PEACE SCIENCE DIGEST

A PROJECT OF THE WAR PREVENTION INITIATIVE

IN COLLABORATION WITH THOUGHT PARTNERSHIPS

SPECIAL ISSUE 2021

COUNTERING HATE AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

IN THIS ISSUE

Our vision is a world beyond war where humanity is united and a global system of peace with justice prevails for current and future generations.

Our mission is to transform the global peace and security paradigm to one that is built around viable alternatives to war and all forms of political violence.

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The *Peace Science Digest* is a project of the War Prevention Initiative of the Jubitz Family Foundation.

We believe that there is a gap between the insights of peace science and the working knowledge that policy makers and practitioners use in global peace and security. Additionally, there is a delay in the application of academic research to policy and practice. As a result, policy and practice both reflect and reinforce militarist narratives about the necessity and legitimacy of the use of force. We believe that these militarist narratives are, in part, informed by xenophobia, racism, and hegemonic masculinities. These same forces also stifle diversity in the field of global peace and security.

The *Peace Science Digest* is a tool to usher in change. By increasing the visibility and application of academic knowledge from peace science, we aim to strengthen the peace and security field by making evident how militarism undermines peace around the world. The *Digest* contributes to a broader narrative shift about the assumed effectiveness of violence by demonstrating that nonviolent responses are often more effective, less costly, and, most importantly, more humane than military action. Drawing on a diversity of scholars, it highlights scholarship that critically examines the racial and gendered power structures, amongst others, that underpin militarism.

The *Peace Science Digest* is designed to lower barriers of access to academic knowledge in peace science by selecting articles from peer-reviewed, academic journals and summarizing their main findings in more accessible language. The Editorial Team then pulls out broader implications and practical relevance in each analysis.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

We are pleased to present our special issue on countering hate and violent extremism in collaboration with Thought Partnerships. Despite its urgency, this topic is an ethically and conceptually thorny one. With the recent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and broader rise in armed extremist groups, the *Peace Science Digest* editorial team was compelled to better understand the drivers of radicalization, as well as nonviolent approaches to supporting deradicalization and disengagement from violent extremism. At the same time, any engagement with scholarship and policy-making on countering violent extremism (CVE) risks complicity with the militarized and discriminatory counterterrorism policies of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), now marking its 20th anniversary. More fundamentally, what do we even mean by "violent extremism," by "radicalization"? (To see working definitions of key terms, see the Glossary.) For instance, one of the research articles discussed in this special issue defines radicalization as "the path that leads an individual to endorse or commit a politically motivated act of violence." It may be straightforward to say that a neo-Nazi or ISIS fighter has been radicalized, but would we also say that those who support or participate in armed liberation movements have been radicalized? What about soldiers who participate in state militaries, which also use violence in pursuit of political goals? To complicate matters, although "radical" is often used to describe the means employed towards a particular end (usually in reference to violence), it can also be used to describe the extent of the change desired—change that can also be accomplished through nonviolent means. Conflating radical change with violence only reinforces widespread assumptions about the efficacy of violence in certain situations.

This last point brings us to an insight worth unpacking further: Perhaps we should lean into the ambiguity around what exactly constitutes radicalization and violent extremism, as this ambiguity helps us see the continuum between violent extremism and other more widely accepted, "benign" forms of violence. Militarism—through its legitimation of violence as a necessary and effective tool for creating change or defending communities—makes violent extremism possible. Once violence is seen as necessary and effective, any ideology can fill the space needed to justify and motivate its use. The effort to rein in and prevent violent extremism is therefore inseparable from the effort to challenge militarism more broadly.

Yet, over the past twenty years since the September 11th attacks, militarism has dominated approaches to countering terrorism and violent extremism. Not only is militarist counterterrorism policy deeply counterproductive for the reasons given above, but it is also far removed from addressing the main drivers that move individuals to adopt violent ideologies and commit acts of violent extremism globally. The analyses in this special issue demonstrate that militarized approaches to countering violent extremism fail because they ignore the broader social and political conditions that foster so-called radicalization, while also reinforcing the logic undergirding violent extremism and the polarization that fuels its existence.

Academic research reveals that radicalization is a social process: Individuals are compelled to join extremist organizations by the very human need for group belonging and identity affirmation, as well as through the practical mechanisms of social networks, particularly existing relationships with group members. Other material benefits—like employment or education opportunities—are also relevant. Disengaging from such organizations—not to mention disowning extremist attitudes and ideologies, the process of deradicalization—is incredibly difficult and requires a long-term, systemic approach: not exclusively focusing on the perpetrators of violence but also transforming the social, political, and economic structures that render individuals susceptible to hate speech, extremist recruitment, and the lure of violent ideologies. Critically, the same social needs and mechanisms that can draw individuals into extremist groups can be crucial to motivating and facilitating their departure—as maintaining or building relationships with individuals outside of these groups can expose members to narratives that delegitimize violence, while also providing them with other sources of identity affirmation and belonging.

Additionally, the analyses demonstrate the critical role that non-governmental organizations and social movements play in countering radicalization and violent extremism. These actors often are better situated to build trust with individuals and organizations engaged in extremist violence, especially in comparison to government-led, carceral, or militarized approaches. In appreciation of the role that non-governmental organizations play, we're happy to feature the work of several organizations who work to counter hate and violent extremism through Thought Partnerships and their Community of Practice. The "Organizations in the Field" section at the end of the issue provides a snapshot of what a systemic, human needs-based approach looks like.

Peace Science Digest Editorial Team

Kelsey Coolidge   Molly Wallace   Kristin Henderson   Patrick Hiller

THOUGHT PARTNERSHIPS

EDITORIAL LETTER

In an era where societal well-being and safety is mostly characterized and decided upon through a hard security lens, we at Thought Partnerships find that policy solutions intended to confront and overcome hate, division, and violent extremism tend to base themselves in the exertion of force or dominance. In these terms, "victory" or progress is seen as necessitating the defeat and sometimes annihilation of the "other." This win-at-all-costs model means that someone in the equation must lose. This model pushes us more deeply toward becoming entrenched in emotions—including shame, anger, and embarrassment—that are associated with loss or defeat and that tend to close us off from the greater collective and propel us into survival mode.

However, this is not the only way to think about or approach societal well-being and safety. If we consider our most cherished everyday human desires and relationships, we may think about societal well-being from the perspective of lived experience. Instead of rooting our security strategies in fear, which facilitates the use of weapons, militarism, and force, we can root these in visions of happy, healthy children, steadily employed families, healthy, long lives, and a general sense of belonging and inclusion in our local and global communities. This alternative perspective allows us to think and operate from a place of empathy, kindness, civic duty, and togetherness.

While we understand that realizing comprehensive well-being and security is not simple, we believe—and have seen through years of work with hundreds of practitioners—that resilient and cohesive societies are made possible by the commitment of community members, institutions, and power holders dedicated to dignity and equality for all people, even in the face of conflict and difference. As such, we stand by the belief that the division, threat, and insecurity created by hate, violent extremism, and all the other "isms" and phobias are best addressed when individuals who make up a society bring their whole selves to overcome these whole-of-society problems.

Photo Credit: Leon VbxyFxlgpjM-unsplash

What this means is that, as community members, we actively co-create solutions to the challenges we face from the desire to better our lives and transform our societies as both stakeholders of our own efforts and active agents of change. In doing so, we recognize that we alone cannot overcome the immense challenges posed in today's world. Instead, by working together in mutually reinforcing ecosystems across sectors and connecting across societies and experiences, we seize the opportunity not only to catalyze change but also to build long-lasting relationships of trust and support that can accelerate one another towards achieving more just, inclusive, and nonviolent societies.

Another way we think and speak about our work is through the metaphor of a tree. Imagine the leaves of this tree as the outward-facing work— the policy agendas, the legislation, etc.—and the roots as who we are as individuals and as a society—the stories we believe about those who are different than us, our civic duty to and engagement with our neighbors, our networks and relationships, our personal aspirations and beliefs about how the society we live in can propel us toward achieving them, and so on. So often, when our focus is maintained on the leaves and the more visible façade, we forget to nourish the roots that anchor and sustain our societies through many storms and hold our institutions and societies upright. The work of nourishing the roots is a long-term investment in the strength of our societies, and, while it is supported by policy and legislation, this work is not solely underpinned by these but rather by social norms and day-to-day human interactions.

Consider when you walk out the door on any given day, your choices have a ripple effect on hundreds of others even if you don't realize it, because we are connected to each other through our daily interactions and exchanges. How we choose to show up and how we feel safe to show up or not impacts those ripples every day. The practitioners in our Community of Practice work in many different sectors and in many different contexts, each of them seeking to create new positive social norms by more deeply understanding the factors that go into our everyday behaviors and

decisions—and to strengthen and reinforce those that promote social cohesion instead of division. When we consider why an individual may be drawn to join an extremist group, resort to violence, or become radicalized, it can be easy to understand those decisions as evidence of failures in a larger political agenda or ideology. While those certainly play a role, we've learned firsthand from the frontline activists in our community, who have dedicated their lives to countering hate, division, and extremism in their contexts, that there are deeper human needs—such as the desire for belonging, dignity, and safety—that are more potent drivers of those decisions.

In the contributions from our Community of Practice members featured at the end of this special issue, we hope to demonstrate how, by examining and addressing division, extremism, and violence from these root causes, we can begin to identify solutions that can be enacted from the societal level and reinforced in our policy and institutional frameworks. Building from the bottom up creates social cohesion and resilience in a way that nourishes the deep roots of the tree, thereby ensuring its overall health, vitality, and sustainability.

Thought Partnerships is a non-profit project housed in Neo Philanthropy. We are dedicated to advancing nonviolent, just, and inclusive societies. We create collective impact by building effective Communities of Practice. To learn more about or join our Community of Practice, please visit us at www.thoughtpartnerships.org

Glossary

Despite the productive ambiguity noted in the editorial letter, it is still useful for the sake of clarity to have working definitions of some of the key terms used throughout this special issue:

Violent extremism:
The "use or support [of] violence to advance a cause based on exclusionary group identities."[1] Even on the basis of this definition, violent extremism can take many forms—from identity-based hate crimes to acts of terrorism and large-scale, organized political violence—and, as such, encompasses a continuum of attitudes and behaviors that transcend precise categorization.

