

**Committee: *ECOSOC***

**Topic: *Creative technology based solutions  
as a means to prevent extremism***

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**Issue:** Creative technology based solutions as a means to prevent extremism

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**Position:** Chair and DMUN President

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## **Introduction**

The internet has shaped and is shaping much of our ever-evolving society. As the world becomes more connected, there's an increasing threat of extremism around the world. With once isolated communities being able to communicate in the blink of an eye, communities can combat threats to our livelihoods and rights. These happen via social campaigns. The importance of this topic is visible in the United Nations involvement in the promotion of digital solutions to real-world problems. The growing global interconnectedness has many positives, but the downsides include the very real threat of the rise and spread of extremism worldwide, as more people are able to become exposed to and entrenched in these ideas.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### **Extremism**

Extremism is defined as the aggressive opposition to fundamental values such as democracy, human rights, equality and respect and tolerance for different faiths and beliefs. Death threats of members of our armed forces with the intention of forcing beliefs upon those who receive it or provoking fear is also regarded as extremist. Not all extremist groups, whether Islamist, or far right (such as the Klu Klux Klan), necessarily commit terrorist or violent acts, but all of them cause civil unrest and use fear as a way to spread their beliefs, either online or offline.

### **Cyberterrorism**

Cyberterrorism is defined by U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation as a premeditated attack against a computer system, computer data, programs, or other digital information with the sole aim of violence (Techopedia, 2018). It can be broadly categorised into three levels: simple- basic hacking of an individual system, advanced- sophisticated attacks potentially involving multiple systems or networks, and complex- coordinated attacks which can have a wide-scale impact.

## **Radicalization**

The action or process of causing another individual to adopt a radical position on social or religious issues. Radicalization may lead to not only extremism but also terrorism.

## **Cybersecurity**

Cybersecurity comprises of technologies, processes and controls that are designed to protect systems, networks and data from cyber-attacks. It can be the installation of firewall or even basic user education on how to avoid cyber attacks.

## **Social Media**

Social media are web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by both sharing and consuming information. This includes Facebook, Gmail, Snapchat and Instagram.

## **Search Engines**

A program or website that searches for and identifies items in a database that correspond to specified keywords or characters, mainly used for finding particular sites and information on the World Wide Web.

# **General Overview**

The primary way that nations choose to combat these issues is through the prevention of radicalization and the creation of faster paths to radicalization. Although social media has been, and is currently, being exploited by certain groups and individuals promoting online means of violent extremism, efforts to challenge this extremist behaviour and representation through social media has been inadequate. However, examples of effective strategies to combat this currently exist. “Programs such as All Together Now in Australia and Exit in Europe are leading the way in helping disengage those on pathways to extremism through social media. While in democratic countries censorship of social media remains untenable for excellent reasons, much more could be done, more nimbly and more creatively, to use social media as a counter-strategy.” (Tough Is Not Enough).

The use of encryption technology has also been cited as a problem in terms of extremism, as it provides a secret service and has been used by terrorists to communicate as a result of such. For example, WhatsApp has added encryption for all of its messages in April 2016. This means that all messages are encoded and can only be decoded by the receiver so cannot be surveyed. This adds additional security for users, preventing any external parties including the government from reading the messages. However, concerns have arose that end to end encryption programs allow terrorists and hate groups to secretly converse. The UK's Home Secretary is now urging governments to make sure they do not provide a convenient platform for terrorists to communicate with each other.

## **Major Parties Involved**

### **UNESCO**

UNESCO aims to prevent violent extremism and ideals, countering extremism on a global scale.

UNESCO is in favor of the idea of “soft power” in order to avoid violent extremism that stems from distorted interpretations of culture, hatred, and ignorance. They believe that extremism is fueled by anger and a lack of education. UNESCO’s achievements are comprised of: an increase in the education of youth, facilitated development and employment opportunities, encouraged strategic

communication, the promotion of human rights, an increase in communication via the internet and social media, and gender equality and women's rights. This organization aims to create an equal environment where both young males and females get the opportunity to learn and become active, open minded empowered global students, who share their knowledge and ideas to increase society's open mindedness. They have already participated in a number of efforts to eradicate extremism such as the creation of online coalitions.

