



Hedayah

UNDERMINING VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

A HOW-TO GUIDE

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ABOUT THIS COMPENDIUM

This Compendium is a follow-on product of Australia's Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) that was hosted in Sydney in June 2015. This Compendium and the accompanying annex of counter-narratives (Annex 3) are available and accessible through Hedayah's existing Counter-Narrative Library. For more information or access to the counter-narrative collection, please contact cnlibrary.admin@hedayah.ae.

Hedayah is grateful to the Australian Attorney-General's Department for sponsoring this project, which includes the Compendium and additional support to update and improve Hedayah's Counter-Narrative Library. For more information about this project, see Annex 1: About the Project.

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As part of this project, Hedayah convened an expert workshop where leading experts from the region, including academics, practitioners and government officials, came together to develop the annex of counter-narratives and case studies. The experts also discussed the effectiveness of the counter-narratives identified and provided inputs to the online portal and collection housed by Hedayah. The experts attending the workshop were:

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INTRODUCTION

With *ad-Dawla al-Islamiyyah fi al-Iraq wa as-Sham* (Daesh, or the “Islamic State of Iraq and as-Sham,” ISIS) acquiring territory in Iraq and Syria and their unprecedented ability to recruit individuals to join their fight, the need to develop better counter-terrorism approaches, strategies, policies and programs is more relevant and pressing than ever. International organizations and governments are grappling with the complex challenges of developing better and more coordinated responses to groups such as Daesh, as well as defining methods to prevent further radicalization and recruitment or the emergence of new violent extremism and terrorism. As the attacks in January 2016 in Jakarta, Indonesia show, the effects of international and local violent extremists on South East Asia continue to influence the security frameworks of individual countries and the region as a whole.

The aim of this compendium is to provide guidance and insight for practitioners, policymakers, governments and civil society organizations in South East Asia that are interested in developing counter-narratives and alternative narratives to the messaging produced by violent extremists. The compendium will draw on international good practice and lessons learned to inform and inspire these actors to utilize the most effective methods and strategies.

The compendium begins with a step-by-step approach to counter-narratives, with clear examples from South East Asia. The compendium then dives deeper into several case studies, highlighting elements of good practice from the region before presenting a detailed annex of 80 existing counter-narratives from South East Asia (Annex 3).

It should be noted that the narratives and subsequent analysis of the narratives and counter-narratives contained in this report mostly focus on violent extremism of groups that claim to be Islamic, primarily because the majority of the threats posed by violent extremist groups in South East Asia fall under this category. However, this is not to say that violent extremism only relates to the above category, and there are case examples from other non-Islamic forms of violent extremism. For a more robust assessment of the threats of violent extremism in the region, refer to Annex 2: Violent Extremism in South East Asia.

It is important to establish the terminology that has been adopted throughout the compendium. The term “narrative” generally refers to the story or recruitment pitch of violent extremists, whereas “counter-narrative” generally refers to the story or counter-argument utilized to reduce the appeal of violent extremism. Counter-narratives include counter-arguments as well as positive, alternative narratives and government strategic communications.

The contents of this compendium rely on a number of sources: 1) research on the academic and policy literature conducted by the author; 2) an expert workshop on “South East Asia Counter-Narratives for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)” hosted by Hedayah and the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JC-LEC) in Semarang, Indonesia in March 2016 and the subsequent report;¹ and 3) a consultation process on draft versions of the compendium with regional experts and policymakers from the region.

¹ The Expert Workshop in Semarang convened 21 academics, policymakers, practitioners, civil society representatives and private sector representatives from the South East Asia region to discuss and debate the most effective counter-narratives. The report from the Expert Workshop can be found here: <http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/cn-se-asia.pdf>.



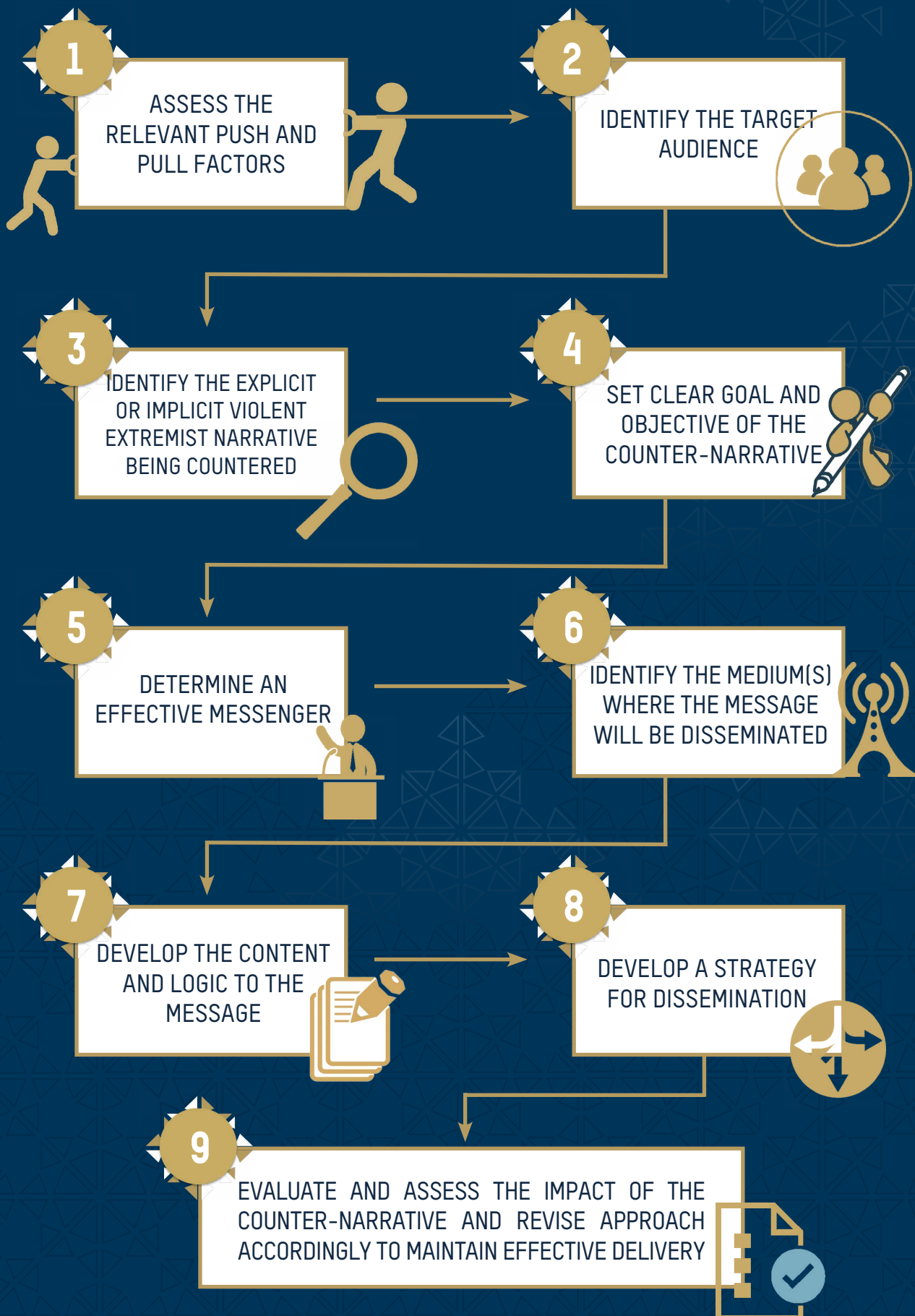
WHAT IS “COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM” (CVE)?

In the spectrum of counter-terrorism approaches, the “soft” or “preventive” strategies, policies and programs that identify and challenge the “push” and “pull” factors of radicalization and recruitment are described as “countering violent extremism” or CVE programs and policies.

For the purposes of this compendium, CVE describes both the longer-term prevention strategies that address potential macro socio-economic and political factors, and the specifically-designed targeted interventions that take place at both the community and individual level (to include psycho-social counseling for at-risk individuals as well as detainees).

DEVELOPING A COUNTER-NARRATIVE

In developing a counter-narrative against violent extremists, there are several main steps:



1 ASSESS RELEVANT PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

As with any effective CVE strategy, policy or program, it is important to begin with a baseline assessment of the main threats and drivers of radicalization and recruitment at a local level before developing a counter-narrative response. Push factors refer to the socio-economic grievances (real or perceived) that have to do with external forces and pressures on an individual, for example: ethnic tensions, lack of economic opportunities, unemployment, low education, government or military actions. Pull factors refer to the psycho-social factors that draw an individual to violent extremism, for example: ideology, sense of purpose, desire to be a hero, and economic incentives. Based on the discussions and outcomes of the Semarang workshop, a number of push and pull factors were identified that were most common in South East Asia, and are highlighted in the figure below.

PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
• Islamophobia • Hate speech • Lack of democratization • Lack of education and critical thinking • Ethnic and religious marginalization and intolerance • Poverty • Military operations by Western governments in Afghanistan and Iraq • Feelings of victimhood and secondary trauma related to suffering of Muslims outside the region (Palestinians, refugees from Syria) • Poor justice system • Violence in the community	• Political identity • Cultural and religious identity • Influence of media • Feelings of victimhood • Monetary incentives • Idealization of former fighters from Afghanistan and other conflicts • Idea of achieving a “pure Islam” • Sense of adventure • Feelings of power • Opportunity of transformation and change for their communities

Figure 1: Push and Pull Factors in South East Asia²

It is important to first assess the local push and pull factors before identifying the target audience, content, messenger or medium relevant to the message. This is important for two reasons. First, identifying relevant push or pull factors helps to avoid biased assumptions of the most “vulnerable” populations. Second, this assessment steers the counter-narrative developer to a target population that might be most impacted by a counter or alternative narrative. Push and pull factors are also related to the counter-narrative content and the messenger. For example, if a key push factor is military operations by Western governments, a Western military might not be the most effective messenger for that particular target group.