Terrorism:
"'[T]he deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in pursuit of political change.'[2] ...A key characteristic that makes terrorism analytically distinct from other forms of political violence is how violence, often a spectacular kind, is used manipulatively (i.e., psychological effects and anticipated actions) to create a particular effect (i.e., fear) in a target audience."[3]

Radicalization:
"[T]he path that leads an individual to endorse or commit a politically motivated act of violence."[4]

Desistence:
"[A] long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending. The focus here is not on the transition or change, but rather on the maintenance of crime-free behavior in the face of life's obstacles and frustrations. The crime in question is not confined to acts of politicized violence, but includes the supporting activities that make terrorist violence possible."[5]

Disengagement:
"[A] behavioral change, such as leaving a [violent extremist] group or changing one's role within it. It does not necessitate a change in values or ideals, but requires relinquishing the objective of achieving change through violence."[6]

Deradicalization:
"[A] cognitive shift—i.e., a fundamental change in understanding [with regards to the values or ideals that motivated violence]."[7]

Countering violent extremism (CVE):
"[A] counterterrorism strategy that recruits community leaders, social workers, teachers, and public health providers ostensibly to assist the government in identifying individuals that may be 'at risk' of becoming violent extremists."[8] "[P]remised on

1. SFCG. (2017). Transforming violent extremism: A peacebuilder's guide. Retrieved August 23, 2021, from https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Transforming-Violent-Extremism-V2-August-2017.pdf
2. Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside terrorism*. New York, USA: Columbia University Press, 40.
3. Ravndal, J.A., & Lygren S. (2021, March 8). What is terrorism? University of Oslo Center for Research on Extremism. Retrieved September 7, 2021, from https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-is-terrorism.html#_ftn1
4. Vergani, M., Iqbal, M., Ilbahar, E., & Barton, G. (2020). The three Ps of radicalization: Push, pull and personal. A systematic scoping review of the scientific evidence about radicalization into violent extremism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43(10), 854-854.

5. Raets, S. (2017). : The We in Me. Considering Terrorist Desistance from a Social Identity Perspective. *Journal for Deradicalization*, Winter (13), 1–28.
6. Fink, N. C., & Hearne, E.B. (2008, October). Beyond terrorism: Deradicalization and disengagement from violent extremism. International Peace Institute. Retrieved September 7, 2021, from https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/beter.pdf
7. Fink & Hearne, Beyond extremism.
8. Brennan Center for Justice. (2019, September 9). Why countering violent extremism programs are bad policy.

the discredited idea that harboring certain political or religious views is an indicator of future violence. Historically, CVE efforts have targeted specific communities, seeking people who might display so-called 'vulnerabilities' to ideological or political 'radicalization'."[9]

Whole-of-society approach (to preventing/countering violent extremism):
"An approach...that envisions a role for civil society actors and other non-governmental actors, as well as relevant government actors across sectors, in the prevention of violent extremism."[10] Relevant actors include "mental health professionals, social workers, teachers, religious and other community leaders, parents, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector."[11] It matters, however, whether such an approach is used in the context and service of a militarized, law enforcement-centric CVE strategy—where the participation of these diverse actors would simply mean more widespread surveillance to flag individuals for law enforcement intervention—or whether it is used in the context and service

Retrieved September 7, 2021, from https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/why-countering-violent-extremism-programs-are-bad-policy
9. ACLU Massachusetts. (N.d.). "Countering Violent Extremism": A flawed approach to law enforcement. Retrieved September 7, 2021, from https://www.aclum.org/en/countering-violent-extremism-flawed-approach-law-enforcement
10. OSCE. (2020, March). A whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. Vienna: OSCE. Retrieved September 28, 2021, from https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/7/444340_0.pdf
11. Rosand, E. (2019, May 26). Responding to the rise in domestic terrorism: Don't forget prevention. Lawfare. Retrieved September 28, 2021, from https://www.lawfareblog.com/responding-rise-domestic-terrorism-dont-forget-prevention

of a strategy rooted in the ability of these diverse actors to better address the unmet human needs of those susceptible to participation in violence.

Push factors:
Factors that drive people either into or out of violent extremist activity, like "state repression, relative deprivation, poverty, and injustice"[12] for the former and disillusionment with or burnout from a violent extremist group for the latter.

Pull factors:
Factors that draw people either into or out of violent extremist activity by making a particular group or lifestyle (whether extremist or non-extremist) appealing, like "ideology [and] group belonging"[13] for the former and the desire to start a family, exposure to non-extremist narratives and friends, or development of other interests or employment outside of an extremist group for the latter.

Note on the use of "jihadi" or "Islamic extremist":
The *Peace Science Digest* editorial team chose to replace the term "jihadi" with "Islamic extremist" (where relevant) in the summaries of original research featured in this special issue so as to not perpetuate the common, narrow, and flawed Western interpretation of the term *jihad*. This decision is consistent with our understanding of *jihad*—which, when simply translated to English, means "struggle" or "effort"—as a religious term that is rich with varying interpretations, uses, and meanings across the Islamic world. To many of our Muslim friends and colleagues, *jihad* is a daily, spiritual practice for the individual to overcome

12. Vergani, et al., The three Ps of radicalization.

13. Vergani, et al., The three Ps of radicalization.

sin, and many reject the interpretation that equates *jihad* with the call for violence.

Researching the Causes of Radicalization and Violent Extremism: What Do We Know?

Keywords

radicalization,
violent extremism,
meta-analysis,
grievances,
behavioral factors,
cognitive factors,
masculinity

Talking Points

• Peer-reviewed research on radicalization and violent extremism identifies a "basic structure of the process of radicalization" where an individual has "real or perceived political grievance(s)," perceives participation in violent extremism as somehow appealing or beneficial, and has a "personal vulnerability" expressed as certain personality traits or a mental health concern.

• Various research studies have revealed common push, pull, and personal factors in both behavioral and cognitive radicalization across geographic and ideological difference.

• Previous academic research focuses predominantly on pull and push factors of radicalization with little focus on personal factors—a gap that may be driven by a lack of available biographical data.

Key Insight for Informing Practice

• Shifting our attention to the personal factors that lead (predominately) young men to engage in violent extremism highlights the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and the broader acceptability of violence, which together help make violent extremism possible.

Continued reading:

Promundo. (2020, July 16). Understanding the motivations that drive men's and boy's participation in violent extremist groups requires focus on masculinities, reveals new report. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from https://promundoglobal.org/understand-ing-the-motivations-that-drive-mens-a-nd-boys-participation-in-violent-extrem-ist-groups-requires-a-focus-on-masculini-ties-reveals-new-report/

Morettini, F. M. (2016, October 27). He-gemonic masculinity: How the dominant man subjugates other men, women and society. *Global Policy*. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/27/10/2016/hegemonic-masculini-ty-how-dominant-man-subjugates-oth-er-men-women-and-society

American Psychological Association. (2018, September). Harmful masculinity and violence: Understanding the connection and approaches to prevention. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from https://www.apa.org/pi/about/newsletter/2018/09/harmful-masculinity

Bjarnegård, E., Melander, E., & True, J. (2020, November). Women, Peace and Security: The sexism and violence nexus. Joint brief series: New insights on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for the next decade. Stockholm: Folke Bernadotte Academy, PRIO and UN Women. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from https://fba.se/contentassets/46391654ca6b4d8b99501856 0cb8ba8e/research_brief_bjarnegard_et_al_webb.pdf

Beyond Conflict. (2020, June). America's divided mind: Understanding the psychol-ogy that drives us apart. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from https://beyondconflictint.org/americas-divided-mind/

Bjarnegård, E., & Piscopo, J. M. (2021, January 21). Gender and white supremacist violence. *Political Violence @ a Glance*. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from https://politicalviolenceata-glance.org/2021/01/21/angry-men-who-dont-like-women-gender-and-white-su-premacist-violence/

Organizations/Initiatives:
Promundo:
https://promundoglobal.org/

Beyond Conflict:
https://beyondconflictint.org/

Summary

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a flurry of academic work emerged on the factors of radicalization—defined as "the path that leads an individual to endorse or commit a politically motivated act of violence" (or, more simply, the path to violent extremism). Matteo Vergani, Muhammad Iqbal, Ekin Ilbahar, and Greg Barton conducted a scoping review of existing academic research to identify under-researched topics and universal factors that predict radicalization. Overall, they find support for a "basic structure of the process of radicalization" where an individual has "real or perceived political grievance(s)," perceives participation in violent extremism as somehow appealing or beneficial, and has a "personal vulnerability" expressed as relevant personality traits or mental health concerns.

In total, the scoping review included 148 peer-reviewed articles published in English and grounded in empirical evidence that explored factors explaining why individuals would support violent extremism. Articles were organized by several key terms and categories (defined below) that help explain the drivers of radicalization:

Behavioral radicalization	"Focuses on an individual's engagement in violent extremism."
Cognitive radicalization	"Focuses on an individual's adoption and internalization of violent and extremist beliefs."
Push factors	"The structural root causes of terrorism that drive people towards resorting to violence, [for example,] state repression, relative deprivation, poverty, and injustice."
Pull factors	"The aspects that make extremist groups and lifestyles appealing to some people, [for example,] ideology, group belonging, group mechanisms, and other incentives."
Personal factors	"Individual characteristics that make certain individuals more vulnerable than their circumstantially comparable peers to radicalization."

A descriptive overview of the articles included in this scoping review reveals:
- 77.7% focus on behavioral radicalization whereas 22.3% focus on cognitive radicalization.
- 78.4% cite pull factors, 57.4% cite push factors, and 39.2% cite personal factors as drivers of radicalization.
- Regarding the geographic scope of articles, 46.6% focus on Europe, North America, and Australia, 12.8% on the Middle East and Central Asia, 5.4% on Africa, and 16.9% on multiple countries across regions.
- Regarding which ideologies were studied, 53.4% focus on Islamic extremism, 18.9% on far-right ideologies, 20.9% on multiple ideologies, and 6.8% on other ideologies not specified in this review.

