'the other'".

In the area of using religious language to spread messages, Imams and other religious scholars have a particularly influential position in which they can help to create the mind-set necessary to commit violence. The was pointed out in a number of different focus groups in which participants showed skepticism towards religious figures; as a Palestinian male said: "I stopped going to the mosque on Fridays because all sermons talk about politics, not about faith." According to another Palestinian male: "It is known that every mosque is affiliated to a politician or to a political faction." Other participants went further, saying that local religious leaders are receiving money from various Arab countries to offer support to extremist views; one Palestinian male described it as follows: "Religion has become a traded product."

Young people and those worst affected by the country's poor economic conditions are particularly vulnerable to extremist messaging, according to the focus group participants. "Youngsters and the needy are the preferred target of radical groups", said an older female from Saida. The foremost reason given for joining extremist groups was the incentive of being paid for fighting. An older female from Saida claimed: "For many, joining Daesh is like getting a job: they have specific missions; they have salaries and incomes." However, no one issue was singled out as the reason for radicalization. There was agreement that it was due to a combination of factors, as expressed by a Palestinian male: "The power of Daesh in attracting people to its ranks depends on people's poverty, their ignorance, and youth illiteracy."

Reactions to and interpretations of counter-radical messages

When it came to discussing the counter-radical messages, participants had had significantly fewer encounters with the materials but were thoughtful about their potential impact and the types of preventative measures they would like to see enacted.

It was generally agreed that **for real, effective change to take place, it had to begin in the "front lines", in communities themselves**. This was expressed by an older female from Saida: "Countering radicalism is a process to be triggered on a micro level, meaning within each family, through education."

Messages designed to counter radical groups must use the same rules and strategies that are applied by radical groups. As a young female from Saida said: "Counter-messages must rely on the same rules of rhetoric used by Daesh in order to be effective in winning minds and hearts. Such messages must be short, direct and simple, and tailored according to the targeted audience." This point was underlined when focus group participants pointed to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah as a person who was considered convincing on the basis of his charisma, in spite of his politics being oppositional to those of nearly all participants. Another young female explained what an effective counter-radical message should look like: "Whatever the counter-message is, it must be delivered by a highly charismatic person. This person, who is not necessarily a clerical person, must master public speaking and be known for their credibility and transparency."

Closely related to this this point, participants highlighted **the need for open discussion about the role of Islam**, provided that it is carried out through a detailed debate in the media, and most importantly: "Such programmes must be presented by persons not affiliated to political factions. They also must not be Sheikhs [Muslim leaders], for they lack credibility. The presenters must be non-religious scholars", according to a young female from Denniyeh.

In terms of the media's role, media channels must ensure that when displaying Daesh material, they must also highlight "the flaws and errors of Daesh".

Participants also described the channels through which counter-messages should be disseminated; as a young female from Saida suggested: "Counter-messages must first be delivered to small groups and progressively spread on larger social scales. These messages must be produced by committees representing all religious and secular groups." Another key point was the importance of trying to correct the significant imbalance of counter-radical messages to radical messages; as a Palestinian male stated: "Moderate messages do not have a great impact as they are rarely heard, while the messages of Daesh are widely spread and incessantly heard."

In the end, it was clearly confirmed throughout the focus groups that **tackling radicalization cannot be done effectively through counter-messages alone**. A young female from Denniyeh stated: "It is not enough to face radical messages only by counter-messages, as long as radical groups do not only produce messages but also take actions and benefit from large financial resources. Actions must be taken on a social level, in every locality, to efficiently confront radical impacts." Equally clear was that one of the central methods to address the issue substantively is to tackle the problems that are facing not only the Sunni community, but the entire country. As an older female from Saida concluded: "We want to live with dignity, protected by a strong state, under the rule of the law, whatever community or religion we belong to."

4.5 Specific recommendations based on the findings of the focus groups in Lebanon

The following recommendations take into account Lebanon's particular context and the information provided by the participants. As Lebanon is still in the process of developing a P/CVE strategy, it is hoped that the following recommendations will be considered when shaping this strategy and the policies to implement it:

- Ensure local community figures are empowered and have ownership in P/CVE programmes. Such people are in the front line of the fight against radicalization as they have deep-rooted connections to the local communities, which allows them to exercise influence and foster social cohesion. If trusted by the community, they will be able to act as intermediaries for organizations implementing the programmes.
- Aid and development programmes must not be P/CVE programmes in disguise. Selling P/CVE programmes as development initiatives (and vice versa) will disengage communities and thwart potential working partnerships.
- Apply P/CVE programmes to all of society, focusing on building common shared interests beyond ethnicities, tribes and sects. All focus group participants expressed a palpable sense of frustration that they are targeted and marginalized because they are Sunni. Because of their identity, suspicion is heightened, and P/CVE programmes that target their community will only exacerbate the feeling of anxiety. It is vital for any messaging to use symbols and discourse that do not focus only on the Sunni community.

- Strengthen national and local good governance, including anticorruption initiatives. Leaders who are perceived to be corrupt might
 be re-elected by at-risk communities out of the need for services and
 other benefits that are promised during election seasons. However,
 one should not mistake the act of voting for a sign of the voter's trust
 and respect for the candidate. Corrupt leaders lose the moral compass
 needed to influence constituents and shield them from the allure of
 radical groups.
- Treat the problem of P/CVE as a police problem rather than military problem. Build partnerships between at-risk communities and the Lebanese security forces. Rather than seeing areas as military or "hard" policing cases, efforts should be made to work alongside members of the community. This means working towards community policing and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs). PCPSs are local policing boards composed of municipal officials, concerned members of the community, locals from the different religious, civic and business sectors, and local security personnel. PCPSs are designed to enable security and local communities to consult one another on issues of concern. The board can identify and prioritize key issues and work across sectors to tackle them.