² Original taken from Sara Zeiger, *Counter-Narratives for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in South East Asia* (Abu Dhabi: Hedayah, 2016), <http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/cn-se-asia.pdf>.

2 IDENTIFY THE TARGET AUDIENCE

One of the most important components of developing a counter-narrative is identifying the target audience. In fact, deriving a narrative without clearly defining the target population “is a recipe for ineffectiveness at best and in the worst of cases can backfire altogether.”³ The target audience will also contribute to determining the objectives of the messages, as well as evaluating whether or not the message is successful. It should also be noted that when the target audience of the message is a key influencer (see section below), the target audience has a vital role of promoting and amplifying the message to reach individuals who may be most susceptible to recruitment and radicalization into violent extremism.

A baseline assessment of the local target audience would ideally include data on age, gender, ethnicity, community interests and types of online and offline social interactions. Target audiences may also be assessed for the types of messages that resonate well in the community as well as the language that is the primary form of communication in that community (or sub-community). While there is little research on how messages affect populations in general, it is possible to glean some of this data from existing market research conducted for other purposes (for example, from technology companies whose products are primarily aimed at youth). Social media platforms may also make some of this data available publicly, and counter-narrative developers can work together with technology and social media companies to aggregate the necessary data for a particular region or sub-region. In the case that baseline assessment data is not available, it may be useful to conduct phone surveys or in-person questionnaires of a smaller group to get a sense of how the audience might receive a particular type of message.

The chosen target audience may fall under one or more of the below categories:

GENERAL POPULATION Counter-narratives aimed at reaching the general population may emphasize “solidarity, common causes and shared values”⁴ or encourage the silent majority to play a more active role in preventing violent extremist narratives from spreading. This may also include sub-populations such as youth.	KEY INFLUENCERS Key influencers to vulnerable populations may include teachers, family members, health care workers, or police officers. Messages aimed at these sorts of populations may focus on providing resources and information that they can then relay to the ultimate target population—those going down the path of radicalization and recruitment.
SYMPATHIZERS TO VIOLENT EXTREMIST IDEAS This category includes vulnerable individuals who might be open to or sympathetic to violent extremist content. This category also includes those who passively support or allow violent extremist content to be part of their normal, everyday lives. They may not actively interact with violent extremist content, but allow the violent extremist messages to be part of their communities.	JUSTIFIERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM This category includes those who actively engage in violent extremist messaging but are not yet part of the group. This may include amplifying the narratives of violent extremist organizations, or having active conversations with violent extremists, with the intent to act, join or actively support others to do so.
PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM	These individuals are actively participating in violent extremism or encouraging others to join.

³ William D. Casebeer and James A. Russell, “Storytelling and Terrorism: Towards a Comprehensive Counter-Narrative Strategy,” *Strategic Insights* 4, no.3 (March 2005), http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/nps/casebeer_mar05.pdf, p. 7.

⁴ Rachel Briggs and Sebastien Feve, *Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism*, (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2013), https://www.counterextremism.org/download_file/117/134/444/, p. 18.

3 IDENTIFY THE EXPLICIT OR IMPLICIT NARRATIVE BEING COUNTERED

One of the most important recommendations in terms of international good practice for developing effective *counter-narratives against violent extremism* is *for counter-narrative developers to learn from the narratives of violent extremists themselves*.⁵ In this regard, it is important to realize the *type of narrative used* by the violent extremists and their messengers in order to better tailor and focus on appropriate counter or alternative narrative. In addition, it is important to highlight the *logical flow or structure* of the narrative to identify key arguments used by violent extremists. Finally, it is important to identify the *potential weaknesses* in the violent extremist narratives in order to exploit them in counter-narrative work.

Types of Narratives Used by Violent Extremists

For radicalization and recruitment in South East Asia, the most common types of narratives used by violent extremists are:

RELIGIOUS OR
IDEOLOGICAL
NARRATIVE

POLITICAL
NARRATIVE

SOCIAL-HEROIC
NARRATIVE

ECONOMIC
NARRATIVE

Religious or Ideological narrative

These types of narratives utilize religious or ideological concepts or elements to justify the terrorist organization's end goal as well as the use of violence to achieve that goal.⁶ Religious components of the narrative ascribe divine legitimacy to the story, which in turn reinforce the narrative for those receiving it. Included in this categorization of narrative, for example, is a moral narrative by which the West is corrupt, and the only rightful path is through the way of Islam.⁷

The religious or ideological narrative is perhaps the most common narrative type when it comes to the context of South East Asia. According to a report on internet radicalization in South East Asia, the primary Bahasa Indonesia and Malay language websites propagating Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI) and Al-Qaeda material include "carefully selected Quranic verses, as well as academic articles and news reports... bearing messages that revolve around the theme of a victimised global Muslim community that is under attack, urging the necessity to fight back."⁸ Similarly, the Mujahidin Syura Council in Thailand has utilized their online media platform Khattab Media Publication to translate religious opinion of Abdullah Azzam (Palestinian intellectual behind Al Qaeda), and has significantly contributed to the mass dissemination of this religious justification of violence and terrorism to the Malay-speaking communities.⁹

⁵ Alex P. Schmid, Al Qaeda's "Single Narrative" and Attempts to Develop Counter-Narratives [The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2014], <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/Schmid-Al-Qaeda's-Single-Narrative-and-Attempts-to-Develop-Counter-Narratives-January-2014.pdf>; Hedayah and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism—the Hague, *Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)* (Abu Dhabi: Hedayah and ICCT, 2014), <http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/developing-effective-counter-narrative-frameworks-for-countering-violent-extremism.pdf>.

⁶ Rohan Gunaratna and Orla Hennessy, *Through the Militant Lens: The Power of Ideology and Narrative*, (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2012), <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Gunaratna-Hennessy-Through-the-Militant-Lens-June-2012.pdf>; Kuman Ramakrishna, *It's the Story, Stupid: Developing a Counter-Strategy for Neutralizing Radical Islamism in South East Asia*, (London: Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, Research and Assessment Group, 2005).

⁷ Kessels, *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives*.

⁸ Bergin, Anthony, Sulastri Bte Osman, Carl Ungerer and Nur Azlin Mohamed Yasin, *Countering internet radicalisation in South East Asia* (Barton: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2009), https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/special-report-issue-22-countering-internet-radicalisation-in-southeast-asia/9_22_46_AM_SR22_Countering_internet_radicalisation.pdf, pp. 6-7.

⁹ Bergin et. al, *Countering internet radicalization in South East Asia*.

There are two main religious narratives utilized by violent extremists that have particular application to South East Asia. Each is described below, followed by examples from the region.

1. The concept of jihad as necessarily associated with violence, *fard al-ayn*.

This concept is often coupled with the theme of victimhood: that Muslims are being victimized “at the hands of a perceived global war on Islam.”¹⁰ Jihad, according to violent extremists, is a necessary and obligatory fight to defend fellow Muslims from injustice. For example, former JI member Ali Imron stated in his memoir that the most persuasive narrative was that of religious duty, and that jihad was necessarily violent.¹¹ Similarly, Daesh narratives emphasize agency of the average Muslim to participate in violent jihad as an individual and civic duty.¹² When it comes to Daesh narratives, another common theme is to highlight the victory or success of their violent war campaigns as proof of their “divinely sanctioned authenticity.”¹³

2. The concept of *al-wala wa'l-bara*, which polarizes the world between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Associated with this concept is the idea of *takfir*, or declaring someone an “apostate” or non-Muslim. For example, according to Imron’s memoir, the Bali attacks were “directed at the perpetrators of disobedience and the *kafirs*, so they would quit bad habits and stop damaging human morals.”¹⁴ In similar fashion, Daesh narratives emphasize the urgency of the situation in Syria and Iraq, arguing that Muslims are being slaughtered now, and that the Crusaders, the Jews, the *kuffar* (infidels) and the *rafida* (apostates, referring to Shi’a Muslims) and their “tyrannical puppet regimes” are to blame.¹⁵ Similarly, the brother of the founder¹⁶ of the Abu Sayef Group (ASG) in the Philippines, Qadhafy Janjalani, references Surat At-Tawbah (29) and Surat Al-Anfal (39) to justify the concept of violent jihad, including against non-Muslims as well as those who “Claimed themselves to be Muslims” and civilians.¹⁷

Political narratives

The political narrative contains elements of political objectives such as government change, a new state-structure, or the institution of a new legal system.¹⁸ In some instances, political narratives can also be coupled with religious narratives, to give legitimacy to the political objectives through religious authority.

¹⁰ Charlie Winter, *The Virtual ‘Caliphate’* Understanding Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy (London: Quilliam Foundation, 2015), <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FINAL-documenting-the-virtual-caliphate.pdf>, p. 24.

¹¹ Sim, *Countering Violent Extremism: Leveraging Terrorist Dropouts to Counter Violent Extremism in South East Asia*, Annex A, p. 5.

¹² Alberto M. Fernandez, *Here to stay and growing: Combating ISIS propaganda networks*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2015), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/10/combating-isis-propaganda-fernandez/is-propaganda_web_english.pdf, p. 11.

¹³ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴ Sim, *Countering Violent Extremism: Leveraging Terrorist Dropouts to Counter Violent Extremism in South East Asia*, Annex A, p. 5.

¹⁵ Fernandez, *Here to stay and growing*.

