

*HANDBOOK*

**A CONFLICT SENSITIVE  
APPROACH TO REPORTING ON  
CONFLICT AND  
VIOLENT EXTREMISM**



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# HANDBOOK: A CONFLICT SENSITIVE APPROACH TO REPORTING ON CONFLICT AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**Disclaimer:** This handbook has been produced within the framework of the “Contributing to stability and peace in Central Asia through media literacy, improved reporting and regional cooperation” Project implemented by Internews and funded by the European Union. The contents of this handbook are the sole responsibility of authors and can not be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and Internews under any circumstances.



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## **Foreword**

While there may be some debate about the precise numbers, it is widely recognised that a disturbing number of people from Central Asia have been recruited in to the ranks of violent extremist groups operating in Syria and Iraq over the past 10 years. It's also evident that, while these groups have suffered significant setbacks in recent years, their membership has not evaporated and that there is a strong likelihood that Central Asian countries will have to deal with the fallout from these conflicts. There have also been repeated reports of people with connections to Central Asia having played pivotal roles in terror attacks in other countries outside of the Middle East. Over this time, it has also become clear that the groups involved in these conflicts and attacks have become sophisticated users of new technology. They have been effective in leveraging social media and online discussion groups to promote their interests and to recruit new members from across large geographic areas. It is against this background that Internews, with the support of the European Union, launched an ambitious region-wide “Contributing to Stability and Peace in Central Asia” project with the principle aims of equipping media organisations to contribute towards the prevention of violent extremist growth in Central Asia. This multipronged approach has involved the provision of training to journalists, bloggers and other media professionals to equip them to report constructively on questions of radicalisation, extremism and terror. It has also involved the facilitation of courses for communications specialists from government departments, security agencies and religious bodies. These have aimed to prepare specialists to communicate with the media and the public about extremist and terrorist activities and to play a role in helping to prevent the spread of extremism. All of these courses were facilitated by Internews’ media partners in the five Central Asian countries<sup>1</sup>. Internews contributed towards these courses by workshoping the curricula with trainers drawn from these partner organisations’ and provided ongoing support as these trainers facilitated their workshops. A third prong of this project has involved raising the level of media literacy in the Central Asian countries to equip consumers to engage more critically with content relating to extremism and terror.

***This Conflict Sensitive Approach to Reporting on Conflict and Violent Extremism Handbook has been developed as part of this programme. It is intended to serve the following functions:***

- It is resource media trainers can draw on as they present courses to journalists dealing with these subjects.
- It provides supplementary information for journalists who have attended these courses and should reinforce lessons that have been learned
- It introduces journalists who have not been able to attend these courses to many of the core principles that have been covered.
- It should help communication specialists to identify ways in which they can assist journalists wanting to make a constructive contribution through their reporting.

While the main thrust of this Internews project has been on the prevention of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, this handbook also focuses extensively on general principles of conflict sensitive reporting. This more general focus on conflict is important, because it is understood that societies grappling with social conflicts can often serve as greenhouses for the spread of radicalisation and extremism. As such, by assisting journalists to play a role in ameliorating the harmful effects of conflict, it is hoped that Internews can also empower them to contribute to the prevention of radicalisation and extremism leading to terror.

***Farhod Rahmatov***

***Project Director***

***“Contributing to Stability and Peace in Central Asia” Project Internews***

1. See acknowledgements for the names of these partner organisations and the trainers.

## Acknowledgements

This handbook owes its existence to the thousands of journalists who have committed their careers and their lives to building a world in which people from diverse backgrounds can find peaceful solutions to conflicts. It recognises the contributions these reporters, editors, producers, presenters and bloggers have made and aims to make a small contribution to enhancing their ability to make a difference. If it can provide some of these courageous women and men with knowledge and tools they can use as they grapple with this complex subject that it will have served its purpose.