CHAPTER IV:

PROPOSAL FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT AND EXTREMIST NARRATIVES



uring the past 12 months, focus groups conducted by the Samir Kassir Foundation, in collaboration with the WLA-CdM, in Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon have enabled more than 400 citizens to voice their opinions and put forward their suggestions on the most effective methods to combat violence and extremism. The key common findings from these focus group discussions are presented below, followed by the groups' main proposals for a counterstrategy.

During the same period, the WLA-CdM met with national and international experts and policy makers to discuss the development of practical guidelines that would enable governments and civil society to effectively combat the phenomenon of violence and extremism. The recommendations from this technical and policy dialogue are also presented in this chapter.

It is very interesting to see the extent to which the policymakers, expert practitioners and focus group participants agree on the importance of combating this extremism using a multidisciplinary approach that includes measures to improve public governance and the economy and to influence public opinion. Their findings, and those of the scientific analysis of the messages of terrorist groups outlined in Chapter 3, form the basis of the study's overarching recommendations in this chapter's final section: "Fourteen steps for building an effective strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism".

FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED
BY THE SAMIR KASSIR
FOUNDATION, IN
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NIGERIA AND LEBANON HAVE
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TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AND
EXTREMISM.

1.

FINAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR P/CVE FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

Participants across the countries shared broadly similar reactions to and interpretations of the messages, which underline a common understanding of radical and counterradical messages, and processes of radicalization. Participants in all three countries highlighted that the messages in and of themselves were not drivers to recruitment; what was much more relevant was the lack of social and economic development, along with the absence of state provision of a basic standard of welfare support. The main common findings are as follows:

MESSAGES ARE NOT
DRIVERS FOR RECRUITMENT;
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SUPPORT.

a. The importance of face-to-face communication



In all three countries, participants considered the presence of face-to-face recruiters who targeted individuals to be a more significant and effective part of the radicalization process than other types of messaging. Face-to-face recruiters, who are able to operate within at-risk communities, can easily identify persons who may be "ripe" for radicalization due to personal circumstances.

b. Segmentation of the audience



It was clear from the focus group discussions that extremist groups' overall recruitment approach, both in their face-to-face recruitment and in other forms of messaging, is highly tailored and contextualized to communities' and individuals' local concerns and experiences. By mapping out very local concerns, radical groups can easily exploit a situation by highlighting community's grievances, then apportioning blame and positioning themselves as an empowering agent for "positive" social change.

In order to communicate with the Arab world, it is important to use the language of the people. It has to be credible, we need to communicate within the reality of people's environment."

Petre Roman: CdM Member, Prime Minister of Romania (1989-1991)

c. The creation of a local social contract



According to the focus group discussions, messages relating to "Islamic" calling for violence have much less effect than messages relating to the actual realities experienced by people in their communities. Islamic jurisprudence is highly contentious, with a range of interpretations depending on

the school of thought, and significant differences between theory and practice. Rather than using particular Koranic verses to inspire radicalization, extremists have created a framework of identity that places Sunni Muslims in an "out-group" that requires individuals to respond to the injustices the group faces. While the Islamic framing of messages resonated less with focus group participants, it did have a cohesive effect.

"Whether in Tunisia or any other place, we currently face a serious phenomenon: the gap between the people and the elite."

Hamadi Jebali: CdM Member, Prime Minister of Tunisia (2011-2013)

d. The impact of the failure of the state



The low presence of the state in providing public services has increased the spaces in which radical groups operate. The means for closing these spaces will depend on the particular political and socio-economic context of each country. However, the wider P/CVE response framework should take this into account, if only to avoid further harm.

⁶⁰ Esmaeili, Hossein. "The nature and development of law in Islam and the rule of law challenge in the Middle East and the Muslim World." Conn. J. Int'l L. 26 (2010): 329

⁶¹ Huddy, Leonie. "From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory." Political psychology 22.1 (2001): 127-156

e. Focus groups' main proposals for an effective P/CVE strategy



- **Counter-messaging should be considered to be only a small part of the puzzle** and will not solve the issue on its own. P/CVE policies will only have a positive effect when coupled with good governance policies, including the guarantee of the rule of law, anti-corruption efforts, the development of socio-economically underdeveloped areas, engagement with at-risk communities and improvements in public service delivery.
- Counter-radical messages should be designed to deconstruct extremist narratives and to ensure that no group feels marginalized.
- ✓ The people delivering the messages must be non-partisan and respected within local communities.
- Messages should seek to adopt symbols of unity and equality through positive campaigns.
- ✓ Messages should not be general; they should focus on issues affecting at-risk communities and respond to their needs.
- ✓ Messages should use **impactful and hard-hitting visuals in the most appropriate language** and dialect.

2.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR P/CVE SUGGESTED IN THE TECHNICAL AND POLICY DIALOGUES

The technical and policy dialogue conducted with experts and policy makers from Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon resulted in a list of comprehensive and multidisciplinary recommendations to effectively combat contemporary violent extremism.

Each case study country has a different approach to tackle radical messaging. Tunisia and Nigeria have made significant policy commitments to deliver counter-messaging, whereas Lebanon has not developed a full-fledged P/CVE strategy. The following list of recommendations, drawn from the technical and policy dialogue in the three countries, includes actions in the field of public governance, economics and public communication.