¹⁶ The founder of ASG is Abubakar Janjalani.

¹⁷ Rommel C. Banlaoi, *Al-Harakat Al-Silamiyyah: Essays on the Abu Sayyaf Group*, (Manilla: Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, 2012), p. 121.

¹⁸ See Gunaratna and Hennessy, *Through the Militant Lens; Ramakrishna, It’s the Story, Stupid; Sim, Countering Violent Extremism: Leveraging Terrorist Dropouts to Counter Violent Extremism in South East Asia; Ashour, “Online De-Radicalization?”; Kessels, Countering Violent Extremist Narratives.*

One of the main narratives of violent extremists in South East Asia relates the political construction of a “state” with religious authority in an attempt to give it legitimacy. This is also sometimes coupled with the aspiration of territorial control. JI argues that their main goal, a regional *Dawla Islamiyah* (an Islamic state), includes a unity of religion, politics and the military. In order to achieve this aim, JI also argues that there is a need for a Muslim to be part of a group (Al Jamaah) as a “precursor to the establishment of an Islamic state.”¹⁹

While JI networks have been reduced significantly in the past decade, individuals and networks previously affiliated with JI may be particularly persuaded by the political aspirations of Daesh if they see the formation of the *Khilafa* (Caliphate) as legitimate. This is the case, for example, with the Indonesian group Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), led by the infamous Santoso, who pledged allegiance to Daesh in July 2014.²⁰ The group itself claims to hold a small amount of territory in Poso, the historical location of conflict between Indonesian authorities and local JI affiliates, and thus “Poso has become the symbolic heart of ISIS support in Indonesia.”²¹

Daesh narratives claim divine authenticity of the organization through the establishment of the state (*Khilafa*) now and the implementation of Sharia now.²² Daesh narratives paint a utopian picture of the *Khilafa*—emphasizing ideas that Daesh can control territory, provide access to water and electricity, provide safe and secure infrastructure and provide education for its “citizens.” According to Charlie Winter, over 50% of the Daesh narratives emphasize the utopian vision of the *Khilafa*.²³ This tactic has been used by Daesh to target recruits from South East Asia. For example, a video titled *Cahaya Tarbiyah Di Bumi Kilafah* (Education in the Caliphate) shows Malay-speaking children reciting the Qur’an, praying, learning in school, and training with weapons. This sort of video attempts to emphasize their ability to provide for future generations in Daesh-controlled territories.²⁴

Particularly for Daesh, part of its recruitment narrative is for recruits to perform a *hijrah* (migration) to the Daesh controlled territory in Syria and Iraq. An article in Issue 3 of *Dabiq* magazine gives advice to travellers (particularly foreign fighters):

Do not worry about money or accommodations for yourself and your family. There are plenty of homes and resources to cover you and your family. Keep in mind that the Khilafah is a state whose inhabitants and soldiers are human beings. They are not infallible angels. You may see things that need improvement and that are being improved.²⁵

According to Winter, Daesh narratives also contain the theme of mercy—Daesh will “forgive one’s past affiliation, provided it is wholly rejected and obedience to

¹⁹ Ramakrishna, *It’s the Story, Stupid*, p. 17.

²⁰ Robi Sugara, “Santoso: The Terrorist Leader from Nowhere,” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis* 6, no. 10 (November 2014): 23–26.

²¹ Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, *Online Activism and Social Media Usage among Indonesian Extremists* (Jakarta: IPAC, 2015), http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2015/10/IPAC_24_Online_Activism_Social_Media.pdf, p. 15.

²² Fernandez, *Here to stay and growing*.

²³ Winter, *Documenting the Virtual ‘Caliphate’* (London: Quilliam Foundation, 2015), <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/documenting-the-virtual-caliphate.pdf>.

²⁴ A. Chan, “The Call of ISIS: The medium and the message attracting South East Asians,” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis* 7, no. 4 (2015): 4–9; Z. Abuza, Z. *Joining the New Caravan: ISIS and the Regeneration of Terrorism in South East Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2015), <https://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/index.cfm/articles/joining-the-new-caravan/2015/06/25>.

²⁵ “Advice for those Embarking Upon Hijrah,” *Dabiq*, Issue 3 (A Call to Hijrah), Al Hayat Media Center, 2014, p. 33.

²⁶ Winter, *The Virtual ‘Caliphate’*, p. 24.

the ‘caliphate’ is guaranteed.”²⁶ This is another important element of state-building: all are welcome to become part of the “state” as long as allegiance is pledged.

Final example of a political narrative is the claim by violent extremists that governments are somehow prohibiting Muslims from practicing their faith, and thus illegitimate as an authority over Muslims. For example, a pamphlet from the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) out of Indonesia argues that the Americans and Zionists insult the Prophet, block Muslims from holding prayers, kill Muslims while praying, humiliate women in prisons and harming children.²⁷ Similarly, a Jund al-Khilafah video in the Philippines states that the Philippine government prohibits men from growing their beards long and women from wearing hijab.²⁸ These narratives, while incorporating religious elements, are ultimately political because they seek to undermine the credibility of ruling governments and question their authority to rule.

Social or Heroic Narrative

The next categorization of narratives used by violent extremists is social/heroic narratives or socio-psychological narratives. This type of narrative focuses on the glorification of violent acts, including terrorism, as well as their perpetrators. It also links them directly to grievances.³⁰ An example of a social/heroic narrative is the idea that Muslims are suffering in other parts of the world, and an individual has a personal responsibility to protect fellow Muslims from harm. JI bomber Umar Patek indicated that it was the suffering of Muslims in Palestine, Bosnia and Chechnya, Thailand and the Philippines that motivated him to join JI in the first case. Rohan Gunaratna argues that Malaysian Muslims in particular become vulnerable to violent extremist ideologies related to international concerns, rather than local, and in fact Malaysians are hesitant to attack their home country.³¹ For example, the narrative of Muslims being persecuted in southern Thailand has been persuasive in the Malaysian context. Daesh also utilizes social and heroic narratives to encourage individuals to take part in the fight against Assad, for example, as a duty to defend Muslims killed by the regime.

This type of narrative also includes elements of social pressure or the desire to be part of a greater good or larger cause. For example, in Indonesia, both Patek and Imron were motivated by social factors—specifically the pressure of not disappointing the rest of the group in perpetrating the Bali bombing, although both argued later they did not agree with the attack because they killed civilians.³²

Economic Narrative

Finally, although perhaps not as pervasive in all parts of South East Asia, is the economic narrative.³³ In this case, violent extremists directly or indirectly suggest that by joining that organization, economic freedom will ensue. In the context of the Phil-

²⁷ A.G. Ikhwani, *Perangilah Mereka Dengan Segala Kekuatan* (Fight Them with Any Strength) (Forum Islam Al-Busyri, Jihadology.net, 2015), <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/gharc4abb-al-ikhwc481n-22ink-of-jihc481d-10-fight-them-with-any-strength22.pdf>.

²⁸ See “Jund al-Khilafah in the Philippines—Training Camp,” (Jihadology.net, 2015), <http://jihadology.net/2015/12/20/new-video-message-from-jund-al-khilafah-in-the-philippines-training-camp/>.

²⁹ See Gunaratna and Hennessy, *Through the Militant Lens*; Sim, *Countering Violent Extremism: Leveraging Terrorist Dropouts to Counter Violent Extremism in South East Asia*; Kessels, *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives*.

³⁰ Ashour, “Online De-Radicalization?”

³¹ Rohan Gunaratna, “The Current and Emerging Extremist Threat in Malaysia,” in *Radical Islamic Ideology in South East Asia*, (West Point: The Counter-Terrorism Center at West Point, 2009), <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/14599/uploads>.

³² Gunaratna and Hennessy, *Through the Militant Lens*.

³³ Ramakrishna, *It’s the Story, Stupid*.

ippines, original ASG members were mostly comprised of young Filipino Muslims who joined the terrorist group because of “economic marginalization and silent discrimination.”³⁴ Cash and easy access to weapons—“the allure of money and power that comes from the barrel of a gun” were other motivating factors for ASG members.³⁵ In the 2000s, the ASG kidnapping for ransom policy helped to reinforce the idea that by joining ASG, economic concerns would no longer be an issue for group members.

Logical Flow and Structure of Violent Extremist Narratives

In addition to the content of the narrative of violent extremists, it is also important to understand the logical flow of the narrative order to better design a framework for counter-narratives and alternative narratives. The basic structure of a violent extremist narrative is:³⁶



³⁴ Banlaoi, p. 69.

³⁵ Banlaoi, pp. 92–93.

³⁶ The basic structure to violent extremist narratives outlined in this chart are taken from elements of Schmid, Al Qaeda’s “Single Narrative,” p. 6; Samuel, “Countering the Terrorist Narrative”; and Ramakrishna, *It’s the Story Stupid*.

All of these frameworks have a common strategic value of the narrative: to create a polarizing sentiment between the terrorist group and the “enemy” as the foundation to ideological/political goals. Terrorists also aim to legitimize violence as the means to achieving that goal.

