

# COUNTER-EXTREMISM COMMUNICATIONS

# AGENDA

## 14.00 Extremist Communications – Islamists

- Principles of Communications Planning
- Violent & Non-Violent Extremist Communications
- Why, Who, What, How, Where and When... do Extremists Communicate?
- Group Exercise: Analysis

## 15.00 Counter & Alternative Narratives

- Counter-Narratives
- Alternative Narratives
- Group Exercise: Design

## 16.00 Finish

# **EXTREMIST COMMUNICATIONS – ISLAMISTS**

# PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

## Five Building Blocks of Communications Planning:

- |            |                        |
|------------|------------------------|
| Why?       | -Strategic Effect      |
| Who?       | -Target Audience(s)    |
| What?      | -Narrative & Messaging |
| How/Where? | -Communication Channel |
| When?      | -Timing                |

# VIOLENT & NON-VIOLENT EXTREMISTS

## VIOLENCE / TERRORISM

Acts or campaign of violence designed to send a message

*“Terrorism is Theatre”* (Brian Jenkins)

Propaganda of the deed – Where an act of terror and the reporting around it becomes a form communications

## NON-VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Utilisation of communications tactics that are acceptable within the parameters of the UK’s legal framework

Publicly opposed to violence but subscribe to Islamist meta-narratives

Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to fundamental values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs (Extremism Strategy)

# WHY DO EXTREMISTS COMMUNICATE?

## Strategic Effects:

- Spread a message / ideology
- Build and mobilise a support base
- Spread concern or fear among the general public
- Influence policymakers
- Attract or divert attention
- Ultimately, to further an extremist agenda

# WHO DO EXTREMISTS COMMUNICATE WITH?

## Target Audience(s):

- Members, Supporters, Sympathisers, Vulnerable
- General Public, Media, Authorities, Politicians, Government
- Age, Demographic, Gender, Ethnicity, Values, Religion

# WHAT DO EXTREMISTS COMMUNICATE?

## Islamist Meta-Narratives

- War with the West
- Incompatibility with the West (democracy, freedom, laws)
- Rejection of women's rights
- Anti-Semitism
- Intra-community issues
- Non-Muslims
- Conspiracy theories



# WAR WITH THE WEST

- Ideological and theological opposition to the West
- Central theme of most violent Islamist extremist messaging
- Create a polarised world view
- Aims to drive a wedge between the West and the Muslim world, and create tensions among Muslims living in the West

# INCOMPATIBILITY WITH WEST

- Islamists present democracy, freedom and laws as antithetical to Islam
- Advocate adoption of Sharia religious law, as the ultimate law
- Discourage Muslims from voting and participating in democratic political system

# WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Present women's primary role as producing, raising and supporting men
- Accuse secular governments of blurring gender roles and preventing women from fulfilling Islamic duties
- Advocate FGM and illegal cultural practices

# ANTI-SEMITISM

- Demonisation and violent discrimination of Jews features among most Islamist extremist narratives
- Feeds in to conspiracy theory narratives
- Attempts to polarise and divide non-Muslim audiences

# INTRA-COMMUNITY

- Attempts to create sectarian tensions and divide societies along sectarian lines
- Takfirism – Muslim sects violate tenets of Islam
- Used against Shi'a Muslims and Ahmadiyya Muslims

# NON-MUSLIMS

- Supremacy and divine right of Islam
- 'Kuffar' – derogatory term used to refer to non-Muslims
- Opposed to western cultural practices –dress, relationships
- Sharia controlled zones
- Lack of tolerance
- Drives isolation and marginalisation

# CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- Conspiracy theories provide narrative tools to polarise non-Muslim societies and rally supporters against 'omnipresent' enemy
- Examples include: Holocaust denial, Zionism, neo-colonialism, oil politics
- UK context – exaggeration of Islamophobia, hate crime, misrepresenting government policies

# WHERE DO EXTREMISTS COMMUNICATE?

## Communications Channels:

- Online: Social Media Platforms, Private Forums, Private Messenger Apps, Websites, Blogs, Media
- Offline: Reports/Publications, Events, Protests, Street Stalls, Group Meetings, Conferences, Peer-to-Peer, Talks & Seminars
- Shifting communications landscape:
  - Reach more people while being more targeted
  - Closed forums to social media platforms
  - Increased sophistication of content, language & messaging

# WHEN DO EXTREMISTS COMMUNICATE?

## Timing:

- Planned
  - Anniversaries
  - Dates of Note
  - Policy Announcements
  - Court Case Outcomese.g. Balfour Declaration Anniversary
- Opportunist
  - In response to local, national and international incidents/eventse.g. Rohingya crisis

# EXERCISE

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In groups analyse a piece of communications content

Deconstruct:

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?



# COUNTER & ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

# COUNTER-NARRATIVE

- A targeted activity to directly deconstruct, delegitimise or demystify an extremist narrative (Briggs & Feve)
- Challenge may take the form of ideology, logic, fact, humour or emotion
- Message and messenger tailored to resonate with target audience
- Messenger may be civil society/community representative, religious leader, former-extremist, victim of extremism
- #MakingAStand – Empowering women to come together against IS/Daesh, to expose the horrors of supporting a terrorist group

# COUNTER-NARRATIVE EXAMPLES

Examples include:

- Haqiqah
- Not Another Brother
- Abdullah X
- Average Mohammed

# ALTERNATIVE-NARRATIVE

- Undercut extremist narratives by providing positive alternatives (Briggs & Feve)
- Promoting what we are 'for' rather than what we are 'against'
- Positive stories about social values, equality, tolerance, plurality, transparency, openness, freedom & democracy
- Help for Syria – promoting goodwill and charitable giving as an alternative means of providing humanitarian assistance in Syria
- Britain Helps – promotes the impact of UK government aid in emergency situations in Syria, Iraq, Gaza and elsewhere

# ALTERNATIVE-NARRATIVE EXAMPLES

Examples include:

- Help For Syria
- Britain Helps
- Great Together

# EXERCISE

# EXERCISE

Design the concept for a counter or alternative narrative to address an extremist proposition

<b>Communications Plan</b>	<b>Counter/Alternative Narrative</b>
Strategic Effect	
Audience	
Narrative / Message	
Messenger	
Communication Channel	
Timing	

**QUESTIONS?**



**THANK YOU.**