<u>a. Preventing radicalization and recruitment into violent groups</u>



TAKE A STRATEGIC APPROACH

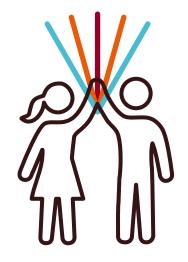
- Communication is a necessary tool, but it cannot counter violent extremism alone. Other policies must reinforce and confirm the content of counter-radical messages.
- Avoid disguising P/CVE programmes as development, cultural, reconciliation, or poverty-alleviation projects, or as dialogue initiatives, as this may be negatively perceived by participating communities.
- Develop proper **stakeholder mapping and research** to better understand people's decision to join extremist groups. Mapping motivations is crucial to crafting an effective counter-strategy because it helps identify the particular grievances and deprivations that push people towards extremism.
- Design a P/CVE strategy with a focus on **personal interaction**, which is the most effective recruitment channel used by extremist groups. **Face-to-face encounters** have proven to be the best way of engaging with people to connect on a personal level and build a relationship of trust.
- Create accurate **profiles of religious leaders and places of worship**, which should help identify those promoting extremist messages, and where and how this is taking place. To support this, it would be extremely useful to establish an official registration portal or database of religious leaders.
- Recognize **the important role of engaging religious leaders** in promoting alternative narratives. Increased understanding of their motivations and concerns can help engage them in more constructive ways.

"The Islamic culture is being manipulated to serve unjust leaders under the misinterpretation of concepts of Jihad, religion, and the relationships with others."

Hamadi Jebali: CdM Member, Prime Minister of Tunisia (2011-2013)

EMPOWER WOMEN AND YOUTH

- Ensure that women and young people are able to participate fully in democratic governance processes, as inclusive societies are more likely to be peaceful and stable. Finding **innovative ways to engage** with these groups is vital.
- The government and other relevant stakeholders should promote **women's empowerment and protection**, ensuring they have access to livelihood and leadership opportunities, which can help to elevate their position in society. Addressing gender inequality would help to prevent extremist groups from exploiting gender dynamics in their recruitment efforts.
- Target the most vulnerable groups of society, such as women and young people, who can become powerful actors in P/CVE efforts. Inclusive messaging needs to incorporate all relevant stakeholders in the discussion, particularly young people and local actors who are considered trustworthy.
- Build young people's capacity to develop and implement **early warning and early response mechanisms** to enable a fast, effective response to concerns about radicalization in their social circle or community.
- Integrate P/CVE initiatives into school activities and establish safe spaces for young people and women who are looking for confidential groups and constructive conversations on how to fight and address violent extremism.
- Encourage **leisure activities**, including sports and the establishment of **cultural centres** to help young people stay positively engaged with society and avoid the boredom, frustration or alienation that can make them vulnerable to radicalization.



REBUILD TRUST BETWEEN CITIZENS AND STATE

Strengthen relationships between different sectors of society, namely the relevant ministries, police, community leaders, local NGOs, and other security and law enforcement agencies. The government should play a key role in rebuilding trust and confidence among different actors through programmes aimed at improving civil-security relations. Likewise, encourage the eradication of corruption and impunity in security agencies and among other law enforcement actors, to help restore trust between these forces and civil society actors.



- International actors should take into consideration the emergence of **new models of governance** across the regions most affected by violent extremism, as they may need to deal with hybrid structures of governance in places where the state authority is weak. There is an institutional void in which authorities go into "survival mode" and condone certain approaches and strategies that do not fully align with human rights. To address this weakness in absence of national authorities, international entities should promote **local good governance programmes**.
- Reinforce **traditional justice systems** in areas where people do not have access to formal systems of justice. Bureaucracy usually makes it difficult for people to find swift resolutions to their problems, leading to frustration and resentment that can make them more receptive to the messages of extremists.



b. Building an alternative narrative

Promote **attractive and persuasive messages that resonate with the audience**. Terrorist groups make use of imagery and audiovisual techniques that fascinate viewers and create confusion between fiction and reality. Counter-radical messages need to be even more compelling.

An effective strategy should focus on the development of a **more effective communication system** that spreads and disseminates counter-narratives using both traditional and new media. **Be innovative** and collaborate with the film and creative industries to produce videos, graphics, photos and advertisements, and exploit both traditional platforms and new online platforms. **Present and reinforce evidence-based narratives** in original, multiple ways. Counter-terror messages should be precise, rich in content and reflect the values of the alternative narrative.

Taking into account that extremist narratives are often based on feelings of marginalization, exploitation and frustration, the goal of counter-narratives should appeal to an **individual's emotions and sense of self-worth** to encourage people to empathize with and relate to broader society rather than isolated extremists.

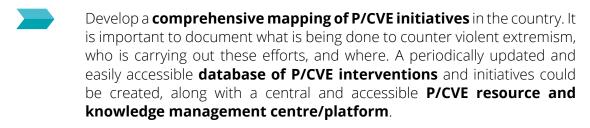
Positive role models can help to debunk stereotypes and spread awareness of the alternative narrative, which should focus on **emotional healing and reconciliation efforts** across different sectors of society, and help to rebuild social trust. Most importantly, the counter-narrative against violent extremism needs to have a principle of "shared humanity" that abandons the victim-perpetrator narrative of who-killed-whom to focus on the common experiences of people on all sides of the conflict.