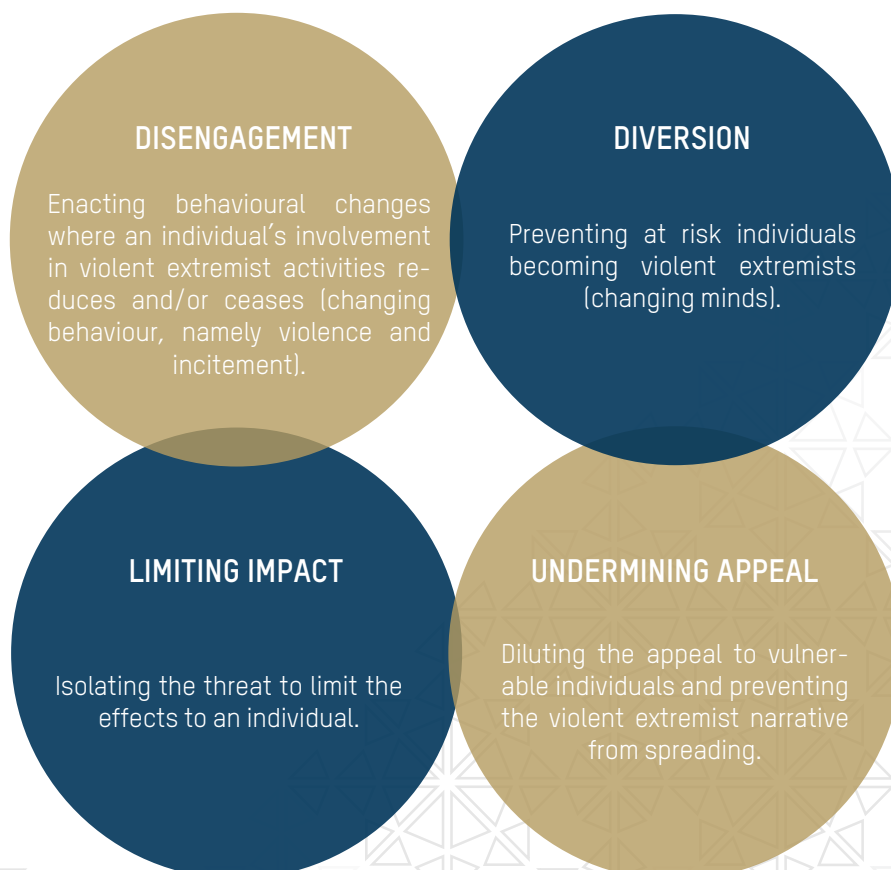
Weaknesses in Violent Extremist Narratives

Identifying weaknesses in violent extremist narratives can be helpful prior to developing an effective counter-narrative. For example, the weaknesses of Daesh narratives could be countered through:

1. Highlighting the ways in which Daesh is not successful at providing safety and security to those that perform *hijrah*;
2. Highlighting the ways in which Daesh’s claim to the *Khilafa* are not legitimate;
3. Undermining and discrediting the religious arguments of Daesh using credible Muslim scholars;
4. Emphasizing the number of Sunni Muslims killed by Daesh;
5. Emphasizing the extreme violence and brutality used by Daesh;
6. Highlighting the hypocrisy of Daesh members in Syria and Iraq.

4 SET CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE COUNTER-NARRATIVE

Defining objectives of the counter-narrative helps to identify the right content and assess whether or not the counter-narrative is effective. Some of the key goals and objectives for counter-narratives could be:



Part of this process also means defining precise sub-goals and developing key indicators to measure success.

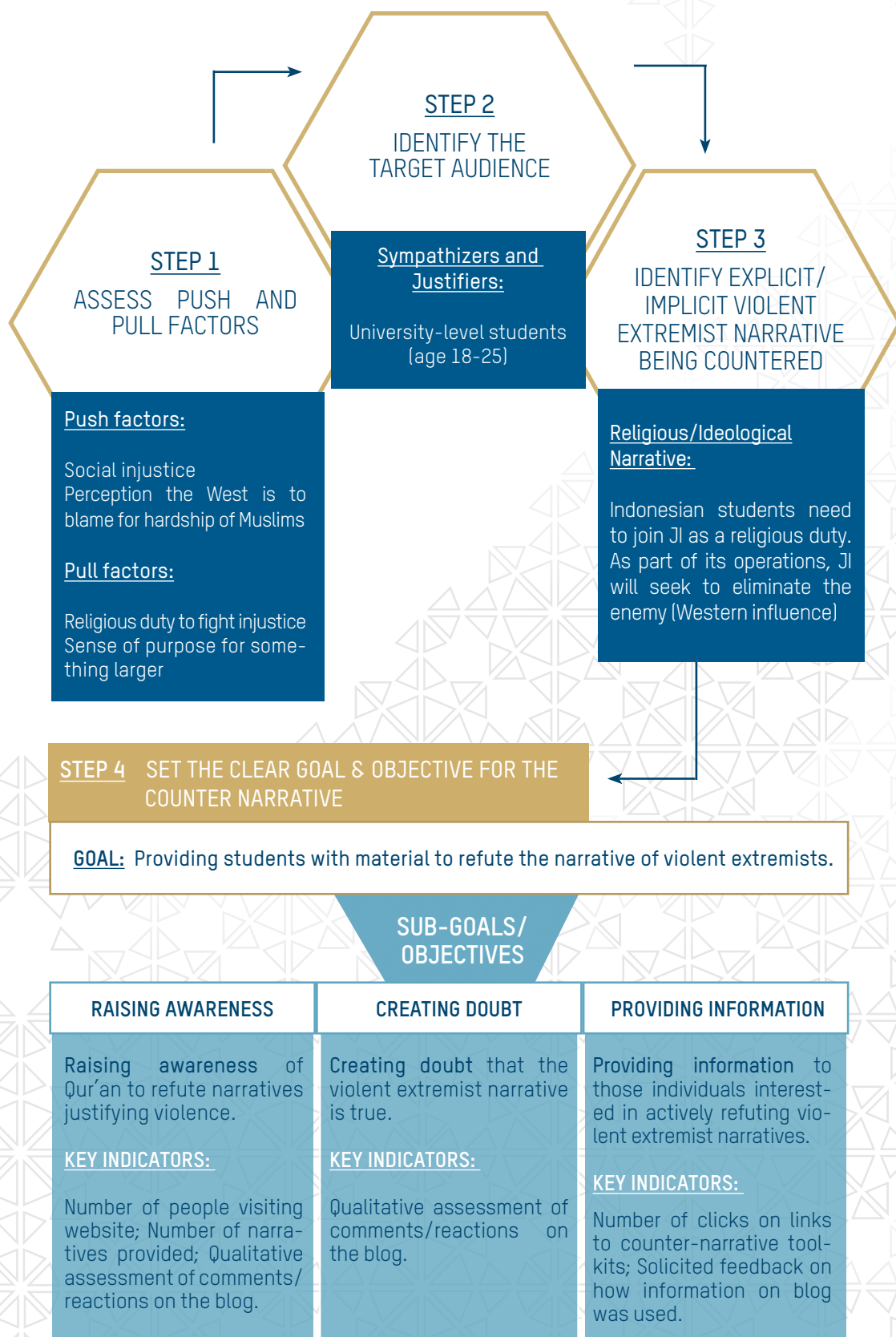
An example of setting goals for a counter-narrative is illustrated below:

Case Study: Counterideology 2 Blog³⁷

The blog contains a variety of research ranging from 1) refutations of Al-Qaeda ideology in Malay, English and Bahasa Indonesian; 2) research on countering extremist narratives; 3) specific narratives countering the ideology of the Bali bombers; 4) blog posts and thoughts against the narratives of Al Qaeda. See figure in the following page describing a case study for goal setting.

³⁷ "Counterideology 2." Counterideology 2. Accessed June 26, 2016. <https://counterideology2.wordpress.com/>.

GOAL SETTING: COUNTERIDEOLOGY 2 BLOG



A blue-tinted photograph of three young women sitting on a grassy field. The woman in the center is looking down and smiling, while the other two are looking towards her. They appear to be in a casual, friendly conversation.

TIP #1

DON'T FORGET ABOUT FACE-TO-FACE MESSENGERS

Although mass-media strategies and campaigns have a role to play in counter-narratives, messaging that is most persuasive tends to include an element of connection that emotionally engages at the individual level.

In the campaign design, think about how the messenger can connect with the target audience, or how the message can be amplified with face-to-face contact.

Violent extremist recruiters use this same model—disseminating broader messages and campaigns, followed by targeted recruitment of individuals both online and offline.

5 DETERMINE AN EFFECTIVE MESSENGER

The next phase of developing a counter-narrative is to identify which messenger(s) best resonate with the target audience. A number of possible messengers have been identified as key to transmitting the message. In each description that follows, there are a number of recommendations as to how that particular messenger may implement counter-narratives most effectively in South East Asia.

Families

Families, including parents, siblings and significant others can be strong influencers in preventing the narrative of violent extremism from spreading as well as diluting the appeal of violent extremism. For example, in the Indonesian and Malaysian context, it is a common perception that the consent and blessing of parents, especially mothers, was necessary before one could participate in jihad or martyrdom. Participants at the Semarang workshop hosted by Hedayah and JCLEC cited a common proverb that “heaven is under the feet of the mother,” indicating the power that mothers exercised particularly over their children.³⁸ In this regard, prohibiting a child from traveling to Iraq or Syria might be one way to temporarily prevent an individual from joining Daesh.

Community Actors and Religious Leaders

Civil Society and community actors can bear significant weight and influence at the grassroots level, and will sometimes carry messages that may be controversial for governments to address. Civil society and community actors can help to generate content organically and disseminate messages online and offline. Popular leaders or sports figures may be useful in providing alternative, positive narratives and outlets for frustrations that may lead to violent extremism.