## **Islamic state**

Isis, or the Islamic state, is currently the world's most prominent terrorist group. Although they are based in Syria, they have garnered supporters from all over the world who carry out attacks to promote their ideals and kill the "non believers". Additionally, ISIS uses social media to spread fear and notify people of their misendeavours such as the instance when a group of cyclists containing two american tourists were brutally murdered in Syria, with a video of the event put online. Recently, it has been known that this group recruits through social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp.

## **France**

France has the largest number of extremist attacks in Europe. There has been 12 major terrorist incidents in the country since 2012 including the 2015 Paris attack. In response, the government is passing legislations to try to restrict the amount of islamic activity, which was met with massive backlash. In September 2017, The French Embassy in Britain published a statement announcing the formation of a coalition with the UK and Italy: "We agreed that terrorist use of the Internet is a global issue that needs innovative, international solutions. We have committed to working together to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online and the use of the Internet by terrorists to radicalize, recruit, inspire or incite. No individual nation state can respond to this threat alone. The response must be global and it must be collaborative."

## United Kingdom

Since 2017, the terror threat in the UK has been at an all time high from both islamic terrorism and far right extremists of which four right wing attacks have been prevented since the Westminster attack. In 2018, the UK home secretary Sajid Javid announced a new counter terrorism strategy titled *CONTEST*, which aims to target violent extremism at its roots by staging earlier interventions, increasing security measures and collaborating with intelligence services, increasing international cooperation and increasing the security budget. A key player in the *CONTEST* operation is technology, as *MIS* puts it, “Developments in artificial intelligence will allow us to filter and identify crucial information faster than ever. Virtual or augmented reality gives counter-terrorism teams the opportunity to plan for a wide variety of scenarios in a safe environment. We will have new technologies that enhance our detection and screening capabilities, for example at borders, airports and crowded places. Quantum computing, along with other cutting-edge innovations, has the potential to dramatically change and enhance our counter-terror operational capabilities.” Overall, the UK government is making a clear attempt to eliminate any possible safe space for extremist activity so as to protect both the British and the international community.

## United States of America

Whether it is the USA’s growing civil tension and “Unite the right” rallies, or President Trump’s highly opinionated twitter feed, the country is highly involved in the question of extremism. Additionally, In 2014 the US implemented the “Cybersecurity Enhancement Act”, which provides an ongoing but voluntary public-private partnership to improve and strengthen cybersecurity research and development, education, public awareness and ensure preparedness for any cybercrime such as cyber terrorism.

## China

China is notorious for censoring content and banning the use of search engines and social media such as Google and Facebook from its people. While the general consensus is that this inhibits one’s

individual freedom, the Chinese government maintains that these measures “are needed to ensure security against growing threats, such as terrorism” and to prevent the sharing and subsequent spread of illegal activity such as rape, violence, murder, and terrorist ideals.

## **Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks**

COSATT successfully published “Countering Youth Radicalization” and “Violent Extremism in South Asia” which suggests changes and better solutions to radicalization that might be fitting in Asian countries. Both our past and present world is directly reflected upon in the report, which outlines the different methods of extremism, which is published online. The COSATT conference is held three times a year with a theme and topic that focuses mainly on terrorism and violent extremism around Asia. Thanks to the conference, newly updated digital solutions and suggestions have been outlined and developed.

## **Key Events**

### **Dates and descriptions of events**

**1 July 2016** UNGA adopted resolution (A/RES/70/291), reinforcing global consensus in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism

**8 April 2016:** *The Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism – The Way Forward.* The conference was co-hosted by the Government of Switzerland and the United Nations, and took place at the United Nations Office in Geneva. It discussed different way of targeting extremist groups.