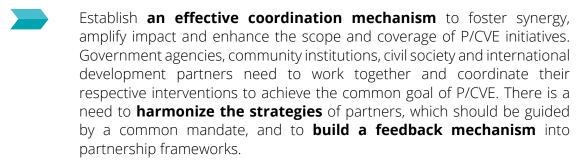
Ongoing **analysis of the content of radical messages** is required, as it provides important evidence about the drivers of extremism and the approach of radicalized groups towards recruitment. This in turn enables policy makers to identify the main grievances of the population and respond by designing – and promoting – livelihood support initiatives. In terms of developing a national communications strategy based on **local concerns** and tailored to a **specific target audience**, participants of the technical and policy dialogue highlighted the need to focus alternative messaging on the **positive aspects of government services**.

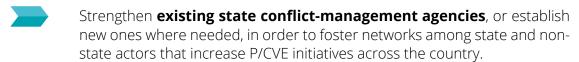
Messages should address vulnerable groups using language that stresses their value and importance in their community, rather than their helplessness as targets or beneficiaries of programming. The use of **vernacular language** when possible is an advantage, as audiences need to identify with the message and trust the news source.

c. Fostering sustainable and meaningful partnerships









- Mainstream **conflict sensitivity and peace-building efforts** into overarching development strategies in community development plans, with a focus on P/CVE.
- Promote **the creation of a participatory and needs-based budgetary system** as part of an integrated national development planning framework. This would be facilitated by the creation of a **multi-stakeholder peace fund** for sustainably funding peace initiatives, with contributions from the government (at all levels), the private sector and international development partners.
- Establish funding mechanisms for **local actors to develop their own P/CVE initiatives** that target specific local concerns. Often, funding bodies of P/CVE projects are international entities, which have more resources than local organizations but do not necessarily provide the most effective strategy for reconciliation, rehabilitation and de-radicalization within a particular community.

3.

CONCLUSION: 14 POINTS FOR BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, violent extremism is one of the most complex threats to democracy and the rule of law. There are several reasons for this.

First, the factors involved in the processes of radicalization are varied, and their number increasing. In addition to religious, socioeconomic or geo-strategic motivations, the fascination with contemporary extremism has many underlying causes that are hard to objectify, such as frustration, the trivialization of violence through popular culture or the creation of alignments of identity in the digital sphere, among others.

Second, the generation of violent and extremist movements no longer depends on hierarchical, localizable power structures. Violent movements are increasingly ethereal, invisible and decentralized. Radical groups seek to generate messages that seduce, influence and inspire actions of violence among their audiences, without the need for highly visible leaders or a chain of command.

And third, fighting extremism and violence is no longer a task that depends exclusively on states and governments. Technology companies, civil society, the media and the entertainment industry may have a greater role to play in the fight against terrorism than states themselves. It should also be borne in mind that the role of states is not effective if it is exercised unilaterally, and that effective action against extremism relies on multilateral cooperation that engages all stakeholders in an inclusive and participatory manner.

States and public institutions must once again win the respect of their citizens and be credible and effective in the eyes of the public. Achieving this will not be an easy task, but doing so will ensure that respect for human rights and the freedom of people will continue to mark the norms of coexistence in the twenty-first century.

The importance of building an alternative narrative

It is clear from the research that violent and extremist groups have succeeded in seducing their audiences by creating elaborate narratives that go beyond the mere construction of messages. It follows that efforts to address these narratives of violence and hatred cannot be limited to the dissemination of isolated counter-messages, but should employ the same tactics as those used so effectively by the communications strategists of Daesh and other terrorist groups.

"The narrative we need is one that we all share, not a narrative of followers, but a narrative of development, not a narrative of grievances but a narrative of working together to get a solution."

Olusegun Obasanjo: President of Nigeria (1976-79, 1999-2007), CdM Member

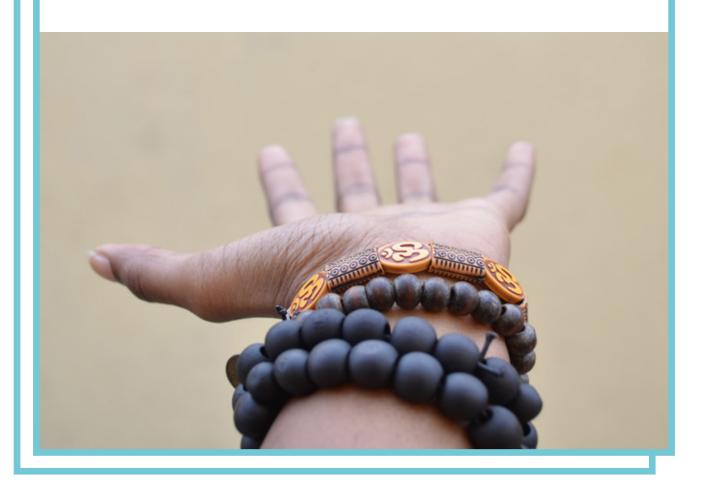
While counter-messaging is intended to respond to a particular message, the alternative narrative is proactive, broader in its scope and is consistently, persistently disseminated. Creating an effective alternative narrative involves listening to and gaining insight into potential audiences; understanding their needs, concerns and cultural particularities. It means developing a script that reflects and responds to these social and cultural concerns, and choosing or creating characters and scenarios that are credible and interesting to the audience. An effective narrative must be aesthetically attractive and culturally familiar, and delivered by spokespeople the audience can both relate to and trust. Finally, it must be distributed in the diverse and multiplatform channels where its target audience is most active.

In the search for effective and thoughtful alternative narratives, P/CVE practitioners and policy makers should embrace innovative storytelling and marketing practices, and collaborate with experts in the creative industries, IT companies, traditional and new media companies and others to jointly create a powerful "alternative story system".