Of the articles that identify push factors, "the relative deprivation of a social group," state repression, unemployment, and level of education are most frequently cited as drivers of radicalization. Push factors are cited more as a driver of group radicalization but also appear frequently in research on individual radicalization when paired with personal factors. Further, push factors are identified and appear in similar proportions in research across geographic areas, particularly those factors defined as "indicators of disadvantage" like inequality, exclusion, unemployment, or poverty.

Of the articles that identify pull factors, the "consumption of extremist propaganda" was the most frequently cited factor, followed by group dynamics like peer pressure, belonging and social identity, or forming strong bonds with like-minded people; charismatic leaders, material incentives, and the emotional appeal of violence and/or adventure are other frequently cited drivers of radicalization. Pull factors are close to equally cited in articles on cognitive and behavioral radicalization. Additionally, pull factors are cited consistently throughout articles of varying geographic scope, except for economic incentives, which do not appear in research focused on North America, Europe, and Australia.

Of the articles that identify personal factors, an individual's mental health, certain personality traits (i.e., narcissism, black-and-white type of thinking, or impulsiveness), and certain demographic characteristics (i.e., young, male, and born in the country where they live) are associated with radicalization. Personal factors of radicalization are cited more frequently in studies on lone-wolf terrorism and appear in roughly half of articles on individual radicalization. Interestingly, personal factors of radicalization are more frequently cited in studies focused on North America, Europe, and Australia in comparison to the rest of the world.

This scoping review shows a dominant focus in academic research on push and pull factors of radicalization with little focus on personal factors—which may be driven by a lack of available biographical data in the field (especially outside of North America, Europe, and Australia). While the social, political, and economic context driving radicalization differs across geographic regions and ideologies, this study finds universal factors of radicalization across this difference.

Informing Practice

One clear take-away from this scoping review is the call for more research on personal factors contributing to radicalization, especially beyond the focus on lone-wolf terrorism. A potential starting point is to focus our attention on the demographic group that dominates participation in violent extremism across geographic and ideological divides: young men. Why does it appear that young men are more susceptible to radicalization and violent extremism? Emerging research in this space should not only gain a deeper understanding of personal factors contributing to radicalization but also contextualize those personal factors in a broader social framework of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, misogyny/misogynoir, and militarization. Further, a gender analysis of men's participation in violence must be at the center of interventions designed to prevent and mitigate violent extremism.

The first step is to reject uncritical assumptions that unequivocally associate desirable masculinity with violence and to understand that men are also gendered, meaning that they are also socialized with expected social roles and/or behaviors that are tied to their biological or assigned sex at birth. How can researchers and practitioners disentangle radicalization and violent extremism from socially acceptable behavior when violence is sometimes considered acceptable behavior? Most of us live in societies where violence is not rejected outright as a viable means to manage conflict. It follows that men's participation in violence is actively encouraged in some instances where it can be construed as a social good. Consider for instance the debate on guns in the United States: Many people believe that more "good guys with guns" is a viable solution to mass shootings—using this belief to block efforts at sensible gun safety legislation. Yet, it is this same belief in the "valiant" use of guns for "protection" that likely informed what was perceived as appropriate and acceptable behavior for 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse to shoot and kill protesters at a Black Lives Matter protest last year in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The shocking number of police officers and current or former members of the armed forces who participated in the January 6th insurrection at the U.S. Capitol further reveals the thread that connects "good" and "bad" uses of violence—demonstrating the complexity of researching but also confronting violent extremism. Our society wants and expects men to participate in some violence but then admonishes them when they spill over the semi-arbitrary line that divides acceptable from unacceptable violence. And with intensifying political polarization, it is no wonder that

there is an increasingly narrow consensus on what forms of violence are or are not considered acceptable—potentially leading us to a place where both ends of the political spectrum descend together into a self-justifying cycle of violence.

Behind the push, pull, and personal factors that operate together to contribute to radicalization and violent extremism, there exist pernicious gender ideologies—like patriarchy and misogyny/misogynoir—that deeply structure the acceptability of violence and implicitly inform the belief systems of many violent extremists. For instance, some gender research on violent extremism reveals that "individuals with sexist attitudes are not just more prone to violent extremist views and religious intolerance, they are also more likely to support and choose to participate in political violence." Targeting only those individuals who engage in violence without working towards dismantling patriarchy and other forms of oppression obfuscates the broader acceptability of violence that facilitates radicalization. Although it entails an uncomfortable reckoning with "benign" militarism's complicity in violent extremism, understanding radicalization and violent extremism in the context of a broader violent, oppressive system helps to shape a response grounded in empathy and healing rather than in further violence and domination. [KC]

Questions Raised

· What combination of push, pull, and personal factors creates the perfect conditions for radicalization and violent extremism? What policies or other interventions are most effective in deradicalization and/or preventing violence? Are there some push, pull, or personal factors that could be more readily addressed than others?

· What types of masculinity reject violence? How might those masculine ideals be promoted or celebrated in such a way that they are appealing to young men and boys?

The Role of Group Identity in Initiating, Sustaining, and Disengaging from Participation in Violent Extremism

Keywords

violent extremism, identity, belonging, human needs, social networks, radicalization, deradicalization, disengagement

Talking Points

• Although participation in violent extremism is often thought of as ideologically driven, it is better understood as driven by a need for identity and belonging.

• While social networks can be the initial impetus for participation in violent extremism, they can also provide the way out through the cultivation of "pro-social" identities.

• The fusion of individual and group identities can make it easier for group members to engage in pro-group but anti-social behaviors like violence, while also protecting against the stress and trauma of violence by helping them make sense of it.

• Leaving a violent extremist group can be incredibly difficult: Not only does isolation from outside influences diminish the number of possible paths out of a group, but also, even if one is successful in de-fusing identities, the process can "involve the restructuring of the self and the meaning of past actions."

• Interventions should support individuals involved (or potentially involved) in violent extremism in cultivating other "pro-social identities through access to pro-social activities and groups," as these other identities can eventually take the place that the extremist identity might otherwise—or once did—monopolize.

Key Insight for Informing Practice

• The most powerful response to violent extremism includes both attentiveness to the human needs of involved individuals—especially needs for identity, belonging, and meaning, and the psychological toll their loss can entail—and a demand for accountability, broadly understood.

Summary

The research on violent extremism—both how people become involved and how they leave—has grown over the past two decades, focusing recently on the various "push" and "pull" factors structuring "pathways" into (and out of) violent extremism. Neil Ferguson and James W. McAuley focus on one factor that has found significant support in this body of research—identity—and examine how it contributes not only to initial involvement in and disengagement from violent extremist groups but also to sustained participation in these groups, drawing on interviews with members and former members of loyalist and republican armed groups in Northern Ireland.

A good starting point for thinking about the role of identity in *initiating participation in violent extremism* is to recognize the fundamental need humans have for belonging and meaning—and social groups are central to "our sense of 'who we are'." This need for group belonging can cause people to engage in violence to defend their group and its superiority, especially in response to real or perceived threats. Interpreting threats against oneself and one's neighbors through the prism of group identity can then work to further solidify this group identity and the boundaries between it and "out-groups," exacerbating out-group bias and facilitating hostility and further violence between the groups in an ongoing cycle. Furthermore, individuals may turn to "fundamentalist, ethnic revivalist, and populist nationalist groups" in particular to mitigate uncertainty about their place in the world, fusing their individual identities with the identity of the group to gain a reassuring sense of certainty and clarity. In effect, though radicalization is often seen "as an ideological process... in reality, it is [a] social process" whereby a connection with the group through one's social networks drives adherence to the ideology rather than the other way around.

Next, the authors explore the role of identity in *sustaining participation in violent extremist groups*. As an individual's identity becomes fused with the group identity, they tend to become increasingly isolated from others in their life—minimizing the presence of alternative influences—as their extremist group membership becomes the dominant dimension of their identity. In addition, an individual will often experience "feelings of empowerment, efficacy, and sense of purpose" but also "decreasing moral ambiguity" and even "moral disengagement." This fused identity and commitment to the group's values can facilitate a willingness to engage in pro-group but anti-social behaviors like violence. Participation in violence, however, brings with it a great deal of stress and trauma, and strong identification with the group can also ease the worst of these psychological effects by helping individuals make sense of this violence.

Continued reading:

Life After Hate. (2021, February 11). Are we ready for accountability? What former extremists can teach us about lifelong change. Accessed on July 22, 2021, from https://www.lifeafterhate.org/blog/2021/2/11/are-we-ready-for-accountability-what-former-extremists-can-teach-us-about-lifelong-change

Slachmuijlder, L. (2017). *Transforming violent extremism: A peacebuilder's guide*. Washington, DC: Search for Common Ground. Accessed on July 29, 2021, from https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Transforming-Violent-Extremism-V2-August-2017.pdf

Brown, R. A., Helmus, T. C., Ramchand, R., Palimaru, Al. I., Weilant, S. Rhoades, A. L. & Hiatt, L. (2021). What do former extremists and their families say about radicalization and deradicalization in America? RAND Corporation. Accessed on July 29, 2021, from https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA1071-1.html

Organizations/Initiatives:

Life After Hate:
https://www.lifeafterhate.org/

Cure Violence:
https://cvg.org/what-we-do/

Finally, given the strength of—and functions served by—a fusion with group identity, *leaving a violent extremist group* can be incredibly difficult. Not only does isolation from outside influences diminish the number of possible paths out of a group, but even if one is successful in de-fusing identities, the process can "involve the restructuring of the self and the meaning of past actions," bringing to the surface questions and moral ambiguity that can be painful to deal with. This insight suggests that intervention strategies should not focus entirely on the extremely challenging work of deradicalization but rather on desistance or disengagement from such groups. The authors found that many Northern Irish militants had left their respective groups and stopped participating in violence while not shedding their "militant activist identity"—with this identity acting as a common thread between their former participation in violence and their present participation in nonviolent forms of activism. Although elements of the extremist group identity may linger, individuals will gradually begin to "find[ ] alternative identities and groups to attach to and identify with." Additionally, a diminished threat context can open up space for individuals to explore other identities, and a shift in the socio-political context, whereby community members start viewing the extremist identity in a more negative light, can re-shape current or former extremists' understandings of their identity.