The value of having a handbook that brings together principles of conflict sensitive reporting and constructive reporting on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism for Central Asian journalists was the brain child of the team at Internews Central Asia. This team of dedicated media development professionals have made vital contributions towards its coming into being, both during the initial stages of conceptualisation and production phase of the handbook. Special thanks go to Internews Project Director for Central Asia Farhod Rahmatov, Regional Journalism Advisor Irina Chistyakova, Aigul Bolotova, Regional Engagement Manager and Internews Conflict Prevention Advisor Ikbalzhon Mirsaiitov for their critical contributions to their handbook. Thanks also to Internews Programme Managers, Internews Regional Programme Manager Tmur Oganov, Nazym Toganbayeva (Kazakhstan), Aida Umanova (Kyrgyzstan), Sheroz Sharipov (Tajikistan) and Jahongir Nahanov (Uzbekistan), and Regional Programme Assistant Yrysbek Choibalsan Uulu.

A number of experts have contributed directly to this handbook and I owe a special vote of thanks to: Jem Thomas, Albany Associates Ltd Director of Training and Research for his chapter dealing with online extremism, Azamat Talantbek uulu for preparing a chapter on Legal Aspects when Covering Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalism, Ikbalzhon Mirsaiitov for his contribution on media law in Central Asia and to the five regional specialists for their

*inputs on the media and extremism in their countries. Thanks also to different experts who gave of their time to share their views on violent extremism and the media:*

- Rasim Chelidze, Doctor of theology, expert in Kazakhstan;
- Rustam Azizi, Deputy Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan;
- Viktor Mikhailov, Independent expert on security in Uzbekistan;
- Yulia Denisenko, Independent Expert on Religion;
- Mametbek Myrzabayev, Director of the Islamic Studies Research Institute.
- Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the contributions of the different trainers from Internews partner organisations in the region who all provided valuable ideas for inclusion in this text during our ten-day workshop in Bishkek.

## About the author

Peter du Toit is a Research Associate of the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership which forms part of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University. Peter has been a journalist and a media trainer for more than 30 years and has focused on Conflict Sensitive Reporting Training across Africa, South East Asia and in states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. His academic qualifications include an M.Ed in Higher Education (Rhodes University) and a M.Phil: Conflict Management and Transformation (Nelson Mandela University).

## Overall introduction - The thinking behind this handbook

Journalists across the world face deep dilemmas when it comes to reporting on conflicts that are occurring in and sometimes devastating the communities they live and work in. Sometimes these conflicts play out in clashes between communities, at other times they take the form of violent attacks, often perpetrated against innocents, carried out by extremist and terrorist organisations. In

all of these instances' journalists must respond to the challenges of being part of a community caught up in conflict while at the same time being part of a profession that expects fair and even-handed coverage of these conflicts. When the people, places, issues, principles and beliefs journalists care about are threatened by conflict, they are often called upon to make difficult and sometimes seemingly impossible choices. Where do the journalists' loyalties lie? Do their allegiances belong to their profession or to their communities? Whose interests should the journalists be trying to serve? These choices become even harder when media houses are owned or managed by people determined to promote the interests of a particular group. This handbook aims to respond to some of these questions and to provide tools journalists can use that will help them report constructively on conflict.

The handbook begins with a more general focus on conflict and on the different contributions journalists can make if they adopt a conflict sensitive approach to reporting. Key ideas relating to conflict sensitive reporting are spelt out in some detail in Part One and this provides a conceptual basis for the rest of the text. The remainder of the handbook focuses more specifically on how a conflict sensitive approach to reporting can enable journalists to make a constructive contribution when reporting on situations involving violent extremists and terrorists. Readers who are primarily interested in these issues can skip Part One and begin their reading at the start of Part Two. That said, many of the ideas discussed in Part One, such as tips for understanding conflict, or interviewing people in conflict situations, would also inform the coverage of extremism and terrorism.

One of the corner stones of conflict sensitive reporting is the assumption that the more journalists know about conflict, the better equipped they will be to report constructively on disputes, confrontations, insurgencies and wars. The handbook assumes the same thing when it comes to reporting on extremism and terrorism and consequently provides a detailed discussion of some relevant aspects relating to these manifestation of conflict in Part Two. Part Three looks specifically at things journalists can do when reporting extremist activities in a community and how, by applying principles of fair, independent and transparent reporting, they can help to limit the harmful effects of these activities. Part Four deals specifically with contributions journalists can make when reporting on actual terrorist attacks, while Part Five, written by Jem Thomas, focuses specifically on violent extremism in the digital world. Part Six: Looking After Yourself, pays attention to question relating to journalists physical safety and psychological well being.