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THE FOURTEEN POINTS

FOR BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM



rawing on the evidence obtained from the analysis of extremist groups' communications, the national and regional technical and policy dialogue convened by WLA-CdM members, and the focus group discussions in Tunisia, Nigeria and Lebanon, fourteen practical steps have been defined to enable countries and public institutions to counter the messages of violent groups.

UNDERSTAND VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM AS A COMPLEX AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY PHENOMENON REQUIRING A MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESPONSE

Efforts to counter contemporary violent and extremist movements require a systematic, scientific and multidisciplinary approach. There is not a simple, single answer that explains why thousands of citizens from all over the world have been attracted to violence and extremism. The complexity of the challenge demands an approach and a methodology that combines border control, exchange of information and intelligence, respect for legal order and human rights, dialogue with social movements and local religious communities, analysis of psychological profiles, sociological and political interpretation of nationstates in the context of postmodernity, socio-economic and labour integration of new generations of citizens and, of course, the battle to win hearts and minds in the complex process of shaping global public opinion. Professionals and researchers from all the above-mentioned disciplines should be called on to explore and define the roots of the global extremism threat and to contribute to an effective counter-strategy.

The **multidisciplinary approach** should foster a policy dialogue between **different public and private actors to develop innovative and effective measures** and narratives to counter extremism and radicalization. Such a policy dialogue should include representatives of governments, public institutions, multilateral organizations, civil society, religious leaders, IT companies, the media and the entertainment industry (music, films and videogames).



THERE IS NOT A SIMPLE, SINGLE ANSWER THAT EXPLAINS WHY THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD HAVE BEEN ATTRACTED TO VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM.

2 TAKE A SCIENTIFIC, EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH



The massive multimedia production of terrorist groups such as Daesh or Al Qaeda to win the hearts and minds of the youngest and most frustrated generations around the world has put the international community on alert. Ongoing, rigorous analysis of the messages of radicalism is fundamental to the development of effective counter-strategies.

First it is important **to identify indicators** that could generate scientific evidence of the main motivations and arguments used by violent and extremist groups in their messages. Indicators could include: the theme of the message, its cultural references, the aesthetic, target audience, language, nationality of the spokespeople, occupation of the spokespeople, length of the message, the platform used to release it, the format (audiovisual, pdf, images, etc.), the most-used words and expressions, and the group responsible for releasing it. This scientific baseline will provide a fuller understanding of violent and extremist messages, which can be drawn on in efforts to counter them.

RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR A MULTILATERAL APPROACH



The current radical and violent extremism is not confined to the boundaries of the modern nation-state. For example, the UN estimates that 35,000 young people from 100 different countries have sworn their allegiance to Daesh. This case clearly illustrates the importance of addressing the threat from a multilateral perspective. The unilateral actions of national governments cannot effectively address a global and multinational challenge. Greater resources and legitimacy are required for existing mechanisms for combating violence and extremism established in multilateral institutions such as the UN and the EU, among others.

Anti-radicalization initiatives at the national level should be supported and supplemented by multilateral fora, through the creation of specific working groups and task-force projects. Such groups or task forces should have at their disposal the full range of expertise needed to counter the communication strategy of violent and radical groups: they should include researchers, public opinion analysts, journalists, audiovisual creators, marketing experts, and specialists in web analytics and big data. The task forces would be monitored by agencies such as the <u>UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)</u>, which has the backing and political legitimacy of the member countries.

4 BUILD A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION

The most **credible messages are those that are backed up by coherent stories**. As has been shown, both in the focus group discussions and in the analysis of the messages of radical groups, contemporary violent extremism is intrinsically related to the crisis of the nation-state. Frustration arising from the perception of nation-states' unfulfilled promises has created conditions favourable to the emergence of a wave of global rebellion, which manifests differently in diverse regions of the planet.

The best way to fight extremism and violence is to root out and respond to such frustrations. The redrawing of new social contracts between citizens and the state, and the moral rearmament of public institutions, will be key to tackling violent extremism.

Institutions must be strengthened such that citizens regain confidence in their public administrations, by eradicating corruption in public life, implementing policies to create an economy that is capable of absorbing the talent of new generations of citizens, and managing public services efficiently. Together these elements form the basis of a sustainable narrative to counteract violent extremism and to build a more effective and inclusive democracy.

BEST WAY TO FIGHT EXTREMISM AND VIOLENCE IS TO ROOT OUT AND RESPOND TO FRUSTRATIONS.

5 COMMUNICATE THE NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT EFFECTIVELY

Frustration arises from perceptions, which are subjective. As has been seen in some countries, the objective improvement of economic, social and development indicators does not necessarily lead to a decrease in levels of frustration and citizen unrest. It is not enough to improve the standards of good governance if citizens do not perceive them as having improved. Indeed, one of the successes of Daesh has been not its good governance, but its communication strategy to generate a perception that it exercises good governance. More than 25 percent of this terrorist group's videos show it providing public services to the Sunni population of Iraq and Syria. As well as actually improving governance standards, countries must implement communication policies to enhance citizens' awareness and perceptions of positive government actions.

ONE OF THE SUCCESSES OF DAESH HAS BEEN NOT ITS GOOD GOVERNANCE, BUT ITS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY.

6 BUILD A TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVE BASED ON THE STORYTELLING TECHNIQUE

One of the most effective ways to respond to radical and violent messages is to create positive narratives that foster values of respect, tolerance and inclusion. These narratives should not just be counter-narrative to the messages of the terrorists, but **positive alternative messages that fascinate and appeal** to the same audiences.