Although participation in violent extremism is often thought of as ideologically driven, it is better understood as driven by a need for identity and belonging. This finding has important implications for interventions aimed at disengagement. By holding social identity front and center, community members and policy-makers can craft interventions that focus on addressing this core need, rather than on targeting a few "bad apples," which feeds into the group's threat perception, reinforcing their exclusionary identity and purpose. The most fruitful way forward is to support those involved (or potentially involved) in violent extremism in cultivating other "pro-social identities through access to pro-social activities and groups," as these other identities can eventually take the place that the extremist identity might otherwise—or once did—monopolize. While social networks can be the initial impetus for participation in violent extremism, they can also provide the way out.

Dugthailte

Informing Practice

The typical way of responding to violent extremist groups—whether violent white supremacists, religious fundamentalists, or ethnic nationalists—is to target the "bad guys" by imprisoning or even killing them, based on the assumption that doing so will diminish their capability and/or deter further violence. But, as this research indicates, direct threats like these can easily backfire by only further solidifying the extremist identity of such groups, reinforcing their sense of purpose and perceived need for self-protection, and facilitating their mobilization of new recruits.

So, what then is a more effective way of turning these individuals and groups away from violence? First and foremost, activists, practitioners, and policy-makers need to take seriously the basic human need for a strong sense of identity, belonging, and meaning that motivates individuals to participate in these groups in the first place. Interventions can use this insight to instead seek out alternative group identities for these individuals that can fulfill this need in more positive ways. Furthermore, the finding that less threatening conditions facilitate the receptiveness of those involved in extremist groups to other "pro-social" identities and social connections suggests that, counter to mainstream thinking, militarist counterterrorism strategy—which only heightens the siege mentality of these groups—is not compatible with these more holistic approaches to addressing violent extremism. There is, however, still room for accountability—especially forms of accountability, like restorative justice, where individuals not only take responsibility for their actions and make amends to those they have harmed but also have the space they need for self-examination, reflection, education, and growth.

Although cultivating pro-social identities can be an effective approach to moving individuals away from violent extremism, the exposure to different perspectives and reinterpretation of past or present violent activities that it entails are also precisely what can make this move so difficult. Effective interventions therefore need to be attentive to the psychological toll this disengagement process can take on individuals as they confront the trauma of violence in a way they were protected from doing earlier. One particularly promising way forward is to foreground the role of "formers"—individuals who have previously disengaged from violent extremist groups and know intimately the struggle such disengagement entails—in supporting those who are contemplating a similar exit. There are numerous models to consider. One is the work of groups like Life After Hate, an organization founded by former violent extremists, which provides a hotline for those having doubts about their participation in such groups and then supports these individuals in their journeys away from violent extremism. In a slightly different context not usually associated with "violent extremism," another model is the work of street outreach workers in local organizations inspired by Cure Violence. These outreach workers—usually themselves formerly involved in street violence and gangs—invest time and energy into developing close relationships with those most at risk of violence (as perpetrators and/or victims), helping identify what sort of support they need to move out of that world and encouraging them to deal with their conflicts without violence.

Crucially, the sustained relationship-building central to both models provides currently involved individuals with not only alternative interpretations of their activities but also support from others who have been there and a new source of meaning and purpose: helping support yet other individuals involved in violent extremism to leave. Since this is work that those previously involved are best suited to do, these individuals—still struggling with the loss of old meaning and purpose that they benefitted from when part of the extremist group—can find new purpose in guiding others like themselves away from violence and, more broadly, in making amends for their past behaviors. Reflecting on accountability, one "former" notes, "As a former white supremacist, I have an obligation that I must uphold for the remainder of my life: To do everything I am capable of to counter the egregious harm I caused while I was involved with white supremacist organizations... I am accountable to all people to speak in opposition to those who still hold hateful beliefs of any kind." In the end, it is this dual approach of attending to the human needs of involved individuals while also demanding accountability that provides the most powerful response to violent extremism. [MW]

Questions Raised

• How can interventions to facilitate disengagement from violent extremism connect involved individuals with other communities and/or social groups that will help them cultivate alternative pro-social identities and social bonds?

• How can interventions effectively balance the need to expose individuals involved in extremism to alternative narratives that reinterpret their participation in violence while also supporting these individuals in coping with the pain and trauma that will inevitably come to the surface with this reinterpretation?

Push and Pull Factors in Disengagement from Islamic Extremist Organizations

Keywords

deradicalization,
push factors, pull factors,
violent extremism,
countering violent
extremism,
political violence,
terrorism,
terrorist disengagement

Talking Points

In the context of disengagement from British and Indonesian Islamic extremist organizations:

• No single factor explains why people withdraw from high-risk activism or political violence; disengagement typically happens because of growing disagreements over time as opposed to singular triggering events.

• Disengagement pull factors in both groups include alternative social networks, educational and employment opportunities, and maturing out of involvement for family reasons.

• A key factor contributing to members staying is their steadfast commitment to the groups' respective ideologies and loyalty to the leaders even when they may have operational grievances.

Key Insight for Informing Practice

• The push and pull factors identified clearly point towards the need for community-driven investment in constructive efforts like education and jobs instead of further investment in destructive, militarized security.

Summary

While political violence is usually examined at the macro-level of national security, international relations, and state-level decisions about war and peace, it is just as important to understand the micro-level mechanisms that enable participation in violence at the individual level. With regards to extremism and terrorism, it is particularly useful for researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers to understand the social context and how individuals engage in and disengage from extremist groups (see Table 1).

Continued reading:

Lehmann, T., & Tyson, S. (2021, February 5). Why radicalization is so common, and what to do about it. *Political Violence @ a Glance*. Retrieved July 29, 2021, from https:// politicalviolenceataglance.org/2021/02/05/ why-radicalization-is-so-common-and-what-to-do-about-it/

Patel, F., & German, M. (2015). Countering violent extremism: Myths and fact. New York University School of Law. Retrieved July 29, 2021, from https://www.brennancenter. org/sites/default/files/analysis/102915%20 Final%20CVE%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf

Peace Science Digest. (2016). Reasons for leaving terrorist organizations. Retrieved July 29, 2021, from https://peacesciencedigest. org/reasons-leaving-terrorist-organizations

Rosin, H. (2016, July 15). How a Danish town helped young Muslims turn away from ISIS. NPR. Retrieved October 6, 2021, from https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/07/15/485900076/how-a-danish-town-helped-young-muslims-turn-away-from-isis

Organizations/Initiatives:

Protection Approaches:
https://protectionapproaches.org/

Common push factors	Common pull factors
Disagreements over a group's strategy, practices, or use of violence	**Relationship with family members, friends, and others outside the group**
Disillusionment with its leaders and members	**The desire to "settle down," marry, and start a family**
Loss of interest or faith in the group's ideology	**Educational and employment opportunities**
Dissatisfaction with one's role or contribution	**Aging or "maturing out"**
Emotional or physical exhaustion from participating in high-risk activism and political violence ("burnout")	

Table 1: Push and pull factors of voluntary disengagement from extremist groups (commonly cited in previous research)

Michael Kenney and Julie Chernov Hwang explore why individuals from al-Muhajiroun (Arabic for "the Emigrants") and Jemaah Islamiyah, two Islamic organizations (one British and one Indonesian) "located at the antipodes of the Salafi-jihadi world," leave or stay in the groups.[1] Both groups, operating in democratic countries, have sought to create an Islamic state since the 1990s. Al-Muhajiroun never engaged in terrorism in the U.K., seeking to advance its goal instead through preaching, education, and demonstrations. Former activists and supporters, however, were known to become involved in acts of political violence with other organizations. Jemaah Islamiyah was known for multiple deadly attacks (mainly in Indonesia) in the first decade of the century.

1. See our note on the use of "jihadi" or "Islamic extremist" in this issue's glossary.

The study was based on 58 semi-structured interviews conducted between 2010 and 2019. All participants were asked how they became involved in their respective groups, what activities they performed, and how they learned to become activists. Those who left their groups were asked why and how they left, and how they fared after their departure. Those who stayed were asked why they stayed. The findings were consistent with previous research on disengagement push and pull factors (see Table 1). No single factor explains why people withdraw from high-risk activism or political violence; disengagement typically happens because of growing disagreements over time as opposed to singular triggering events.

Push factors:

The confrontational nature of al-Muhajiroun activism was the most common push factor for participants who disengaged. This was in part attributed to the perception of their actions being counterproductive and harmful to their communities. Disagreements with leaders and their promoted ideology was another reason identified for disengagement, which in part had to do with a leader's changing interpretation of Islamic scripture. Disengaged al-Muhajiroun activists also commonly cited burnout as a reason for leaving. In a non-Muslim country, they were not able to progress in their individual and group goals and instead saw old friends who were not part of the organization advance professionally and personally, and they also experienced stress due to public (e.g., police) and private (e.g., family member) resistance to their involvement. In the case of Jemaah Islamiyah, leaders' mistakes, dogmatism, and tactical choices regarding bombing were sources of disagreement, whereas the ideology generally was not questioned. Given long-term socialization into the group, Jemaah Islamiyah members were also less likely to experience burnout.