**12 February 2016** UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that, “welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General, and takes note of his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism”

# Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

## UNESCO

### **Education as a tool to prevent extremism:**

UNESCO has attempted to solve the issue through education programs which strive to make young people and women aware of the dangers of extremism, and also equip them with the values and attitudes which are needed to foster healthy citizenship. This was passed under the implementation of UNESCO Executive Board Decision 197 EX/Decision 46: “UNESCO’s role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism”. The forms of education include A) Global Advocacy, which builds an international consensus around the world for a stronger need for human rights-based awareness

#### ● **Guidance**

○ This includes guidance for teachers and parents in both formal and informal settings

UNESCO leverages the Internet’s global reach and its diverse network of partners, UNESCO is mobilizing stakeholders - particularly youth, policy-makers, researchers and media actors, to respond against violent extremism. They do this by:

● Supporting research, tailored training, the creation of communities of practice, the delivery of communication campaigns and dissemination of useful resources.

● Fostering empowerment through Media and Information Literacy, enhanced media self-regulation, conflict-sensitive reporting, cross-cultural and cross-religious dialogue among journalists

### ***Youth participation & Empowerment:***

This was a response to the Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, and is the team which helps young people understand and become aware of the threats of terrorism. It is a cross between Education, Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Information and Culture and strives to create a more peaceful world. Methods include

● Working with youth organizations to improve their skills, and address any challenges

they experience related to youth.

- Evaluating digital youth platforms and encouraging civic participation through social media

### ***Media & Online coalitions for PVE***

In 2018, UNESCO proposed increasing the internet's global reach and connections between organisations and the media in order to spread awareness of extremism to people of all groups both online and offline. This programme aims to discuss youth radicalization and de-radicalization processes, how to combat extremist content online and hate speech. They also intend to build the capacity for countries at risk and stakeholders to develop innovative responses and promote the protection of freedom of expression, privacy and other fundamental liberties. Using the action of forming coalitions, UNESCO hopes to make the internet a safe and enriching environment, and share knowledge of how to counter extremist parties and hate groups.

## **The UK Investigatory Powers Act, 2016**

The Investigatory Powers Act (also known as Snoopers Charter) was a UK law passed by Theresa May in 2016 regarding internet surveillance and security. The bill allowed the government nationwide surveillance of the browsing history and internet data of ordinary citizens and allows the infiltration of the accounts of these people. This bill was introduced as a way to regulate extremist and illegal activity (such as paedophilia) on the internet. However, the legislation was met with widespread backlash due to concerns regarding the invasion of privacy and the breaching of human rights. From the start, the public had questioned the legislation of the bill as it gives many different groups such as the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency access to people's private information, and since then, concerns have been growing. On April 2018, the UK high court ruled that the Investigatory Powers Act violates EU law. The government has until 1 November 2018 to amend the legislation.

## **The Global Internet Forum to counter terrorism**

The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism aims to substantially disrupt terrorists' ability to promote terrorism, disseminate violent extremist propaganda, and exploit or glorify real-world acts of violence using our platforms. The forum includes major tech and social media companies such as Youtube, Facebook, Microsoft, and Twitter. The forum intends to counter terrorism via collaboration with smaller tech shares and the UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (UN CTED), the ICT4Peace Foundation, and the Tech Against Terrorism initiative to share knowledge and expertise. They intend to decrease terrorist activity by collaborating and employing and leveraging technology, sharing knowledge, information and best practices; and conducting and funding research. The members of the GIFCT use a number of innovative techniques to help them achieve their goals such as the use of photo and video matching and text-based machine learning classification techniques. Members have used these methods to remove terrorist content from social media, which is the root cause of the spread of extremist ideals. Results achieved from advances in technology include: 98% of the videos YouTube removed for violent extremism are flagged by machine-learning algorithms. Machine learning helps YouTube's human reviewers remove nearly five times as many videos than previously; in Twitter between July 2017 and December 2017, a total of 274,460 Twitter accounts were permanently suspended for violations related to promotion of terrorism. Additionally, 74% of those accounts were suspended before their first tweet. On Facebook, 99% of ISIS-related terror content is removed before anyone in its community has flagged it, and in some cases, it is detected before it even goes live on the site. Once Facebook is aware of a piece of terror content, it removes 83% of subsequently uploaded copies within one hour of upload (*Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism*).

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