It's notable that in the parts that deal specifically with radicalisation leading to extremism and terrorism, the handbook recognises that there is currently a tendency to focus on extremism within a religious context. There are, however, many other forms of extremism in the world and, as a consequence, the handbook has adopted a more inclusive approach to these issues. The handbook also offers some specific insights into radicalisation leading to extremism and terrorism in Central

Asian countries. These can be found in the Country Reports by Regional Experts section in which these experts describe the way terms are defined in their countries and the local laws journalists need to be aware of when covering extremist and terrorist activities. The experts also provide some suggestions about professional questions they believe journalists should consider when reporting on these matters.

## Part One: Conflict Sensitive Reporting<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1. Core assumptions underpinning Part One of this handbook

**Five interrelated assumptions underpin the thinking behind this approach to conflict sensitive reporting. These are:**

**Assumption One** is based on lessons from the field of peace and conflict studies and assumes that conflicts cannot be sustainably managed or resolved unless the needs and interests of all parties involved are satisfied to an acceptable level.

**Assumption Two** suggests that journalists can make a positive contribution towards the peaceful management and resolution of conflict in their communities by helping to create conditions that allow for the needs and interests of various parties to be met.

**Assumption Three** is that the more journalists understand about conflict, the better equipped they will be to report on events and processes in ways that enhance the likelihood of parties achieving peaceful solutions.

**Assumption Four** is that while journalists can make a positive contribution to creating conditions that facilitate the peaceful management and resolution of conflict, they should not promote the agenda or interests of a particular group or advocate a particular solution.

**Assumption Five** is that journalists need to be constantly reflecting on the impact of their work and on the degree to which they are meeting the needs of their audiences.

Taken together Assumptions One and Two are significant because they suggest journalists can only serve the interests of their own communities if they also serve the interests of other stakeholders involved in the conflict. The journalist's ability to make a difference is thus contingent on his or her commitment to providing fair, accurate, responsible and comprehensive<sup>1</sup> coverage and on his or her willingness to explore the hopes, fears, needs and concerns of all parties caught up in a conflict.

If journalists wish to meaningfully contribute to managing and resolving conflict, they also need to be aware of the contributions they can make to easing tensions and to enhance their understandings of the causes of conflict, the dynamics of conflict escalation and how conflicts can be addressed. Not only must journalists be aware of the contributions they can make in promoting peace, they should also become conscious of how their reporting can impact negatively on conflict. Inaccurate reports, biased coverage (intentional or not), sensationalism and in some instances outright propaganda can exacerbate conflict and result in loss of life and destruction of property.

Conflict sensitive reporting means adopting a conflict-sensitive approach to the gathering and presentation of news. It also means finding ways to tell conflict-sensitive stories in an engaging and compelling manner. If these stories cannot capture the attention of listeners, viewers and readers

2. Part One of this handbook draws heavily on an earlier handbook written by Peter du Toit with editorial assistance from senior Southern African journalists, Chris Chinaka, Barbara Among, Nikodemus Kioko Kivandi, James Mpande and Setsabile Sibisi. The original can be found in English at [https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/ConflictSensitiveReporting-Peter\\_du\\_Toit\\_2012-03.pdf](https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/ConflictSensitiveReporting-Peter_du_Toit_2012-03.pdf)

then the impact of this journalism on a conflict will be limited. This is especially the case today as media channels proliferate and people become more reliant on social media.

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## 1.2 Understanding conflict

Most news stories involve an element of conflict. Why? Because conflict is ubiquitous. It permeates every aspect of social existence. Conflict is also always about change. It's about people trying to meet unfulfilled needs, enhance their influence, defend their identities, gain increased access to resources and reduce inequalities and injustice. It can also be about people resisting change and fighting to maintain privilege. Conflict is an important driver of change and change is at the heart of almost all reporting. It's what makes news, news. Journalism is about the impact change has on individuals, communities, groups and nations, political structures, economies and the natural environment. And people rely on journalists to help them orientate themselves to the world around them and respond to shifting social and political environments. People also rely on the information they get from journalists in deciding how to react to conflict, how they should feel about others in the conflict and how they should behave towards them.