Pull factors:

Relatives and friends who were not supportive of participants' al-Muhajiroun activism but who continued engaging with them were considered personal influences in pulling activists out. Jemaah Islamiyah activists also recounted being exposed to new friends and ideas, which allowed them to move into more mainstream movements and reintegrate into society. The desire for more education and more lucrative and desirable employment opportunities pulled participants from both groups out of activism. Parenthood also led to a shift in priorities away from activism toward being present with families. Similarly, aging out of activist networks was another pull factor away from both groups. With a focus on careers and families, individuals were no longer willing and available to pursue high-risk activism that initially might have drawn them to the groups when they were younger.
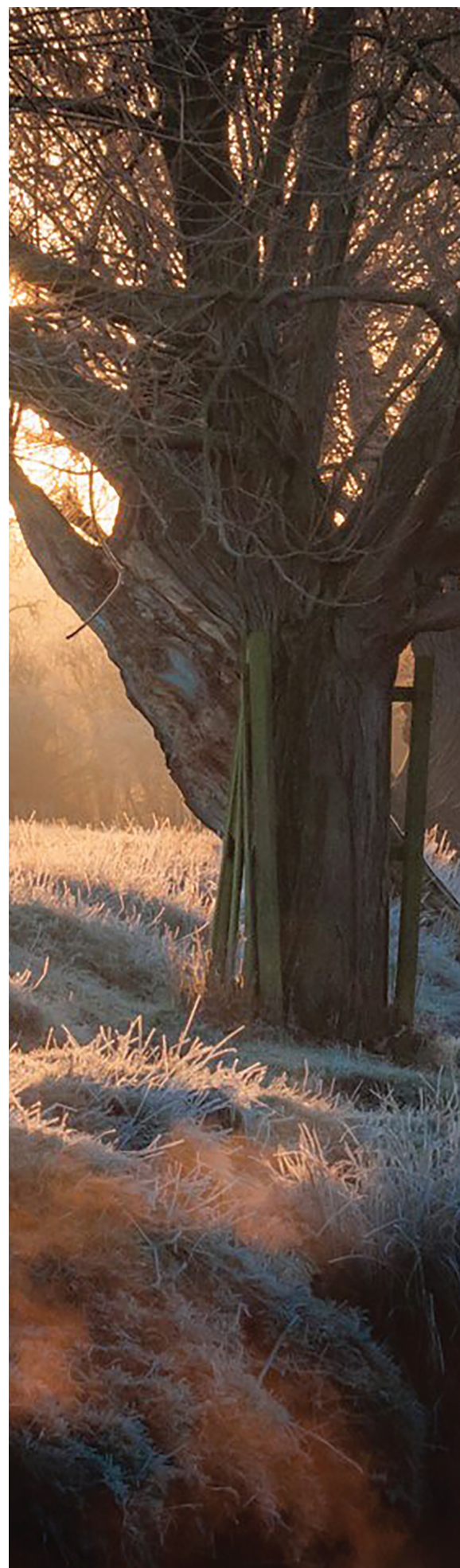
Study participants who remained in the groups experienced some but not all push and pull factors. In particular, they did not experience disillusionment with ideology, shifting priorities, or maturing out. In fact, a key factor contributing to them staying was their steadfast commitment to the groups' respective ideologies and loyalty to the leaders even when grievances existed.

To facilitate disengagement, the authors suggest formal and informal community initiatives supporting individuals' identity needs without initially challenging their ideological views. Employment and education opportunities leading to financial independence all contribute to solidifying activists' identities outside of their groups. While each activist's disengagement is different, programs that address the most prominent push and pull factors "may help those who are questioning their involvement realize that there is life after al-Muhajiroun and Jemaah Islamiyah."

Informing Practice

Members of extremist groups need to be understood as individuals, who like any other individuals undergo processes of identity formation throughout their lives. If they are reduced to the picture of static, unchanging, and unchangeable "terrorists" in a securitized landscape of the Global War on Terror (GWOT)/Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), leaders of these groups can maintain a grip on their harmful ideologies, with entire communities continuing to be stigmatized. Members of extremist groups carry collective and individual grievances. Root cause analysis commonly reveals the non-fulfillment of basic human needs such as education or employment opportunities. According to theories of human needs, those needs must be satisfied for destructive conflict (in this case, participation in extremist groups) to be prevented.

Community, domestic, and international programs and policies that advance opportunities for education and employment directly address basic needs and vastly limit the space for recruitment into extremist groups. Supportive family members, mentorships, and educational and employment opportunities leading to financial independence all contribute to solidifying activists' identities outside of their groups. Community programs that take the different life stages (e.g., parenthood) and processes of identity formation (e.g., maturing) into consideration can lead to disengagement. As the study shows, disengagement happens over time. Programs should consider long-term engagement rather than quick fixes, however politically expedient they may be. Importantly, given that programs dealing with extremist groups are on the outside of those groups, their primary objectives will likely emphasize external pull factors.

More broadly speaking, this study opens pathways to transcend the misguided post-9/11 military-driven GWOT and the "softer" securitized efforts within the CVE framework, the latter being the dominant approach to combatting violent extremism, which focuses on identifying individuals "at risk" of radicalization. In addition to the loss of lives, the human suffering, and the social, political, and economic costs it has caused, the GWOT—and militarized counterterrorism more generally— produces discontent and directly acts as a recruitment tool for terrorist organizations. CVE is represented as an approach that empowers communities and builds resilience to extremism. However, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, CVE programs are conceptually flawed and ensure negative impacts. The Brennan Center challenges the "myths" that CVE programs prevent terrorism, are necessary to implement (even in the absence of evidence of their efficacy), do not target Muslims, are an alternative to "hard" security, and are community driven. A closer look at CVE programs, according to the Brennan Center, shows that they entail "stigmatizing Muslims and reinforcing Islamophobic stereotypes, facilitating covert intelligence-gathering, suppressing dissent against government policies, and sowing discord in targeted communities." Organizations like al-Muhajiroun and Jemaah Islamiyah would typically be addressed within the GWOT and CVE contexts. Instead, this research suggests alternative pathways for disengagement from extremist groups centered around the discussed aspects of individuals' identity development and fundamental needs.

While this study was conducted in a specific context, the focus on the identities of extremists allows for cautious generalizations to other contexts, even when extremist groups (e.g., white supremacists) have completely different priorities from those of the examined Islamic extremist groups. The efforts contributing to disengagement from extremist groups appear surprisingly obvious. The push and pull factors identified clearly point towards the need for community-driven investment in constructive efforts like education and jobs instead of further investment in destructive, militarized security. It is not enough to simply add these constructive approaches onto destructive, military approaches already being used, with the assumption that they can complement one another. Rather, it is imperative to reject militarized security approaches outright, as they directly impede the constructive factors and likely drive individuals deeper into their respective groups. To put it simply, there needs to be an investment into healthy, inclusive communities where everyone's human needs are being met, as well as into the creation of equality within and between societies. [PH]

Questions Raised

• Do research studies such as this one reinforce the previously mentioned flaws of CVE? Or do they provide insights into creating stronger community resilience to violent extremism of all forms?

Lessons Learned from the Law Enforcement Response to Far-Right Terrorism: Insights for a More Effective Approach

Keywords

Atomwaffen Division,
violent extremism,
countering violent
extremism,
United States,
far-right terrorism

Talking Points

• Although arrests and a proposed Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation worked in dismantling the Atomwaffen Division (AWD), the immediate rebranding of the group under a new name undermines the success of the law enforcement response.

• Characteristics of the far-right movement—including lone-wolf terrorist activity, the use of social media, a penchant for vicious rhetoric, and attachment to a distinct accelerationism ideology—underscore how a group-centered law enforcement approach is ineffective in addressing far-right violence.

• A more effective approach to countering far-right violent extremism would center on four priority areas: addressing rampant conspiracies, preventing radicalization on social media sites, engaging in a public health approach beyond just law enforcement, and formalizing and expanding exit paths for those seeking to renounce hatred and racism.

Key Insight for Informing Practice

• In practice, a public health approach for confronting violent extremism would emphasize prevention at three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. This framework embraces a more nuanced approach to addressing a range of causes and risk factors at the societal and individual levels, shifting the focus away from radical ideologies to violence prevention based on evidence-based risk factors.

Summary

In early 2020, the U.S. government targeted the Atomwaffen Division (AWD) and its counterpart the Base though arrests and a proposed Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation, thus contributing to the disintegration of AWD. However, AWD leaders soon rebranded under a new organization—National Socialist Order. Moreover, the landscape of far-right extremism in the U.S. is evolving. Neo-Nazi and white supremacist organizations are being joined by conspiracy theorist movements (e.g., QAnon) and anti-government groups (e.g., Boogaloo Boys), all of which pose a dangerous and imminent domestic terrorism threat. Counterterrorism experts and some law enforcement officers are calling for new tools to address violent extremism. In response, Jacob Ware provides an instructive analysis of AWD and the limitations of the law enforcement response. He illustrates the similarities between AWD, the Base, and the broader, evolving far-right extremism movement. Based on his analysis, he proposes "bolder and more transformative policies" to address the evolving threat of far-right extremism in the U.S.

Although arrests and a proposed FTO designation worked in dismantling AWD, the immediate rebranding of the group under a new name undermines the success of the law enforcement response. Moreover, the law enforcement approach did little to impact the broader far-right extremism movement that poses a violent and imminent threat to the American homeland.

Several characteristics of AWD and the Base are relevant to the broader community of far-right extremist individuals and groups, including domestic and transnational groups. Rather than orchestrating indiscriminate terrorist attacks, far-right extremist groups provide an ideologically extreme outlet to channel and exploit the non-ideological vulnerabilities of its members, including a history of mental illness and ongoing social isolation. AWD, the Base, and the broader community of far-right extremists have demonstrated an adeptness with social media and a penchant for vicious rhetoric. The echo chambers created in the online environment give way to increasingly radical language and plans, which increase the likelihood of "breakaway lone actor violence." AWD and the Base both tapped into the broader "accelerationism" strategy, which has evolved from a fringe movement into a distinct ideology of the far-right movement and has inspired at least twelve extremist organizations.

