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Youth Extremisms

Evidence Briefing

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Mainstreaming of Extremism: Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents

As the current political climate in both Europe and North American proves to be more divisive day-by-day, there has been a significant increase in hate-inspired and terrorist incidents around the world. Additionally, as the refugee crisis continues to harrow, politicians and citizens alike are starting to use hateful rhetoric towards "outsiders." Thus, this ESRC Research Seminar Series was dedicated to the "Mainstreaming of Extremism," more specifically ways in which academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and civilians can help to combat hate crimes and incidents.

Participants from a wide range of academic disciplines and from NGOs working in the counter-violent-extremism (CVE) area considered: findings on the alt-right from recent academic fieldwork; current trends in extremism, antisemitism, islamophobia and gender dynamics; Islamist movements; and interventions, policy, and monitoring.

Key Discussion Points
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- While populist movements seem to be gaining momentum as evidenced in both Brexit and the United States' election of Donald Trump, there is no sign that they are producing successful results. However, these failures have not delegitimized the movements, but rather caused further polarization within society.
- Twitter and other social media platforms have allowed extremists and the radical-right the ability to brand themselves, ultimately generating sources of income for individuals within those movements. Not only does Twitter assist in their self-promotion, it allows their ideologies and rhetoric to be shared with other individuals, creating a sense of community which assists in sharing those views with the world.
- Often, radical group discourse does not match the views of its younger members. Instead, they are attracted to the ideal of group membership, rather than the ideology it purportedly represents.
- While people around the world regard the populist and radical-right movements as engaging in open displays of racism, members of these groups do not recognise this portrayal of themselves. This suggests the importance of studying the views of group members themselves.
- As more and more hateful acts of violence erupt, the media often blames extremist groups when the majority of violent acts/extremism is not carried out by extremist organisations.
- Misogyny has also permeated the already troubling rhetoric of hate groups. Often, male members in these groups no longer cloak their sentiments, borrowed from the Christian-right, which promote control over women.
- Members of extremist groups are often subject to structural inequalities (for instance disproportionate representation in prison populations). Such inequalities may be a necessary factor in the extremist ideologies taking root.
- As the field of countering-violent extremism continues to grow, researchers often focus on studying the ideologies adhered to by violent extremists. However, such people may be less motivated by ideology and more influenced by the attraction of violence. Thus, extremism may appear to give individuals a channel for acting on these sentiments.

Implications for Policy

- It is important to engage parents of extremists in counter-extremism activities. There should be a focus on creating safe-spaces for parents to not only increase their knowledge and tools for recognising and countering radicalization, but also to build a network for children at risk.

- As hate incidents/attacks grow internationally, CVE leaders need to be aware of the danger of appearing to play a policing role. It is imperative to work with authorities, such that they are seen as partners in CVE.

- The Department of Homeland Security helps to combat further hate incidents by: sharing information among partners and local law enforcement; facilitating info locally back to Washington, DC; creating public awareness programmes; and establishing various systems that solicit the help of local citizens to gather intelligence on potential extremist groups/members. Local organisations struggle to sustain energy for inputting into CVE initiatives over a long period, so it is important to consider what kinds of infrastructures need to be set up to support their efforts.

About the Project