The technique known as "transmedia" **storytelling"**⁶² is of particular interest in this regard. Transmedia narratives require the creation of an "exciting world" in which different characters interact on different platforms, generating human stories that socialize the message in a pleasant and suggestive way among audiences. The target audience for this communication process are young people known as "millennials", who grew up with transmedia storytelling and the creation of narratives such as the legendary world of Pokémon: as children they watched it on television, continued to be involved with it through various formats such as magazines, toys and merchandising, and ended up interacting with its protagonists by playing a virtual reality game on their smartphones.

To harness this strategy in the effort to counter violent extremism, institutions must create alliances with scriptwriters, artists, game designers and other agents of a country's entertainment industry. Transmedia narratives must clearly define and articulate their messages, create the main characters of the story, construct an attractive universe and write compelling scripts that inspire and unite their audiences.

The most difficult decision is in choosing the principles upon which to base the narrative. What are the values, symbols, heroes and common histories of a society that deserve to be narrated and disseminated to help shape public opinion? The plurality and complexity of contemporary societies make it **difficult to find** these **points of basic consensus**. However, the search for a common denominator that satisfies the great social majority is fundamental to the construction of narratives that defend coexistence and the rule of law, and respect human rights.

As noted above, Daesh has devoted 25 percent of its narrative to projecting values associated with good governance and management of public services; with another 25 percent of its content it presents itself as a global movement supporting youth empowerment. More than 800 young people from different parts of the world have appeared in its videos explaining why they joined. This data is useful for formulating alternative narratives to combat extremist groups, which must be largely based on disseminating global and diverse values of social justice and good management of public resources, and targeted to a young audience.

INSTITUTIONS MUST CREATE ALLIANCES WITH SCRIPTWRITERS, ARTISTS, GAME DESIGNERS AND OTHER AGENTS OF A COUNTRY'S ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY.

⁶² According to its creator, Henry Jenkins, narratives "represent a process where integral elements of a fictional story are systematically dispersed across multiple broadcast channels in order to create a unique and coordinated entertainment experience". The idea is that each medium makes its own contribution to the narrative of history. Jenkins gives as examples of this new narrative the sagas of fiction like *Star Wars* or the worlds of the *Marvel* superheroes, created using various audiovisual products that "enable the potential market of a product to be expanded by creating different entry points for different audience segments".

USE THE SAME COMMUNICATIONSSTRATEGIES AS EXTREMISTS TO COUNTER THEIR MESSAGES

This study's scientific analysis of the 1,340 propaganda videos distributed by Daesh identified **four major strategies** in its narrative: messages about **good governance**; messages about its **triumph in the field of combat**; **interviews with hundreds of young recruits** from around the world explaining why they decided to join Daesh; and videos in which **explicit violence**, including murder, is **transformed into multimedia shows**.

These four key communications strategies can also be employed to build an alternative narrative:

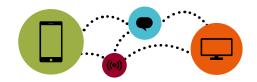
- ✓ First, **show the good governance of public institutions**; at the same time, demonstrate the poor and corrupt management of public services exercised by terrorists.
- ✓ Second, highlight the military defeats of Daesh and the effectiveness of the armies who fight them.

"They (Daesh) show their victory; we have to show their defeat."63

Mehdi Jomaa, Prime Minister of Tunisia, 2014

- ✓ Third, an effective counter-strategy could share the testimonies of hundreds of young people from all over the world explaining why they left the terrorist group and returned to their country of origin.
- ✓ Finally, it is crucial to **give a face and a voice to the victims of extremism** to show that their murders have no place on a multimedia show, but are the horrific slaughter of human beings whose stories should be reported with dignity and humanity.

⁶³ Mehdi Jomaa. BBC. 30 September 2016. http://www.clubmadrid.org/en/noticia/they_show_their_victory_we_have_to_show_their_defeat_mehdi_jomaa_tells_bbc_about_isis



CREATE A NETWORK OF "OWNED MEDIA" IN ALLIANCE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

The distribution of digital media content is based on a triple strategy that combines "owned media", "paid media" and "gained media". Owned media refers to the platforms and channels that a brand creates to communicate directly with its audiences; paid media refers to the advertisements and paid spaces that a brand inserts in traditional channels of communication; and gained media is the information, comments or communications that, free of charge, users and influential traditional media make about a brand. Owned media is of great importance in disseminating a narrative that aims to counter violent and radical messages, as it allows for direct communication and interaction with the target audiences in a segmented and personalized way.

Violent and extremist groups such as Daesh have created solid structures of owned media to transmit a huge number of messages to their audiences, without losing control over the framing of these messages. The network of owned media established by Daesh includes 39 audiovisual producers, magazines in several languages, news agencies and radio stations.

As part of a framework of P/CVE, it is therefore necessary to work with civil society to create and build support for a network of owned media – one which can compete with that of terrorist groups in terms of its size and reach, and effectively counter their radical message.

9 FORM ALLIANCES AND ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH TRADITIONAL MEDIA

To successfully disseminate messages created to counter extremism and violence, it is also necessary to have the support of traditional media – television, radio and print channels.