Continued reading:

Zerkel, M. (2019, June 28). Stopping Islamophobia. American Friends Service Committee. Retrieved July 14, 2021, from https://www.afsc.org/story/stopping-islamophobia

Garcia, M. (2019, April 3). A public-health approach to countering violent extremism. Just Security. Retrieved July 14, 2021, from https://www.justsecurity.org/63455/a-public-health-approach-to-countering-violent-extremism/

Beauchamp, Z. (2019, November 18). Accelerationism: The obscure idea inspiring white supremacist killers around the world. *Vox*. Retrieved July 12, 2021, from https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/11/11/20882005/accelerationism-white-supremacy-christchurch

National Security Critical Issues Task Force. (2016). Countering violent extremism: Applying a public health model. Georgetown University Center for Security Studies. Retrieved July 14, 2021, from https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NSCITF-Report-on-Countering-Violent-Extremism.pdf

Organizations/Initiatives:

Moonshot:
https://moonshotteam.com/

Parents for Peace:
https://www.parents4peace.org/

Accelerationism: an ideology embraced by neo-Nazis and white supremacists that aims to collapse the government and establish a white-dominated system. To hasten the collapse, these groups deploy violence to sow chaos and create political tension.

Beauchamp, Z. (2019, November 18). Accelerationism: The obscure idea inspiring white supremacist killers around the world. Vox. Retrieved on July 12, 2021, from https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/11/11/20882005/acceleration-ism-white-supremacy-christchurch

The lone-wolf nature of far-right terrorist attacks, the increasingly violent rhetoric stemming from an anonymous online environment, and the proliferation of far-right ideology renders the government's group-centered, law enforcement approach to counterterrorism inadequate in preventing the spread and appeal of far-right extremist groups. Arrests and FTO designation fail to deter lone-wolf terrorism, especially when members enjoy the anonymity of the online environment. As demonstrated in the AWD case, the elimination of one extremist group via direct targeting by law enforcement is unlikely to deter the larger, transnational movement, as new groups can emerge seamlessly. Furthermore, the far-right extremism field is evolving to include not only neo-Nazi and white supremacist ideology but also extremism hinging on conspiracy theories and anti-government sentiments. Thus, the author proposes a more effective strategy to counter far-right violent extremism, centering on four priorities.

First, addressing rampant conspiracy theories is essential, as they are a key element in political extremism. For instance, recent coronavirus conspiracy theories have inspired attempted violence against hospitals and care centers. Conspiracy theories emerge in societies with high levels of distrust because adherents are motivated more by distrust of official narratives than by certainty in the conspiracy theories. To restore trust in legitimate news sources, public figures can be more disciplined about their use of the term "fake news," distinguishing fact-based reporting from sensational reporting that is not assiduously fact-checked. To prevent future radicalization, online infrastructure should be developed to slow the spread of falsehoods.

Second, preventing radicalization on social media sites is critical in the fight against far-right terrorism. The author identifies the "redirect method" pioneered by Moonshot in which at-risk individuals are rerouted to alternative, benign content online when flags are raised. Identifying vulnerable young people on social media and halting their progression into extremist ideologies and communities is especially important considering the membership of AWD, the Base, and other like-minded groups is predominantly young.

Third, a whole-of-society approach must be deployed, including an ecosystem of actors and programs beyond law enforcement. Crucially, a

public health approach must be adopted as there is ample evidence of the link between mental health vulnerabilities and far-right lone-wolf terrorism.

Lastly, exit paths for those seeking to renounce hatred and racism must be formalized and expanded. Deploying "formers" in the deradicalization space could facilitate a smoother exit path as advocated by the nonprofit Parents for Peace. Most importantly, countering violent extremism work should be done through nonprofits, as there is a potential for politicization and backlash with any government-led efforts at deradicalization. The author warns we cannot arrest ourselves out of extremism. Although law enforcement approaches were effective in stymieing AWD, these methods had little impact on the larger far-right extremism movement that remains an active threat to Americans.

Photo Credit: Robert P. Alvarez

Informing Practice

The author recommends adopting a public health approach to confront far-right extremism. In practice, what would this approach look like? In the world of healthcare, prevention can occur at three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention is focused on preventing the disease from occurring in the first place. Secondary prevention is targeted toward a specific audience susceptible to the disease. Lastly, tertiary prevention is meant to cure an individual with a specific disease. Likewise, a public health model for preventing political violence would emphasize prevention at these same three levels. Primary prevention refers to a broad range of activities undertaken by educators, social-service providers, and healthcare professionals to mitigate societal grievances that have been shown to contribute to political violence. Community and societal risk factors for political violence would be addressed under primary prevention. Some of these factors include socio-economic grievances, lack of social services, and stigma associated with mental health. Addressing these risk factors at a societal level to reduce political violence would mitigate unnecessary and counterproductive targeting of individuals that pose limited or no risk, as has historically been the case with countering violent extremism (CVE) programs in the U.S.

Secondary prevention focuses on identifying at-risk individuals—those experiencing several "push" and "pull" factors of violent extremism—and preventing their radicalization. (See "Researching the Causes of Radicalization and Violent Extremism: What Do We Know?" in this special issue.) As the author mentions, the online environment is a primary source of far-right radicalization, thus secondary prevention should be targeted at reducing radicalization on the internet and social media. The "redirect method" employed by Moonshot is an excellent example of countering radicalization in the online environment. Additionally, efforts could be directed at bolstering community engagement to increase social belonging for isolated community members outside of the internet.

Lastly, tertiary prevention is designed for individuals already radicalized, those who either have planned to commit or have already committed an act of political violence. Importantly, this requires coordination and trust among several stakeholders, especially at the local level. The perpetrators of the deadliest violence of the far-right movement have primarily been lone-wolf actors. In many of these cases, there was little evidence beforehand of an impending terrorist attack. After years of discriminatory application of CVE policies and rampant distrust of authority, some communities may be reluctant to flag at-risk individuals. Community members must have confidence that an at-risk individual will receive appropriate intervention, not be needlessly criminalized or locked away. Therefore, interventions at this tertiary level should attend to individuals' basic needs—for instance, for identity and belonging, for a sense of purpose, for gainful employment,

for mental health support—the non-fulfillment of which may have drawn these individuals into extremist groups in the first place.

Applying a public health lens to countering violent extremism is not a new thought—as early as 2016 there were reports outlining this framework. Yet, as the author suggests, the necessity of its adoption is just as pertinent. A public health framework facilitates the development of a more nuanced approach to addressing a range of causes and risk factors at the societal and individual levels. Crucially, this approach would shift the focus away from radical ideologies to violence prevention based on evidence-based risk factors. Ideology is undoubtedly a factor in far-right violence, however long-term vulnerabilities, such as a history of mental illness, and short-term instabilities, play a more significant role in radicalization. [KH]

Questions Raised

• What are some barriers that have prevented the adoption of a public health approach to confronting domestic terrorism?

Interfaith Peace Movements as Counter-Movements to Radical Buddhist Nationalism

Keywords

religious radicalization, Buddhist nationalism, anti-Muslim violence, peace movements, movement/counter-movement dynamics, social media, Myanmar, Sri Lanka

Organizations/Initiatives:

Christians Against Christian Nationalism: https://www.christiansagainstchristianna-tionalism.org/statement

The National Peace Council (of Sri Lanka): https://www.peace-srilanka.org/

Religions for Peace-Myanmar: https://www.rfpmm.org/who-we-are/

Talking Points

• The diverse actors who have come together to challenge Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka can be understood as a peace movement—one that promotes interfaith understanding, counters hate speech (including through the evocation of "Buddhist values of nonviolence and tolerance"), prevents violence, and protects and advocates for minority rights.

• Although widely perceived to be weaker than and largely reactive to the Buddhist nationalist movements they oppose, interfaith peace movements "constitute important counter-voices" to these movements, finding creative ways to challenge their narratives and activities even within existing constraints.

• Social media constitutes an important arena of contestation between Buddhist nationalist movements and the peace movements countering them—one where peace activists need to further build their skills.

• The movement/counter-movement dynamics reveal the "ambivalent role of religion" in this context and the critical importance of voices *within* Buddhism drawing on its teachings to challenge the religious justification of violence and to call for peace.

Key Insight for Informing Practice

• Peace movements countering radical religious nationalist movements can strengthen their efforts by building broad-based, diverse coalitions that reflect their inclusive ethos, investing in their social media skills and strategy, and engaging with faith leaders who can credibly draw on religious resources to promote peace and coexistence.

Summary

Continued reading:

Fuller, L. (2018). How unarmed civilians saved lives during anti-Muslim attacks in Sri Lanka. *Waging Nonviolence*. Retrieved August 25, 2021, from https://wagingnon-violence.org/2018/03/how-unarmed-civil-ians-saved-lives-during-anti-muslim-vio-lence-sri-lanka/

Waidyatilake, B., & Sivaloganathan, M. (2018). Can Buddhist values overcome nationalism in Sri Lanka? Carnegie India. Retrieved August 25, 2021, from https://carnegieindia.org/2018/07/25/can-bud-dhist-values-overcome-nationalism-in-sri-lanka-pub-76922

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Despite its reputation in the West as a uniformly peaceful religion, Buddhism has not been immune to the "**religious radicalization**" that has touched other global faith traditions. In both Myanmar and Sri Lanka, "**radical**" Buddhist nationalist movements have gained ground in the past decade, directing their energy against Muslim minorities whom they have targeted with hate speech and violence—including attacks against "mosques, Muslim-owned property and individuals." Camilla Orjuela is interested in what she frames as the peace movements that have emerged to *counter* these Buddhist nationalist movements—in particular, who is involved, what activities they engage in and challenges they face, and the dynamics between them and the Buddhist nationalist movements they confront. She finds that "although the peace movements are considerably weaker and largely reactive to and restrained by the radical Buddhist movements," including in the arena of social media, "they constitute important counter-voices" online and beyond.

> **Religious radicalization:** "[t]he process… whereby individuals adopt attitudes and behaviours favouring the use of violence to achieve religious objectives." Although "**radical**" can mean very different things, including the advocacy of fundamental change by non-violent means, the term will be used here to mean the endorsement of violence as a means to reach objectives.