In the case of South East Asia, religious leaders may be particularly significant because of their unique positions of authority, credibility, institutional resources and ties with communities. Culturally speaking, popular religious figures are often venerated by their local followers to the highest level, and the guidance provided by these figures bear significant weight in the communities. However, one of the key challenges to religious counter-narratives is identifying an appropriate religious figure that resonates with the target audience. This might mean identifying messengers with religious appeal and authority that fall outside traditional religious structures and hierarchies. For example, peer-to-peer messengers with support from religious organizations and figures might be more successful at amplifying religious messages than the religious leaders themselves. Still, it is important to identify key religious leaders that can guide and steer the public conversation and debate around religious extremism. The workshop participants in Semarang identified several key figures in the context of Indonesia, including Mohammad Quraish Shihab. Other participants suggested that political figures that have gained religious credibility and authority within certain communities may also be key messengers, including former Indonesian President Abdulrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) or former Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

³⁸ This proverb is rooted in Hadith. See example in the following source, Sunan An-Nasa'i 3104.

Former violent extremists (formers)

Former violent extremists can be credible messengers to deliver counter-narratives. Their credibility stems from their experience of having been part of a violent extremist group, and their disillusionment with staying in the group provides a model for others to leave. Former violent extremists can relate to and sympathize with an individual interested in violent extremist ideology because they experienced a similar process. Moreover, formers can shed light on the reasons why they chose to leave or disengage with violence, and amplify messages that may encourage others in a similar process.

A report by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR) gives a number of reasons why former violent extremists may be credible messengers, particularly against Daesh. These reasons include:

1. shattering the image of unity and determination of the violent extremist group;
2. highlighting the group's contradictions, hypocrisies and empty promises;
3. encouraging members to leave the group; and
4. deterring others from joining the group.³⁹

In South East Asia, former violent extremists, particularly those that have travelled to conflict zones (e.g. Afghanistan, Syria), use their experience to gain “street credibility” when it comes to vulnerable populations. In Indonesia and Malaysia, narratives of former JI members have been incorporated into secondary school and university programs, as these formers were able to provide compelling reasons, based on their own experiences, why violence was not an effective tool to address grievances and injustice. For example, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Aliansi Indonesia Damai pairs a former violent extremist with a survivor of a terrorist attack to speak with secondary school students about the dangers of extremism.⁴⁰

In the case of Daesh, former violent extremists can provide effective factual counter-narratives by exposing hypocrisies and exposing the realities of life under Daesh rule in Syria and Iraq. In this regard, former violent extremists who have travelled to Daesh-claimed territory and have returned can help to discredit the group in terms of religious behavior, monetary incentives and living conditions on the ground by challenging the “utopia” theme that Daesh attempts to promote in their communications strategies.

It is important that former violent extremists are carefully vetted and selected prior to engaging in any counter-narrative campaign. At the same time, there may be limitations for engaging former violent extremists in counter-narratives. For example, governments may be hesitant to encourage formers to openly speak about their experiences. Similarly, if vetted by governments, there may be some impact on their credibility because they will be seen as “defectors” or “traitors” by the groups with which they were once affiliated.

³⁹ Peter Neumann, *Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narratives of Islamic State Defectors* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2015), <http://icsr.info/2015/09/icsr-report-narratives-islamic-state-defectors/>.

⁴⁰ For example, see “Empowering Terrorism Victims in Indonesia,” AIDA Foundation, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDUUakk5ip4>.



TIP #2

PROTECT THE MESSENGER

It is important to ensure the physical safety of the messengers as well as protect the reputation of that messenger. This is important both in ensuring the message is credible as well as preventing the messenger from becoming a direct target of violent extremists. An individual that is the “face” of countering violent extremism has to be well-prepared to handle potential backlash against them for speaking out. For example, the April 2016 edition of *Dabiq* specifically names a number of religious leaders and key figures from the West that have spoken out against Daesh as future targets of the group. In this case, there is a significant role for governments to demonstrate their willingness and ability to ensure the safety of those that actively challenge violent extremism.

Victims and survivors

Victims and survivors of terrorism are often referred to as credible messengers because they expose the real impact of violence, and their stories de-legitimize terrorism by providing a human face to the consequences of terrorism.

The concept of “victims” includes what Alex Schmid refers to as primary victims (those injured by attacks or counter-terrorism operations), and secondary victims (family members of primary victims, those listed by terrorist organizations as targets, first-responders who suffer trauma from assistance to victims, individuals who experience income loss or property damage, or those whose lifestyle changes due to a terrorist attack).⁴¹

Victims and survivors of terrorism are most useful to a counter-narrative campaign when they tell their personal stories and testimonies. Counter-narrative campaigns should avoid allowing the victim/survivor to take on the role of a religious scholar or a counter-terrorism expert, however, and may focus instead on the thoughts, emotions and impacts (physical or emotional scars) of that individual’s journey.

Although families of violent extremists and terrorists are not always seen as victims, it can be argued that family members of perpetrators can feel some of the same emotions as victims of terrorism. Moreover, stories of family members of violent extremists have been utilized in a number of contexts in order to sway individuals from radicalization and recruitment, often coupled with stories of victims themselves. For example, the NGO Sisters Against Violent Extremism has brought together mothers of victims of terrorism with mothers of terrorists to create powerful stories of why not to be involved in terrorism.⁴² Of course, the stories that resonate most powerfully with the audience are those of locally-based survivors. However, stories of victims from outside the region (particularly those available on video) have also been used with some success—for example in both Indonesia and Malaysia.

Governments

There is a role for government bodies to produce and sometimes support counter-narratives, particularly those aimed at the general public and reinforcing social or moral values shared by society. Rachel Briggs and Sebastien Fève argue that there is some limited scope for governments engaging directly in counter-narrative activities, but that there is also significant evidence to suggest governments are most effective when they play an indirect, facilitative role such as funding.⁴³

However, because governments are often cast as the enemy by violent extremists, and can have low credibility as a messenger in the eyes of some target audiences. For example, those that feel alienated or forgotten by governments or society), government narratives may fail to resonate with these target audiences.

⁴¹ Alex P. Schmid, *Strengthening the Role of Victims and Incorporating Victims in Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism and Terrorism* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism-the Hague, 2012), <http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Strengthening-the-Role-of-Victims-August-2012.pdf>.

⁴² See, for example, “We Refuse to Hate: Mothers of 9/11,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuUJSbqTdtA>.

⁴³ Briggs and Fève, “Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism,” p. 8.

6 DEVELOP THE CONTENT AND LOGIC OF THE MESSAGE

The next step is to develop the content and logic of the message of the counter-narratives. Based on the review of the types and structure of violent extremist narratives above, the development of a counter-narrative (or alternative narrative) may consider following a similar structure and logic to that of the narrative of violent extremists. The best approach is to use a simple, clear message rather than a complex or complicated argument. However, there is also room for innovative approaches to counter-narrative development, particularly with creating alternative and positive narratives. The table below draws on international good practice to highlight the key elements of a counter-narrative as well as some recommendations for how counter-narratives could be utilized in the context of South East Asia.

POSITIVE/ALTERNATIVES NARRATIVES (PEACE NARRATIVES)

These narratives refer to developing a proactive alternative story that is more attractive than terrorism. In South East Asia, inter-faith and inter-ethnic narratives may be the most persuasive, mainly due to the diversity in cultures, ethnicities and religions in the region. Below are some examples:

AUSTRALIA

All Together Now, an Australian national charity dedicated to erasing all forms of racism in Australia, created an advertising campaign and hashtag to raise awareness of racism and condemn hate speech. The #EraseRacism campaign created a short animation video to encourage people to speak up if they witnessed racism. This video was distributed across social media channels as well as on large public screens.

The All Together Now Facebook Page can be accessed here: <https://www.facebook.com/alltogethernow.org.au>

The movie Latitude 6 was filmed in southern Thailand as a love story—highlighting both the differences and similarities between the Muslim minorities in the south and Thai society and values in the north. The movie aims to promote tolerance between religious groups as well as provide more accurate information about the insurgency and peace process occurring there.

An English subtitled trailer for Latitude 6 can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4ON0uxVvVO>

THAILAND

INDONESIA

One example of an institution to generally promote Islam as a socio-religious culture in Indonesia is Wahid Institute. The organization was established to advance the development of a tolerant, multicultural society in Indonesia, improving the welfare of the poor, building democracy and fundamental justice, and expanding the values of peace and non-violence in Indonesia and throughout the world. The Wahid Institute promotes a peaceful and plural Islam.

The Wahid Institute website can be accessed here: <http://wahidinstitute.org/>



TIP #3

TAILOR COUNTER-NARRATIVES TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND CULTURE⁴⁴

South East Asia is home to a number of regions, cities and villages that vastly differ when it comes to the local context. An example of some of the nuanced differences to community-level solutions can be seen through responses to sectarianism, specifically anti-Shi'a rhetoric. In Indonesia, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) chairman has publically emphasized unity and tolerance among all Muslims, including Ahmadiyyah and Shi'a Muslims. However, at the local level in Indonesia, religious leaders do not always reinforce this point, and sometimes instead reinforce anti-Shi'a rhetoric. This shows that local-level considerations are important to the content development of the message.

⁴⁴ Sara Zeiger *Counter-Narratives for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in South East Asia*, (Abu Dhabi: Hedayah, 2016), <http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/cn-se-asia.pdf>, p. 5.

STRATEGIC COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives aim to inform broad audiences or the general public. These may be most useful for governments, international organizations or companies. Below is an example:

AUSTRALIA

The Australian Government initiative Living Safe Together provides information to communities on violent extremism, individual and community-level efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, as well as government efforts. The website provides toolkits as well as advice on how to be involved in CVE efforts in Australia.