It would also be extremely useful to **engage in a policy dialogue** with traditional media companies to analyse best practice in coverage of violence and extremism, particularly when reporting on events where the only available information is that disseminated by violent extremist groups through their own media channels. A case in point is the videos showing beheadings of hostages; the only available images are those provided by extremists, but by replicating these images traditional media channels are indirectly participating in the terrorist group's communication strategy. Traditional media channels should not contribute to disseminating the narratives created by extremist groups; nor should they remain silent about the atrocities committed by these violent organizations. A policy dialogue with traditional media could include finding new ways

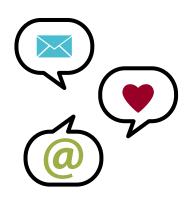
A POLICY DIALOGUE WITH TRADITIONAL MEDIA COULD INCLUDE FINDING NEW WAYS TO FRAME THESE HORRIFIC EVENTS, SUCH AS INTERVIEWS WITH VICTIMS' FAMILIES to frame these horrific events, such as interviews with victims' families – including Muslim victims. Another issue that such a policy dialogue could address is that traditional media have not sufficiently highlighted the fact that the vast majority of victims of the "Islamic" terror group Daesh are Muslims. From January 2014 to August 2017, Daesh published 240 videos on social media of the murders of 850 citizens. Only 2 percent of the victims in these videos are Westerners; 34 per cent are Syrian; 33 per cent are Iraqi; 8 per cent are Yemeni; 6 per cent are Egyptian; and 3 per cent are Afghan.

10 ENSURE CONSTANT COVERAGE AND INTERACT WITH THE AUDIENCE

Repetition and pre-eminence of a message is one of the decisive elements in creating a successful and effective narrative about a public issue. According to Robert M. Entman, the more often the frame of a public matter is repeated (the "magnitude" of its coverage), the more likely it is that a significant portion of the audience will feel compelled by the message. Daesh published 10,000 communication campaigns, including 1,340 videos, in less than three years. Never in history has a criminal organization communicated at such levels. It is estimated that more than 400 anonymous individuals participate in each Daesh Twitter campaign, typically spreading more than 1,000 messages in less than four hours.

To succeed, alternative narrative campaigns have to be at least equal in terms of magnitude and repetition than those created and launched by violent extremist organizations in social media; this implies great production capacity.

As important as communicating with insistence is establishing **contact and dialogue with the target audiences**. Those responsible for the communications of violent and extremist organizations understand that much of the success of their communication campaign relies on their ability not only to inform, but also to listen to and engage in dialogue with their audiences and attract new recruits. In the last two years, there have been abundant cases of active listening dialogue between terrorists and their potential audiences.



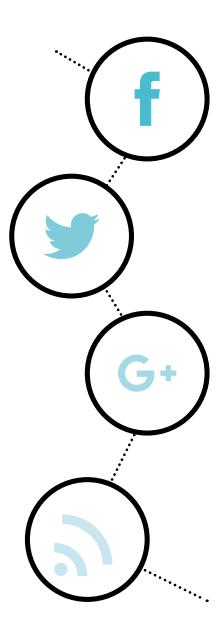
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1 FORM ALLIANCES WITH IT COMPANIES

To effectively distribute messages among potential audiences online, it is critical to know exactly where those audiences are. The systematic use of monitoring software for social networks makes it possible to know exactly what channels are used and what conversations are frequented by the followers of violent and extremist groups. It is very useful to implement active listening equipment in social networks to detect groups and influential individuals in these conversations. Once the networks where radicalization is occurring are objectively known, a "campaign of disruption" can be implemented by distributing the communication materials developed to create alternative narratives.

Digital disruption campaigns can have a much greater impact if they are carried out in collaboration with large technology companies, which can help detect individuals who are actively seeking out violent and extremist groups. Governments should seek the support of such companies while ensuring a balance between legitimate security concerns and human rights guarantees. The Internet and social media search software itself may suggest alternative content that leads these vulnerable individuals away from extremism and violence.

Every day, terrorist and extremist groups spread hundreds of messages through open communication platforms. **Daesh**, for example, **maintains a production capacity of more than a dozen propaganda campaigns a day**, and an average of ten videos per month. Public and governmental initiatives to thwart this activity are of little use without the support and cooperation of the large IT companies whose platforms are maliciously used by violent and extremist groups to propagate their messages. These companies have the ability to remove content that promotes violent behaviour from their platforms, but to date any efforts to do so have fallen well short of what is needed. Governments have to address the normative gap and develop regulatory frameworks for companies to abide by in order to establish limits on extremist content.



12 SEGMENT THE AUDIENCES



One of the greatest innovations that Daesh has brought to modern terrorism has been its treatment of its **potential audiences as a potential market**. According to Kotler, a market is the set of "all potential customers who share a specific need or desire and who might be willing to have the ability to make an exchange to satisfy that need or desire". Daesh has detected the needs and desires shared by both its internal audiences (citizens of Iraq and Syria) and external audiences (young foreigners). It has also applied audience segmentation in its communication strategy since the beginning of 2014, using a network of 39 audiovisual producers that create and distribute personalized content for 39 audiences in different regions of the world. The message conveyed is common to all audiences, though different cultural products are created to be more effective in each context.

Proposals for an alternative narrative to violent extremism must also use audience segmentation, developing personalized products for each potential audience that takes into account its cultural, linguistic and social specificities.

13 WORK WITH THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY



One of Daesh's major victories over governments and institutions is in the battle of aesthetics. The investigation of the 1,340 videos released by Daesh in the last three years indicates that **50** percent of its videos of executions are directly inspired by and based on the most popular movies, video games and music videos of youth culture. For the first time in history, terrorism has been made to appear exciting, modern and familiar. Defeating it therefore requires building a cultural and social alternative that is just as appealing to younger generations. Democracy, the rule of law, freedom and equality should not be concepts that young people associate with history and law books – they should be at the heart of attractive, inspiring cultural products. Making democracy and freedom fashionable is one of the most effective ways to combat terrorism, extremism and violence.