The author bases her findings primarily on interviews with religious leaders, peace activists, and NGO representatives in Sri Lanka (2016) and Myanmar (2016-2017), supplemented with media reports, first-hand observations of peace activities, and secondary sources. First, the author finds many similarities between Buddhist nationalist movements in the two countries, both of which have diverse majority-Buddhist, minority-Muslim populations. These Buddhist nationalist movements—led by radicalized Buddhist monks, energized by new organizations, and facilitated by social media and global anti-Muslim discourses—developed around the same time in both countries (roughly 2012-2014) and are animated by victimization narratives casting Muslim communities as an economic, cultural, and demographic threat to Buddhism/the Buddhist population. Although the prominent organizations cannot be directly linked to anti-Muslim violence, they are closely related to it insofar as "rumors on social media and speeches by key figures in the Buddhist organisations have spread hatred and legitimised violence." Enjoying some measure of sympathy from the political elite, these movements mobilize more broadly around the preservation and protection of Buddhist sites, texts, and symbols; boycotts

of Muslim businesses and products; and legal protection for and social welfare of Buddhist populations.

The movements that have emerged to counter Buddhist nationalism are closely related to previous democratization and peace movements in both countries and include a range of actors: from interfaith and peace NGOs to moderate Buddhist monks and religious leaders from other traditions. They have engaged in five kinds of activities: interfaith dialogue and broader "contact" initiatives, bringing together religious leaders and laypeople from different traditions/communities; minority rights advocacy and protection; direct intervention to prevent violence; dissemination of counter-discourses promoting coexistence through social media and various cultural outlets; and public demonstrations promoting coexistence.

The interfaith peace movements are widely perceived to be weaker than and largely reactive to the Buddhist nationalist movements, including on social media where peace activists struggle to respond with equal agility and vigor. Episodes of violence are often sparked by online rumors or sensational, false stories about the "Muslim threat"—as well as explicit calls for violence—that go viral. Not only are the Buddhist nationalist movements capable of mobilizing supporters quite easily, but they also create the constraints within which the peace movements must operate and set the agenda to which they must respond. For instance, in contexts where it may be perceived as dangerous for Muslims to publicly criticize Buddhist nationalist activities, these individuals must instead work through moderate Buddhist monks to register their grievances. And even these moderate Buddhist monks often fear the repercussions of engaging in interfaith peace work as it may elicit "arrests, surveillance, obstruction of inter-religious festivals and attacks on social media," leading activists to be strategic with their involvement.

These counter-movements have learned to use Buddhist nationalist movement dominance to their advantage at times by appropriating some of its language and symbolism towards the promotion of a more tolerant ethos. Some moderate monks publicly contest Buddhist nationalist/anti-Muslim ideology, both on and off social media, by expressing alternative interpretations of Buddhist teachings in support of nonviolence and coexistence—suggesting the importance of *intra*-faith contestation to countering radicalization. Other activists have started clever social media campaigns that flip the Buddhist-nationalist script or humanize Muslim community members. In addition, these counter-movements have "educated people on news literacy, the use of social media to combat hatred, and Facebook reporting mechanisms," so they become more critical media consumers, less receptive to calls for violence.

Framing the study in terms of movement/counter-movement dynamics enables us to see how the movements interact with one another, "struggl[ing] for influence" in different arenas, especially social media—an arena that "requires new skills often not held by peace activists." These movement/counter-movement dynamics especially reveal the "ambivalent role of religion" in this context and the critical importance of voices *within* Buddhism drawing on its teachings to challenge the justification of violence and to call for peace.

Photo Credit: David Mark from Pixabay

Informing Practice

One vital, overarching contribution of this research is to frame "deradicalization" work as movement work. Seeing peace movements as key to countering radicalization or violent extremism provides these deradicalization activities with greater depth and links them to a substantive vision of an inclusive, peaceful national community. Furthermore, it grounds these activities in a commitment to peace that makes it harder to link tactical deradicalization activities to a broader militarized counterterrorism strategy, the dominant approach seen since the inception of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) in 2001. Framing deradicalization work in this way also brings to light movement/counter-movement dynamics and the way each movement is vying for public support to gain power—awareness of which can inform more effective peace movement strategy.

Whether activists are working in the context of Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka (countries that have experienced significant transitions even since the recent publication of this research) or of white Christian nationalism in the United States, a few related practical recommendations stand out.

First, recognition of the easy pull and preeminence of religious nationalist movements vis-à-vis the peace movements countering them can prompt these counter-movements to proactively create diverse, inclusive coalitions that are resilient enough to withstand the exclusionary, polarizing rhetoric of religious nationalist movements. If the power of a movement is ultimately about the extent of public support for it, then peace movements can use their inclusive ethos to their advantage, attracting a broad range of community members to the cause. Whereas religious nationalist movements may have the "benefit" of fear narratives, which can be extremely effective in mobilizing people, especially during transitional periods when uncertainty may create a greater need for the reassuring clarity they provide, interfaith peace movements can use their diversity as an asset—and even as a model of interfaith cooperation and as a source of humanization narratives.

Second, peace movements need to put substantial energy and resources into social media strategy—especially those countering religious nationalist movements, as social media is a major arena for promulgating rumors and hate speech that can trigger violence. Instead of focusing online interventions narrowly on deterring likely recruits from joining extremist groups, these efforts should aim more broadly at the general public where exclusionary ideologies and enemy images can take root. Crafting agile, creative social media campaigns that can flip the religious-nationalist script, humanize the religious "other," and credibly reinterpret religious teachings in the name of coexistence—drawing on the authority of clergy from within the dominant religious tradition—can go a long way in providing essential discursive resistance to hate speech and violence legitimation. Movements should also consider devoting energy to more general social media literacy to make community members more critical of—and therefore more resilient to—the fear mongering of religious nationalism.

Third and finally, peace activists should not shy away from engagement with religious leaders in their effort to counter radical religious nationalist movements. In fact, moderate religious leaders from within the same tradition are probably those best positioned to credibly challenge the hateful narratives emerging from nationalist groups, as they can draw from the same religious resources—sacred texts and teachings, religious authority, religious institutions and values—to argue against exclusion and violence and for love of one's neighbors. [MW]

Questions Raised

• How can peace movements more effectively employ social media to confront dangerous rumors and falsehoods that may incite violence?

• How can religious actors allied with peace movements best challenge exclusionary narratives coming out of their own religious traditions?

Organizations in the Field

Thought Partnerships (TP) seeks out global peers confronting similar challenges such as hate, violence, and extremism in their own societies and connects them across sectors and geographies to magnify the impact of their collective wisdom.

We believe this type of peer-to-peer exchange and connection is a critical building block for any successful field of work and is a particularly powerful ingredient in sustaining and growing social justice movements. Our team creates opportunities for deep learning and sharing within and across diverse geographies in order to harness the collective wisdom of experts, activists, and practitioners seeking to work as part of mutually reinforcing ecosystems across sectors to amplify impact and advance a more peaceful world. We foster Communities of Practice that collaboratively co-create whole-of-self solutions to whole-of-society problems.

To achieve outsized impact, TP strategically operates through a distributive organizing model, welcoming members, including indi-viduals, institutions, networks, and organizations, who are working as multipliers in their own contexts. This design allows TP's impact to expand beyond its immediate interactions with members of its community to the thousands of individuals and institutions in the networks of its members.

The Peer Learning Community for Countering Hate and Division (PLC), a section of our wider Community of Practice, is made up of members who are seeking to consistently and actively engage with their peers across geographies substantively, strategically, tactically, and in solidarity. In its first year of operation, TP nearly doubled the size of its PLC, which now represents the voices and participation of 73 organizations in 23 countries working collectively to counter hate and prevent identity-based violence around the world.

In the following section, you will have the opportunity to learn about the work of a few members of the Thought Partnerships community and their approaches to countering hate, division, and extremism.

Moonshot
Digital Interventions to Interrupt Hate Online

Written by Meghan Conroy, Analyst at Moonshot

Moonshot is a global social enterprise working to end online harms, applying evidence, ethics, and human rights to this endeavor. We design new methodologies and technologies to respond effectively to harms that threaten public safety, including violent extremism, gender-based violence, disinformation, online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), and organized crime. Rather than making assumptions about people based on who they are or where they live, we focus on online behaviors that can indicate possible risk or harm—e.g., searches for violent extremist material or comments supporting dangerous conspiracy theories. Using publicly available and anonymized data, we assess the likely risk of the "what," rather than the perceived risk of the "who."

The distinctions commonly drawn between "online" activity and "the real world" often underestimate the influence and impact of digital interactions. Online discourse frequently gives rise to offline action—including violence. We need to take seriously the safeguarding of digital public spaces in the same way we protect offline spaces.

Moonshot's methodologies are premised on the notion that individuals' online search behavior can represent both a risk and an opportunity. While they risk being exposed to harmful online material, there is also an opportunity to challenge dangerous beliefs by offering relevant, alternative viewpoints. In practice, this entails targeted online engagement with at-risk audiences through digital campaigns and online interventions programs offering tailored support to those in need. We work closely with partners around the world to ensure local expertise is embedded in each approach—for instance, our online interventions programs connect vulnerable people with local support services online. Our programs benefit from multi-disciplinary perspectives across our specialized team of subject matter experts, mental health practitioners, software engineers, data analysts, and former law enforcement officers. Our work is underpinned by the belief that people can change; empathy and compassion are key tenets of our efforts to help safeguard against online harms.

Protection Approaches
Changing How We Understand and Prevent Identity-Based Violence

Written by Dr. Kate Ferguson, Co-Executive Director and Head of Policy and Research at Protection Approaches

Protection Approaches wants to change the way the world thinks about identity-based violence and how we respond to and prevent it. Protection Approaches believes that a spectrum of identity-based harms—from hate crimes to violent extremism to mass atrocities, all animated by the deadly idea that some lives are more valuable than others—should be seen as a shared global crisis. We are working to build a world where everyone accepts and respects each other, regardless of identity. We believe that accomplishing this mission is not only possible but probable, and we are dedicated to doing the long-term, difficult work necessary to help make it a reality. We are currently implementing programs that support those affected by identity-based violence, challenge those responsible for it, and encourage those in a position to prevent it. We know that no society is immune to identity-based violence and that the collective responsibility to help protect people from such discrimination spans whole societies.