<http://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/pages/home.aspx>

EMOTIONAL AND ETHICAL COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives mainly address the “pull” factors—the emotional or psychological incentives that an individual may feel are beneficial by joining a violent extremist organization. Below is an example:

Arguments by former terrorists/ fighters may be effective in countering the emotional and psychological appeal, specifically for those that join to address real or perceived grievances, to achieve a “greater good,” or to become a “hero.” This interview with a former *Daesh* member from Indonesia undermines the credibility of *Daesh* by highlighting the corruption within the group:

<http://m.news.viva.co.id/video/read/40891-inipengakuan-ang-gota-isis-selama-di-suriah>

INDONESIA

EXPOSING MYTHS AND MIS-INFORMATION

Inform audiences of more accurate facts, de-bunk myths and cite references of the realities of life as a terrorist. This might also include undermining terrorist leadership or exposing the hypocrisies of terrorist organizations. Below are some examples:

PHILIPPINES

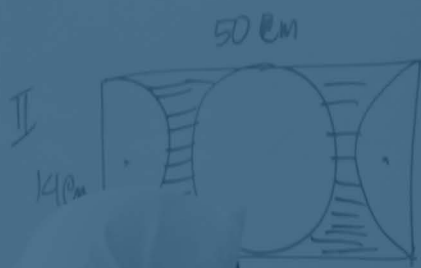
In a 2015 recruitment video in Tagalog, a video message from *Jund al-Khilafah* in the Philippines, “Training Camp,”⁴⁵ it was stated that the government of the Philippines was prohibiting Muslims from practicing their true religion by stopping women from wearing the niqab and men from growing their beards. Factual arguments and statements can easily refute this, as there is not a prohibition of these forms of religious identity in the Philippines.

In an interview with Mazlan, a jailed returnee from *Daesh*, the “realities” of joining and leaving *Daesh* are exposed. Mazlan describes his experience in Syria, initially being recruited to do humanitarian work with the promise of receiving cash. However, upon arriving in Syria, he realized he would not receive the money he was promised, and was instead instructed to do menial jobs for *Daesh* like cooking and cleaning.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/recruit-promised-cash-to-do-humanitarian-work>

INDONESIA

⁴⁵ See “*Jund al-Khilafah* in the Philippines—“Training Camp,”” (Jihadology.net, 2015), <http://jihadology.net/2015/12/20/new-video-message-from-jund-al-khilafah-in-the-philippines-training-camp/>.



$$L \times l = 50 \text{ cm} \times 14 \text{ cm} = 700 \text{ cm}^2$$

$$A = \pi r^2 = \frac{22}{7} \times 7 \text{ cm} \times 7 \text{ cm} = 154 \text{ cm}^2 \times 2$$

TIP #4

CONSIDER HOW MILITARY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM ACTIONS IMPACT THE STRATEGIC COUNTER-NARRATIVE

Actions themselves, particularly those undertaken by governments, can carry significant meaning in terms of reinforcing or changing the counter-narrative, and it is important to consider how military and counter-terrorism actions impact on counter-narratives.

TACTICAL COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives refute the idea that violence is the only way to achieve aims, or that violence is the most effective way to achieve aims. Below is an example:

SINGAPORE

In a pamphlet by Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group titled "The Fallacies of the Islamic Caliphate," the final page highlights several initiatives in Singapore that are actively supporting relief efforts in Iraq and Syria that are not using violence. This discredits the idea that there are no alternatives to violent action to support, for example, Syrian refugees.

The pamphlet is accessible on RRG's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Religious-Rehabilitation-Group-RRG-218225878199660/>

One of the alternative programs providing aid to Syrian Refugees is through Simply Islam: <http://www.simplyislam.sg/main/aid-to-syrian-refugees/>

HUMOR AND SARCASTIC COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives de-legitimize the narrative of violent extremism through poking fun at their objectives, aims, tactics or beliefs. Below is an example:

The Burka Avenger cartoon series utilizes humor to dismantle key violent extremist messages in Pakistan. In the show's pilot episode, the villain (Baba Bandoor) attempts to shut down a girls' school, one of the key violent extremist messages in the country. The heroine (Burka Avenger) fights back against the villain using books, pens and advanced acrobatics to defeat the villain and re-open the school before the end of the week. The show is riddled with subtle jokes and humor poking fun at the villain and his crew as well as more strategically, the efforts of violent extremists in the country.

Burka Avenger's pilot episode can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XahbqLdCVhE>

INTERNATIONAL (PAKISTAN)

IDEOLOGICAL OR RELIGIOUS COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives refute and dismantle the religious and ideological elements of the violent extremist narratives, utilizing religious texts and religious leaders to refute religious claims. Below is an example:

REGIONAL

1. Reinforcing the concept of jihad as an internal struggle ("great-er jihad" or *al-jihad al-akbar*), not a physical or violent one.
2. Emphasizing that Islam is tolerant and accepting of all people within communities, including all ethnicities and other religions.

7 IDENTIFY THE MEDIUM(S) WHERE THE MESSAGE WILL BE DISSEMINATED

Once the target audience, messenger and message have been determined, the next step is to identify the platforms by which the message will be disseminated. In this regard, “it is sensible to use similar platforms to those used by the audiences whom you wish to reach.”⁴⁶ Some of the possible platforms include:



⁴⁶ Tim Stevens, “New Media and Counter-Narrative Strategies: Countering Violent Extremist Narratives,” in *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives*, edited by Eelco Kessels, (The Hague : National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2010), p. 118

⁴⁷ For an overview of the social media platforms most widely used in the Asia-Pacific region, refer to <https://www.ag.gov.au/NationalSecurity/CounteringViolentExtremism/CVE-Summit/Documents/Workshop-1-Working-with-social-media-We-Are-Social.PDF>

Worth noting is the influence of social and online media with regards to the presence of Daesh in South East Asia. With a high number of internet users, Daesh's presence in South East Asia includes at least 300 extremist websites and forums and over 1000 Facebook users affiliated with Daesh in South East Asia.⁴⁸ According to the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, traveling to Iraq and Syria to join Daesh requires a recommendation from a contact on the ground, and social media helps to facilitate these contacts quickly for individuals in South East Asia.⁴⁹ In this regard, it is important for counter-narratives in South East Asia to be active online. For a practical guide to creating content online, see the counter-narrative toolkit at www.counternarratives.org.

However, while there is a large focus in current counter-narrative development on online and social media, it is important here to point out that not all of the target audiences are necessarily utilizing these platforms, and other, traditional forms of media may be more productive at reaching certain target audiences.⁵⁰ For example, there are large rural populations in many areas of Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia that do not have consistent access to the internet. In these cases, lessons can be drawn from what has been called the "Sneakernet"—the gap between the online-connected space and the offline networks.⁵¹ On the "Sneakernet," the Internet still plays a role in terms of influencing networks, but face-to-face contact and interpersonal relationships reinforce and interact with messages originating online. For example, in the case of Afghanistan, the "Sneakernet" is significantly impacted by SMS, as opposed to "online" messaging. In the same sense, traditional forms of media are still applicable in many contexts—including radio, TV, billboards, pamphlets/flyers and cartoons. As the example of the "Sneakernet" reveals, it is essential for counter-narratives to reoccur across several platforms so as to be reinforcing rather than "one-off" messages.

⁴⁸ Nur Azlin Mohamed Yasin, "Impact of ISIS' Online Campaign in South East Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis* 7, no. 4 (May 2015), p. 27.

⁴⁹ IPAC, *Online Activism and Social Media Usage*.

⁵⁰ Stevens, "New Media and Counter-Narrative Strategies."

⁵¹ E. Hu, *Information Technology Strategies and Platforms Used by Islamic Extremist Groups and How to Counter Them: Fieldwork and Analysis on Lebanese Hezbollah Afghan Taliban and Daesh* (Kabul: Impassion Group, 2016).

8 DEVELOP A DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

The next step of a counter-narrative campaign is to develop a dissemination strategy. The strategy should seek to answer questions such as:

What is the timeline of your campaign ?
Why is this significant to the target audience ?

If your campaign includes dissemination across multiple platforms, **when** will the different elements be released ?

How do the elements across multiple platforms fit together to create a cohesive message ?

For social media campaigns, **are** the keywords, hashtags and/or taglines of the message catchy ?
Do they underpin the key elements of the message ?

How can the target audience interact with the message ?
How can the target audience interact with the messenger ?

If there is a call to action, **how** can the target audience learn more information about the suggested action ?
Is there a contact number, email or method available ?

9 EVALUATE YOUR IMPACT AND RE-ASSESS YOUR COUNTER-NARRATIVE

In order for a campaign to be sustainable, it is important that there is some evaluation of the impact of the counter-narrative.

The essential component of how you measure the impact relies on the goals and objectives identified in step 4. For these goals and objectives, it is also important to track performance of the narrative against targets (i.e. key performance indicators) and revise the delivery mechanisms if required. Some potential indicators for impact of counter-narrative campaigns include:

1. Social media statistics including followers, likes, Tweets and Retweets, mentions, interactions, clicks etc. Number of times a link or narrative is shared on social media;
2. Number of times a link or narrative is shared on social media;
3. Number of times a contact detail (email, phone etc.) is contacted for further action;
4. Qualitative assessment of interactions or comments on the narrative via multiple platforms (unsolicited feedback). Qualitative assessment of content or messenger based on solicited feedback (surveys, focus groups etc).



TIP #5

BE FLEXIBLE, ADAPTABLE AND CREATIVE IN GENERATING AND RE-WORKING COUNTER-NARRATIVE CONTENT

Violent extremist narratives are ever-changing and adapting to new events and information. Therefore, counter-narratives should do the same; “We should create grand narratives that have some built-in adaptability and flexibility. Protagonists and antagonists change. Basic plot lines shift. Culmination points move.”⁵² In this regard, regular assessment of the impact of the counter-narrative campaign can help to tailor and adapt the message to the target audience, or tweak the campaign in a way that could be more effective.