14 FIND CREDIBLE SPOKESPEOPLE



Choosing the right spokespeople is fundamental to effective communication. This is well understood by Daesh, which entrusted the transmission of its messages about the caliphate to a group of almost 1,000 young people from all over the world – spokespeople who were credible to their target audience. Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi appeared in only one of the 1,340 videos the group released.

The **alternative narrative** required to seduce generations of millennials towards social and cultural movements opposed to extremism and violence must also be communicated **by credible actors**. The young people of Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Nigeria, Lebanon, and others vulnerable to violent and extremist messages must be the main protagonists in this. Only they can offer a credible and attractive alternative to channel the disenchantment of a generation frustrated with governments and institutions that are perceived as distant and even hostile. Public institutions should seek out and build alliances with these youth groups, and entrust them with spreading effective and compelling narratives that can compete with violent extremist messages.

Processes of radicalization do not only occur in the digital environment; they are the sum of many variables, and, as this study has found, personal relationships play a vital part. It is imperative that the main messages of the alternative narratives are internalized and spread by those in the close personal circles of young people vulnerable to radicalization: their mothers, fathers, siblings, friends, schoolmates, local sports personalities, and community or religious leaders.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
SHOULD SEEK OUT AND
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ANNEX

PVE: Leaders Telling a Different Story project Mehdi Jomaa's recommendations for Tunisia



Our approach was a pragmatic one combining both field action and prevention initiatives.

Quick wins on this front were of the essence and we launched an integrated action plan to this end.

This comprised:

under control.

- Reinstating state control in those mosques "lost" to extremist imams by designating moderate ones educated and trained at the prestigious Zitouna mosque one of the most respected Islamic institutions renowned for its moderation and its modern approach to religious issues.
- The close supervision of the numerous associations, which thrived at an unprecedented scale post 2011, and whose activities and practices were clearly dubious in terms of predication, indoctrination and recruitment. This supervision focused mainly on the financing aspect particularly from foreign origin and specifically from certain Gulf countries.
- The supervision of websites advocating extremist and violent action aiming at recruiting followers and would-be jihadists. This eventually led to the dismantling of dormant cells providing logistic back up to those terrorists based in the mountains and difficult to access areas.
- The creation of a "crisis group" with the objective of collecting, analyzing information and making operational decisions for execution by the various state bodies. This crisis group held its meetings as and when necessary under my authority. It worked in total harmony for maximum efficiency.



This approach was relatively successful in laying down the foundations of a structured strategy in fighting and preventing violent extremism but we feel it now needs to be "revisited" and adapted to the global nature of this phenomenon. Including through:

- 1. Adopting an offensive fight against terrorism strategy based on the principles of the law primacy and the perfect control of the national territory and shaped by joint or coordinated military and security actions targeting the terrorist groups and showing the determination of the State to eradicate this phenomenon.
- 2. Maintain a permanent pressure on the terrorists and their logistical support showing a capacity and a will to counter these elements in a continuous and targeted manner based on an intelligence unit that is well performing and capable of enlightening and guiding the operational units and making them holding initiatives and anticipations in the fight against terrorism war.
- 3. Considering a policy of modernization and transformation of the State armed forces that are in charge of the fight against terrorism by targeting the psychological and moral preparation of the troops, and likewise striving for a better organization of these troops by creating the necessary synergies between them in order to optimize their operational capacities and providing them with better equipment in terms of effectiveness and performance to achieve more compelling results on the field.

It is now clear that better international cooperation is of the foremost importance in combating the new global and cross-border terrorism as represented by the likes of so-called Islamic State (IS).

In the absence of such cooperation, organizations like IS will continue to thrive, capitalizing on the frustration of a sizeable proportion of vulnerable youngsters who feel left behind by the "System/ Establishment". Using sophisticated and targeted messaging techniques Extremist or terrorist groups position themselves as an alternative to the traditional State. A sort of counter-model and substitute to the current establishment. They are also cash rich thanks to all sorts of illegal trafficking and underground networks. This allows them to finance their propaganda to recruit people and entertain their deadly dreams.

If we were to contain, weaken and ultimately eradicate violent extremism, we need to concentrate more efforts on prevention. Addressing the younger generations' expectations should be as high on our agenda as fighting terrorism. The need to consolidate democratic values and practices coupled with poverty alleviation and better access to jobs will no doubt prevent many would-be candidates to the "IS Dystopia" and others extremist groups, Efficient counter-messaging to this end is certainly necessary in order to win the communication battle against violent extremism.

CLUB DE MADRID MEMBERS



Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Club de Madrid, President of Latvia (1999-2007)



Cassam Uteem, Vice President of the Club de Madrid, President of Mauritius, (1992-2002)



Amine Gemayel, Member of the Club de Madrid, President of Lebanon (1982-1988)



Hamadi Jebali, Member of the Club de Madrid, President of Tunisia (2011-2013)



Mehdi Jomaa, Member of the Club de Madrid, President of Tunisia (2014)



Zlatko Lagumdžija, Club de Madrid Member, Prime Minister of Bosnia & Herzegovina (2001-202)



Festus Mogae, Member of the Club de Madrid, President of Botswana (1998-2008)



Olusegun Obasanjo, Member of the Club de Madrid, President of Nigeria (1976-1979; 1999-2007)



Petre Roman, Member of the Club de Madrid, Prime Minister of Rumania (1989-1991)



Fuad Siniora, Member of the Club de Madrid, Prime Minister of Lebanon (2006-2009)



Danilo Turk, Member of the Club de Madrid, President of Slovenia, (2007-2012)



www.stoppingviolentextremism.org





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