Our Stronger Communities project in the U.K. works to engage, support, and encourage local leaders—particularly young people—to play a central role in identifying, challenging, and preventing all forms of institutionalized prejudice and inequality. In doing so, we broker relationships that can help facilitate locally driven change in communities across the U.K.

At the same time, we have successfully pushed the U.K. government to do a better job of predicting, preventing, and responding to all forms of identity-based violence. We have worked with ministers, Parliament, and civil society to improve their understanding of identity-based violence, integrate prevention into their decision-making, and strengthen the development and implementation of timely, effective policies. As a result of our work, atrocity prevention is now a policy priority in the U.K.'s new strategic framework for international policy. We helped to secure the inclusion of language addressing grievances and political marginalization as drivers of conflict and atrocity in the 2021 outcomes of the U.K. Prime Minister's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, which sets out the government's vision for the U.K.'s role in the world over the next decade.

Beyond our community and policy programming, we also collaborate with colleagues in the broader human rights movement to examine and dismantle the structural biases and inequalities in our own work that influence our ability to effectively challenge identity-based violence elsewhere.

Beyond Conflict
Brain and Behavioral Science -Informed Peacebuilding

Written by Karen Bernstein, International Peacebuilding Program Manager at Beyond Conflict, and Michelle Barsa, Program Director at Beyond Conflict

Innovation in peacebuilding has left brain and behavioral science largely unexplored. Beyond Conflict seeks to change that. With the ultimate objective being sustainable social and behavioral change (e.g., a reduction in violent, prejudicial behavior), we translate insights from neurobiology and social psychology into practical, necessary interventions to shift related attitudes and beliefs.

Anchored in learning from social psychology, neurobiology, and 30+ years of peacebuilding experience in conflict-affected countries, our framework and tools address a range of critical issues related to violent conflict. In collaboration with partners, we utilize a science-informed design process to:

> I. Diagnose the neurobiological, psychological, and behavioral factors that drive conflict through initial research;
> 2. Design interventions and rigorously test them; and
> 3. Re-define the problem using the findings to scale up programming and provide results to practitioners, policy-makers, and decision-makers to re-define discourse, practice, and policy.

As one example, our work in Nigeria is a multi-year collaboration with local partners to reduce intergroup conflict between Christians and Muslims. We co-created radio and television programs that have reached millions of people and conducted rigorous impact assessments to determine whether they reduced dehumanization, identity-based threat perceptions, and support for violence against the opposing group. The storylines utilized behavioral science-informed humanizing approaches, such as showcasing the characters—in this case, a Christian and a Muslim—sharing common group membership and recognizing their shared experiences of suffering. Researchers and script-writers carefully crafted the storylines to be authentic and relatable while touching upon messaging shown in studies to reduce intergroup conflict. In a randomized control study, the results found that both of the programs reduced support for interreligious violence. In fact, the TV drama audience reported interacting more with someone from the other religion than they had previously. This result held true four to eight weeks after the drama aired.

This is just one example of Beyond Conflict's programming. The research-based results showcase the need for more attention to brain and behavioral processes within the peacebuilding field as a means of more effectively reducing and preventing intergroup conflict.

Dadin Kowa

Award-Winning Original Drama • Runtime: 60mins

AREWA24's primetime, award-winning original drama tells the story of Dadin Kowa, a fictional town in which the main characters reflect real life and society in Northern Nigeria. Through these storylines, audiences see themselves, their hopes and challenges, and relate characters' struggles to their own decisions regarding career, family, finances, and conflicts. Dadin Kowa won the 2016 Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Award for best Hausa Movie/Television Series.

Pictured: The latest season of the highly popular Nigerian drama series, Dadin Kowa, included a behavioral science-based storyline aimed at reducing interreligious negative perceptions, dehumanization, perceptions of threat, and support for violence.

PeaceTech Lab
Contextualizing Tech Tools to Counter Hate

Written by Achol Jok Mach, Senior Specialist at PeaceTech Lab

PeaceTech Lab works to identify, monitor, and combat hate speech on social media in fragile and conflict-affected countries around the world. One example is the development of hate speech lexicons, which identify and explain inflammatory language on social media while offering alternative words and phrases that can be used to combat the spread of hate speech. Our lexicons serve as a pivotal resource for local activists and organizations working to stop and prevent hate speech worldwide.

In 2020, the Lab developed the Countering Hate Action Network (CHAN) program as a response to a request from lexicon partners—organizations with whom PeaceTech Lab partners to identify hate speech terms in different countries—to strengthen their skills to effectively fight hate speech and division in their respective contexts. The Lab then invited 11 lexicon partners from Africa and the Middle East to take part in a seven-month CHAN program. The aim of the program was to train lexicon partners on well-researched best practices and 19 low-cost/easy-to-use technology tools to counter hate speech and division in their respective locales, while also providing these partners with a community of practice to support them in these efforts.

CHAN members attended seven live sessions on best practices that were facilitated to encourage context-specific experience-sharing of best practices to counter hate speech. In addition, expert technologists led 19 sessions for members on technology tools to identify, monitor, and counter hate speech. With the support of the Lab, CHAN members designed and are now implementing three-month, highly contextualized, action-oriented projects. CHAN's content and live sessions are housed on the Thought Partnerships platform, which is also used by members to exchange ideas, share experiences, and strengthen their network. Members also directly communicate through a WhatsApp group created for fast and easy communication to exchange ideas and for potential collaboration.

Feedback from a monitoring and evaluation process revealed that members found the CHAN program relevant to and useful in their fight against hate speech. They have also expressed interest in attending another phase of the CHAN program. The PeaceTech Lab is now in the process of developing a CHAN Training of Trainers Program, which will be opened to existing members and other peace actors/organizations interested in learning how to counter hate speech and division using best practices and technology tools.

Photo Credit: Bruce Warrington-DsOfmWI0cRU-unsplash

Notes

RECOMMENDED SOURCES OF PEACE JOURNALISM AND ANALYSIS:

PEACEVOICE

A peace and justice op-ed distribution service and an extensive library of ready-to-publish commentary and op-eds written by peace professionals, focusing on changing the U.S. national conversation about the possibilities of peace and justice and the destructive cycle of war and injustice. PeaceVoice operates on the belief that presenting academically informed opinions that promote peace and nonviolent conflict resolution provides the public one of the best, and most absent, deterrents to war and injustice.

www.peacevoice.info

PEACE POLICY

A product of the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for Peace Studies, providing research-based insight, commentary, and solutions to the global challenge of violent conflict. Contributions include writing from scholars and practitioners working to understand the causes of violent conflict and seeking effective solutions and alternatives war and the use of force.

https://peacepolicy.nd.edu/

OTHER WORDS

Distributor of no-cost commentary, op-eds, columns and cartoons focused on empowering readers to become more engaged in issues of local and global peace, justice, democracy, economy and the environment.

www.otherwords.org

TRANSCEND MEDIA SERVICE

A nonprofit peace network specializing in exclusive analysis, research and policy commentary on local and global affairs. Topic areas include political, economic and social issues; as well as global insight on nonviolence, activism conflict resolution and mediation.

www.transcend.org/tms

FOREIGN POLICY IN FOCUS

A "Think Tank Without Walls" connecting the research and action of 600+ scholars, advocates, and activists providing timely analysis of U.S. foreign policy and international affairs, and recommends policy alternatives seeking to make the United States a more responsible global partner.

www.fpif.org

POLITICAL VIOLENCE @ A GLANCE

Political Violence @ a Glance answers questions on the most pressing problems related to violence and protest in the world's conflict zones. Analysis comes from a distinguished team of experts from some of America's top universities. The goal is to anticipate the questions you have about violence happening around the world and to offer you simple, straight-forward analysis before anyone else does. No jargon. No lingo. Just insightful content.

www. politicalviolenceataglance.org

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The *Peace Science Digest* is a project of the War Prevention Initiative

OUR VISION

Our vision is a world beyond war where humanity is united and a global system of peace with justice prevails for current and future generations.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to transform the global peace and security paradigm to one that is built around viable alternatives to war and all forms of political violence. To achieve this we research, advocate for, and advance knowledge on practices that demonstrate the effectiveness of nonviolence and challenge militarism.

OUR CORE VALUES

Nonviolence – We promote strategic and principled nonviolent solutions over any kind of armed conflict.

Empathy – We aspire to view social problems through the eyes of others and respectfully communicate with each other in the pursuit of mutual understanding.

Planetary loyalty – We consider ourselves global citizens, living in harmony with humanity and nature.

Moral imagination* – We strive for a moral perception of the world in that we: (1) imagine people in a web of relationships including their adversaries; (2) foster the understanding of others as an opportunity rather than a threat; (3) pursue the creative process as the wellspring that feeds the building of peace; and (4) risk stepping into the unknown landscape beyond violence.

*This concept was developed by peace and conflict studies scholar and practitioner John Paul Lederach in his book *The Moral Imagination. The Art and Soul of Building Peace*.

OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

Demilitarizing security

Underlying assumptions and norms in traditional security discourse emphasize militarized approaches to political conflict to achieve security. By rethinking what makes us secure, we seek to identify opportunities to challenge militarism in the U.S. and on a global level. The end result is a radically transformed concept of security that prioritizes a global, shared security paradigm that is cognizant of the lived experience(s) of individuals and communities, particularly those made more vulnerable by security threats or whose voices are often overlooked by traditional security discourse.

Managing political conflict without violence

Violence is often considered an undesirable yet inevitable characteristic of political conflict. By demonstrating the effectiveness of nonviolent responses to political conflict, we advocate for the rejection of political violence and instead promote the many viable alternatives. The end result is a global expectation/standard that political conflicts are managed without violence.