In this regard, it is important to also draw lessons from organic counter-narrative campaigns. For example, the #illridewithyou campaign on Twitter was inspired by the good will of one Australian offering to walk with a Muslim woman who felt discriminated against after the Sydney siege. The trend caught on when a fellow Twitter user and local TV writer Tweeted her bus schedule and the offer to ride with anyone who felt unsafe while the city was on high alert. The hashtag inspired some limited follow-up, including a website. However, after trending worldwide in December 2014, very little was done to continue to promote and adapt the content of the hashtag.

⁵² Casebeer and Russell, “Storytelling and Terrorism,” p. 7.

CASE STUDIES FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA



CASE STUDY #1: “DARE TO BE PEACE” #BERANIDAMI

TARGET AUDIENCE:

This particular campaign was targeted at youth in urban areas in Indonesia that are active on social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In particular, the campaigns focused on the urban secular communities who are vulnerable because they have little understanding of religion (especially in Jakarta).

MESSENGERS:

The campaign coordinated the efforts of 130 community groups in Indonesia, including theatre groups, religious gatherings, women groups, human rights activists, artists' fans, business groups, youth groups, ex-jihadis, network of victims of religious and terrorist attacks and labour unions. Amongst key messengers were also Indonesian celebrities, including political figures, sports stars and musicians.

MEDIUM:

The primary platform was Twitter and social media. The program also included a large rally, TV broadcasts of key celebrities promoting the program, and YouTube videos that were uploaded to the internet at a later stage. Calendars with peace messages were produced that targeted single parents that also included practical suggestions for micro-financing.

MESSAGE:

The “Dare to be Peace” campaign was developed in Indonesia by the Wahid Institute as a supplementary activity to the United Nations International Day of Peace. The objective of the counter-narrative is to engage and encourage the “silent majority” to convey a message of moderation and tolerance. The message itself is intended to put into check messages of intolerance reinforced by violent extremists.

NEXT STEPS

This counter-narrative could be expanded if it were adapted to some of the local non-urban contexts and cultures in Indonesia. For example, in Ambon there is the local culture of “pelagandong” which refers to familial connections and networks that transcend religion and ethnicity. This element of local culture can be leveraged to localize the message of tolerance and moderation.



CASE STUDY #2: A COMMON WORD

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The focus is on the leaders and the adherents of the Abrahamic faith as well as the followers of those religious leaders that have agreed to adhere to the principles. The document is available in English, Arabic, French, Italian, German, Indonesian, Russian and Polish, with the introduction also available in Spanish.

MESSENGERS:

Muslim leaders across South East Asia and the world. Endorsers of the website include key political and religious figures that have significant influence over both Muslim and Christian populations. Recipients of the letter have provided responses to the letter, so secondary messengers include Christian leaders and major Christian organizations.

MEDIUM:

Website (www.acommonword.com) and document.

The website also promotes significant events to convene religious leaders in inter-faith dialogue, and has inspired a number of academic publications around the subject (<http://www.acommonword.com/category/new-fruits/publications/>).

MESSAGE:

"A Common Word" is an open letter by Muslim leaders to Christians that expounds on God's commandments to Muslims to love Him and to love their neighbors, referring to their brothers and sisters from the Abrahamic faiths. The initiative originated in Jordan in 2007, but has gained some traction within Indonesia and the Philippines.

The basic message relies on scripture from the Bible and the Qur'an that refer to messages of loving one's neighbor and treating others with kindness. The website also emphasizes points of debate and differences between religions, and reinforces the need for dialogue between religious leaders.

NEXT STEPS

The campaign could be more proactive in reaching the religious leaders at the highest levels (e.g. Archbishop of Canterbury, Grand Mufti, the Pope) as well as to religious leaders at a local level in South East Asia. In addition, the message is currently only available on the website. The message can be expanded through, for example, the use of social media platforms or quotes captured in photos and GIFs of key messages.

WOMEN WITHOUT BORDERS

CHANGE THE WORLD.



CASE STUDY #3: MOTHERS' SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The program target of Mothers' Schools are the mothers in communities affected by extremist violence. However, the primary target of the counter-narratives are two-fold: 1) the communities and direct social circles of the mothers that are trained, and 2) the youth and children of the mothers that are trained.

MESSENGERS:

The Mothers' School model works with local NGOs and local communities, and passes the ownership of the initiatives to these local NGOs for better sustainability and ensured credibility. In the South East Asia context, the Mothers School model was implemented with TANOKER, a locally-based NGO that focuses on cultural traditions in Ledokombo. The model utilized local cultural traditions as an entry point for engaging with mothers in the community including weaving/handicrafts, batik and cultural festivals.

The **secondary messengers** are the mothers themselves. The Mothers School model is based on the premise that mothers are the first line of defense against radicalization to violence by youth. The Mothers school seeks to empower women to work with and in their communities to have influence and be mobilized to create change.

The **tertiary messengers** are the social circles of the mothers that learn from the lessons the mothers inherit at the workshops. For example, fathers may learn parenting skills from the mothers and may be able to more effectively communicate with and parent their children.

MEDIUM:

The Mothers' Schools are training programs, but the mediums by which the messages are spread are provided on multiple platforms. For example, the training programs are followed up with direct one-on-one engagement by the SAVE team, follow-up workshops and platforms for mothers to meet, as well as TED talks available online by Edit Schaffer, the founder of SAVE.

A video about the Mother School model can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90diNrGrN08>

More about the program can be found here: <http://www.women-without-borders.org/projects/underway/42/>

MESSAGE:

The Mothers School model is an initiative of the Vienna-based non-governmental organization (NGO) Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE). The premise of the Mothers School is to develop the capacity of mothers in a number of different countries to be better equipped to prevent radicalization and violent extremism in their children. SAVE works with local organizations to develop a tailor-made program that addresses community issues, including better parenting skills, communication skills, strategies for discourse with children, strategies for involvement in their children's education, and identifying early warning signs of radicalization. The program was piloted in Tajikistan in 2013 and has been expanded to 5 other countries (Nigeria, Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Zanzibar), with plans to roll out the model in other European countries.

The message of Mothers' Schools are counter narratives partially because violent extremists are intent on separating families in order to recruit. The Mothers' Schools also emphasize the strong role that women and families have in preventing terrorists from achieving their "separation quest" by building women's capacity to resist/maintain rupture or disruption of strong family fabric. There is also an underlying counter-narrative that refutes the idea that women will not allow violent extremism in their families, and rejects the narrative that extremism triumphs over families.

NEXT STEPS

The existing programs can be connected to other local initiatives with similar goals (for example, Dare to be Peace). The messages and tools provided in the workshop can be supplemented with additional training materials and coursework through social media channels and online.

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ANNEX

Annex 1

About the Project

Annex 2

Violent Extremism in South East Asia

Annex 3

Counter-Narrative Details

ANNEX 1: ABOUT THE PROJECT

The South East Asia compendium is a practical and tangible outcome of “Australia’s Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism (June 2015),” and builds on the work underway globally to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178 (2014) addressing foreign terrorist fighters, the Follow-On Action Agenda commenced by the White House CVE Summit, and the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The aims of the Compendium are to:

- ➔ Explain existing good practice approaches to counter-messaging informed by key bodies of research;
- ➔ Reflect diverse regional practices;
- ➔ Include multiple best practice case studies of effective counter-narrative campaigns drawn predominantly from the region (and abroad), as well as analysis of the key reasons for success;
- ➔ Annex a list of commonly used terrorist narratives and corresponding counter-narratives; and
- ➔ Link to online material (such as reference to video/audio files).

This Compendium and the annex of counter-narratives are available and accessible through Hedayah’s existing Counter-Narrative Library. The counter-narrative collection was initially developed and launched by a number of countries, led by the government of the Netherlands, and was handed over to Hedayah in July 2015. The collection, consisting of existing, open-source counter-narratives, is available on Hedayah’s website on a password-protected portal.

Hedayah plans to expand the Counter-Narrative Library through the development of regional collections. Future regional collections will include Middle East and North Africa, West Africa and the Sahel, and Horn of Africa/East Africa. For more information or access to the Counter-Narrative Library, please contact cnlibrary.admin@hedayah.ae.

ANNEX 2: VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

Introduction

The purpose of this Annex is to outline the key threats of violent extremism in South East Asia. It is not intended to be a robust threat assessment, but instead is written to provide some background and context to the compendium.

Threats in South East Asia

South East Asia currently is at risk from three main threats when it comes to violent extremism:

1. Radicalization, recruitment and travel of individuals from the region to Iraq and Syria, and the return of these individuals to carry out attacks in South East Asia;
2. Radicalization of individuals inspired by international conflicts and carrying out local attacks; and
3. Association of global violent extremist ideology onto historical, localized and cross-regional conflicts and the re-energization of these existing local networks with respect to their allegiance to Daesh or Al-Qaeda affiliates.

Foreign Terrorist Fighters

One of the emerging threats in South East Asia is the radicalization and recruitment of individuals by Daesh, Jabhat an-Nusra and other groups in Iraq and Syria. This threat is heightened with the potential return of foreign terrorist fighters to South East Asia—bringing back with them extremist ideologies, training and international networks. For example, two Malaysians arrested in April 2015 were found to be members of the Royal Malaysian Air Force, and facilitating travel to Iraq and Syria. Similarly in Indonesia, two Indonesian commercial airline pilots were profiled as possibly joining Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

Foreign fighters who have returned are coordinating with existing recruitment cells to launch smaller attacks on a localized level. According to a recent report by the Soufan Group, around 1150 foreign fighters have traveled from South East Asia (including Australia and New Zealand) to Iraq and Syria since the beginning of the conflict, although the report also acknowledges that a more accurate estimate may be around 750. The majority of these fighters according to official counts are from Australia (150-250), Indonesia (700), Malaysia (100) and the Philippines (100), with a couple also from Singapore (2) and New Zealand (5-10).⁵³ According to the same report by the Soufan Group, there have been returnees to Indonesia (162) and Malaysia (5+).