Conflict is almost always more complex than it seems, and journalists can make good use of thinking tools from the field of peace and conflict studies to enhance their understanding of what is happening and why. The next few pages will introduce a range of useful concepts, theories and tools that can assist us in (1) enhancing our understanding of conflict, (2) equipping us to tell stories about conflicts that explain their complexity, and (3) consider the impact of our own reporting on conflict. What is important about these concepts is that they can be applied in a variety of different contexts. Lessons that we learn from small intergroup conflicts can also prove useful when we are looking at conflict on a national or even an international level.

### 1.2.1 What is conflict?

**Scholars have provided us with many definitions of conflict that contain many similar elements. This handbook draws on the definition provided by South African conflict specialist Mark Anstey who writes that:**

Conflict exists in a **relationship** when parties **believe** their aspirations cannot be achieved at the same time, or **perceive** a divergence in their **values, needs** or **interests** (latent conflict) and **purposefully mobilise** the power that is available to them in an effort to eliminate, neutralise, or change each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction (manifest conflict)<sup>3</sup>.

**From this definition a number of things become clear:**

- Conflict takes place within **relationships** and the nature of these relationships will have

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3. Anstey, M. 2008. *Managing Change: Negotiating Conflict*. Cape Town: Juta.

an important influence on the way the conflict plays out. Where parties have longstanding histories of antagonism and hostility the prospects of finding mutually satisfactory outcomes without confrontation is diminished. Where there's a history of parties having dealt with contentious issues in a constructive manner, the likelihood of a peaceful outcome is enhanced.

- Parties' **beliefs and perceptions** play a tremendously important role in shaping how a conflict plays out. The fact that a party believes something is true can be as important as the reality of whether that belief is justifiable or not.
- Conflict will always involve parties' **needs, values and interests**.
- Conflict can exist in a **latent state** for a long time until one of the parties begins taking steps that will alter the status quo. It's possible for parties to be unaware of the potential for conflict until something happens that alerts people to a problem.
- Conflict becomes manifest when parties begin to deliberately **mobilise** the **power** that they have at their disposal. This power can take many forms and include the use of military hardware by governments and rebels, strike action and lock-outs by unions and corporations, hunger strikes by prisoners and demonstrations by marginalised citizens.

While conflict all too often leads to violence, **violent** confrontations are not a given. Conflicts are frequently managed and resolved without confrontation. Often this is because there are established mechanisms for addressing conflicts, which might include the courts, commonly agreed on rules and procedures or longstanding customs. Sometimes, as a conflict progresses, parties can become aware of the validity of each other's claims and find ways to accommodate these peacefully.

### **1.2.2 Violence and conflict**

Many people equate the concepts of violence and conflict, but this is not the case. Violence is a manifestation of conflict and can serve a range of different functions simultaneously. For instance, when demonstrators from a poorly-serviced informal settlement hurl stones at police cars they can be doing several things at once. These could include:

- venting their anger over things that are frustrating them;
- communicating dissatisfaction to authorities;
- attracting media attention to place pressure on authorities;
- demonstrating that they are not powerless; and/or,
- threatening authorities with the prospect of heightened violence.

Violence involves one party taking deliberate action to hurt another and does not always have to involve the use of physical force. Violence can also take the form of withholding material goods. Stopping food from reaching refugees causes great suffering. Action aimed at undermining people's sense of self and identity, such as violating human rights or withholding political rights, can also be seen as violent. Verbal abuse should also be seen as a violent act.

### **1.2.3 Identifying the causes of conflict**

If journalists want to play a role in helping parties to find solutions to conflicts, then they need to be able to understand how conflicts start and to be able to explain these origins to audiences. The following are some of the factors that can cause conflict. Conflicts can be multi-causal – several of the below conditions can be present at once – which increases the difficulty of finding lasting solutions.

- **Scarce Resources**

If a community or nation does not have the resources to ensure a reasonable standard of living for everyone, then conflict is likely <sup>4</sup>as groups and individuals compete for scarce resources. These can include material resources such as land and access to water and health services, or other benefits such as jobs and opportunities for personal advancement. Often these confrontations occur

because parties want to make different use of the resources. It's not surprising that a large percentage of the world's serious conflicts happen in areas characterised by high levels of poverty. Conflicts over resources can also be severely aggravated in situations where there are noticeable inequalities in the distribution of resources. The theory of relative deprivation argues that

when groups feel they are not getting a fair share of a resource or a social good in relation to others then conflict is likely. Resource-based conflicts can also occur in situations where dramatic shifts in societies and economies see people having to do without things, they once took for granted.