Radicalization of Individuals to Carry Out Attacks Locally

A second threat in South East Asia is the influence of transnational groups on individuals that carry out attacks locally. In this case, these individuals may or may not be affiliated with a terrorist organization (such as Daesh, Al-Qaeda or a regional or local group), but carry out attacks that are inspired-by or partially inspired-by the ideology of these groups. This type of threat is difficult to predict or thwart, but as seen with the Sydney Siege in December 2014 in Australia, indi-

⁵³ The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An updated assessment of the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq* (New York: The Soufan Group, 2015), http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TS6_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf, p. 8-9.

viduals carrying out attacks are not out of the question.⁵⁴ Daesh in particular has called for this style of attacks, and the possibility of individuals carrying out attacks at home with little international support remains a concern. Similarly, there have been several cases in Singapore where individuals have self-radicalized and intended to carry out attacks at home.

Reemergence of Local Terrorist Networks

In the history of South East Asia, there have been a number of groups, from separatist insurgencies to communist-affiliated gangs to Islamist terrorist organizations, that have resorted to violence to carry out their objectives. For example, historically speaking, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates were the main actors in providing ideological, financial and operational support to groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines; Lashkar Jundullah in Indonesia; Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) in Malaysia; and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) acting in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.⁵⁵ In Indonesia, Malaysia Thailand and the Philippines, groups not affiliated with Al-Qaeda have been active and utilizing violence for a number of years. For example, in Thailand since January 2004, violence between insurgents and security forces has left over 3,400 people dead.⁵⁶

Traditionally considered South East Asia's most deadly group, JI was formed as a faction of Darul Islam, a political group that aims to establish an Islamic state and institute Islamic law (Shari'a) in Indonesia. JI appears to be reviving after maintaining a low profile for several years; the organization has been creating sleeper cells across different countries, as well as recruiting and training professionals such as doctors, engineers and technicians as part of its outreach efforts. A revived JI, with its long-established networks, poses a significant long-term threat to the region.

The threat posed by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates has lessened in South East Asia over the past decade partially because of successful counter-terrorism operations, resulting in the death or incarceration of key members of these groups. Regardless, Al-Qaeda's global ideology has endured, and Al-Qaeda's foundational ideology has been revived by Daesh and its growing influence in South East Asia on groups such as JI, ASG, and Jemmah Anshorut Tauhid.⁵⁷ Al-Qaeda and Daesh have influence on the strategic aims of regional separatist groups in South East Asia by changing their tactics and narrative from winning localized territorial struggles to waging universal jihad.⁵⁸

A number of groups previously affiliated with Al-Qaeda and JI have pledged their allegiance to Daesh. The Indonesian group Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), led by Santoso, is a particularly pervasive group that, despite its small size, has gained considerable attention since Santoso published an official video pledge of allegiance to Daesh on 1 July 2014. Notably, the video was produced in Arabic with

⁵⁴ Note: The Sydney siege is still under investigation.

⁵⁵ Chaliand, G., & Blin (Eds.), *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al-Qaeda*, (University of California Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ It should be noted that although extremist groups in the region have offered occasional material support and have used the plight of Thai Muslims as inspiration for their own causes, there is little evidence that these foreign jihadi groups are significantly active in southern Thailand.

⁵⁷ UN Security Council, *Seventeenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, (June 16 2015), <http://www.derechos.org/peace/syria/doc/unalq1.html>.

⁵⁸ Rohan Gunaratna, *Annual Threat Assessment* (Singapore: International Centre For Political Violence And Terrorism Research, 2015), http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/CTTA-Jan_Feb-2015.pdf.

English subtitles, suggesting that the intended audience for the video was outside of Indonesia, perhaps to acquire weapons and international support.⁵⁹ MIT is one of the only groups in Indonesia that claims to hold land (Poso, Indonesia). Notably, a number of other organizations in Indonesia have been actively supportive of Daesh, including the Forum of Islamic Law Activists (FAKSI) and the Forum Pendukung Daulah Islamiyah (FPDI).⁶⁰

Part of Daesh's influence in South East Asia can be attributed to the creation of a Malay-speaking fighting unit called Majmua al Arkhabiliy (Archipelago Unit/Group) to help fighters from South East Asia overcome the culture-shock of traveling to Arabic-speaking Iraq/Syria.⁶¹ In addition, al-Hayat Media Group has either translated or sub-titled a number of videos (up to 20 per month) into Bahasa Indonesian, revealing South East Asia as a priority recruiting ground for them.⁶²

In the Philippines, there have been pledges of allegiance to Daesh by four notable groups, the ASG, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), the Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSM), and the Khilafa Islamiyah Mindanao ("black flag movement"). In July 2014, Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon swore loyalty to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in a video, giving Daesh a presence in the Philippines. In September 2014, the group began kidnapping people in the name of Daesh, and some reports have shown that ASG members are being trained by Daesh in Iraq and Syria as well as newly-revived JI networks in the Philippines.⁶³

Despite government attacks on BIFF territory in early 2014, the BIFF also remains a key player in the transnational narrative of Daesh, with its leader pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in August 2014. While RSM has been relatively inactive as most of its leaders are in prison, RSM continues to have followers, and the pledge of its jailed leader Hilarion Del Rosario Santos III to Al-Baghdadi could encourage others to join the group.⁶⁴ Finally, a relatively new group is Khalifah Islamiyah, or the "black flag movement", which is an umbrella entity comprised of very young members as well as elements of ASG, BIFF and JI elements who have also officially pledged allegiance to Daesh.

The risk affiliated with the historical presence of violent extremism in South East Asia is that these networks can be, and are being, re-energized by new and emerging conflicts and organizations, such as Daesh in Iraq and Syria. However, it should also be mentioned that the growing rift between Daesh and Al Qaeda affiliates in Iraq and Syria also has implications for South East Asia. While Daesh is gaining power and influence over some previously existing networks in South East Asia, other networks are rejecting its claims and objectives. For example, Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT) leader and spiritual guide of JI, Abu Bakr al Bashir,

⁵⁹ Sugara, "Santoso."

⁶⁰ Peter Chalk, "Black Flag Rising: ISIL in South East Asia and Australia" (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, December 2015), https://www.aspi.org.au/publications/black-flag-rising-isil-in-southeast-asia-and-australia/Black-flag-rising_ISIL.pdf.

⁶¹ Chan, "The Call of ISIS."

⁶² J. Singh and V. Arianti, "Islamic State's South East Asia Unit: Raising the Security Threat- Analysis" *Eurasia Review* (October 2015), <http://www.eurasiareview.com/20102015-islamic-states-south-east-asia-unit-raising-the-security-threat-analysis/>.

⁶³ Fergus Hanson, "Countering ISIS in South East Asia: The Case for an ICT Offensive," (Perth US Asia Centre, February 2015), http://perthusasia.edu.au/usac/assets/media/docs/publications/FINAL_F_Hanson_ISIS_ICT.pdf.

⁶⁴ UN Security Council, *Seventeenth report*.

swore allegiance to al-Baghdadi and Daesh,⁶⁵ stating that it was obligatory for JAT members to obey/respect his pledge. JI has also been reportedly supporting the recruitment and travel of foreign terrorist fighters to Syria/Iraq and training other terrorist groups such as the ASG in the Philippines. However, it should also be noted that several key JI leaders have also virulently and outwardly opposed Daesh.⁶⁶

In the context of this compendium, the rifts between Al Qaeda and Daesh ideologies, goals and objectives have advantages for counter-narratives. Competing ideas from terrorist organizations opens up opportunities for debate, dialogue and engagement with those that are most vulnerable. There are also opportunities to exploit the narratives used by both Al Qaeda and Daesh to discredit the other.

⁶⁵ Chalk, "Black Flag Rising."

⁶⁶ See S. Hawley, A. Prihantari, and A. Wu, "Two senior leaders of Jemaah Islamiyah released on parole after serving half of 15-year sentences," *ABC News*, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-10-29/jemaah-islamiyah-leaders-released-on-parole/6894738>.

ANNEX 3: COUNTER-NARRATIVES, POSITIVE AND ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

The contents of Annex 3 are not available to the general public in order to protect the messengers and messages of the counter-narratives identified in the Annex. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the full report (including Annex 3), kindly send an email to info@hedayah.ae with your name, contact details, reason for access and credentials. Hedayah reserves the right to refuse access to Annex 3 to any individual or organization for any reason.

The contents of Annex 3 are also available in Hedayah's Counter-Narrative Library. For those interested in accessing the Counter-Narrative Library, kindly contact the administrator at cnlibrary.admin@hedayah.ae.

ABOUT HEDAYAH

Hedayah was created in response to the growing desire from members of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and the wider international community for the establishment of an independent, multilateral center devoted to dialogue and communications, capacity building programs, research and analysis to counter violent extremism in all of its forms and manifestations.

During the ministerial-level launch of the GCTF in New York in September 2011, the U.A.E. offered to serve as the host of the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism. In December 2012 Hedayah was inaugurated with its headquarters in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.

Hedayah aims to be the premier international center for expertise and experience to counter violent extremism by promoting understanding and sharing of good practice to effectively serve as the true global center to counter violent extremism.



Hedayah