- **Human Needs<sup>5</sup>**

Many conflict theorists argue that everyone has a range of basic human needs which need to be satisfied. These include physical needs, such as food, clothing and shelter and physical security. They also include identity needs which include the freedom to associate with people who share their ideological, political and religious beliefs and the freedom to express themselves openly without being threatened. Individual identity is often linked to groups, and individuals tend to see the group's structures, beliefs and attitudes as extensions of themselves. When something or someone threatens a group's identity, then members of that group are also likely to perceive the threat as directed at themselves as individuals. This can have serious implications for conflict because it allows leaders to mobilise people around issues affecting group identity. It is also makes it possible for people pursuing their own agendas to manipulate people's perceptions of threats to group identity as a way of mobilising people to their advantage. Other needs include the need for control (being able to make and carry out decisions about your own life), and the need for recognition (the expectation that others will acknowledge and respect an individual or a group's life choices). The urge to satisfy needs is believed to be so strong that groups unable to satisfy them by following accepted social and political processes are likely to turn to more contentious strategies. Needs are so integral to individuals and groups that they cannot simply be bargained away.

- **Structural Imbalances**

Conflict often occurs when there is an actual or perceived inequality of control of resources and the way these are distributed. This occurs when a dominant group uses its power to entrench a privileged position and to secure an unequal allocation of resources. In some instances, political structures have been established to benefit people from particular ethnic or religious groups, often at the expense of others. Such structural imbalances often have their origins in colonial times when ethnic identities were either manipulated or ignored in the construction of modern states. Conflicts are also likely in post-colonial states when the interests of minority groups are not accommodated by the State. Prime examples of these problems occur when a minority group finds that a dominant group's language and faith have been imposed on them. Addressing structural conflicts is complex and may often require a substantial transformation of the society away from one political system to another more accommodating one. This transformation can be a painful as previously privileged groups are likely to be resistant to change, while oppressed and marginalised groups may have expectations that cannot easily be satisfied in the short term.

4. See Pruitt, D., & Kim, S.H. 2008. *Social conflict: escalation, stalemate and settlement* (3rd edition). Boston: McGraw Hill. p. 19-20

5. See Burton, J. 1990. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. London: Macmillan Press for a comprehensive explanation of needs theory

Moving beyond such conflicts means finding ways of addressing immediate problems, but also devising ways in which past inequalities can be redressed.

- **Information and communication**

Conflicts sometimes occur in situations where the parties do not have sufficient access to the information, they need to make informed decisions. Parties may misinterpret each other's motives for acting in particular ways, a situation that is exacerbated if they are unable or unwilling to communicate openly with each other. Parties in conflict often want to withhold information from each other in the hopes that this will give them an advantage. Anstey suggests that this strategic withholding of information can be detrimental to everyone. He argues that:

*Lack of shared and legitimate information ... gives rise to power struggles and contributes to rising levels of mistrust in relations. Over and above this, it reduces the capacity of the parties to understand each other's stances on issues, contributing to the chances of misjudgement in embarking in trials of strength ... instead of matters being worked out on the basis of a common data base, they are fought out on the basis of position and principle informed by guess work and assumption<sup>6</sup>.*

These problems can be exacerbated by the tendency of people to distort information to make it fit into a pre-existing understanding of a situation. People are likely to believe the worst of an opponent and it can become exceptionally difficult for someone wanting to make a conciliatory gesture to ensure someone from the other side understands this. Instead of being seen as having made an effort to reach out to build a bridge between rival parties, a group's honest attempt to bring about positive change can be misinterpreted as strategic manoeuvring to gain an advantage.

- **Interpersonal relations**

Conflicts between groups may sometimes have their origins in interpersonal conflicts. When influential people clash, they will frequently mobilise their supporters to gain an advantage over their opponents. Supporters may participate in such struggles because they are genuinely loyal to their leaders; they may also be reliant on the leader's patronages. When conflicts are allowed to develop in this way, they can take on a dynamic of their own, sometimes extending beyond the leader's sphere of influence. This is especially so when conflicts turn violent and are accompanied by the destruction of property, injuries and deaths.

- **Uncertainty**

Conflict frequently breaks out during times of change, uncertainty and transition when new norms are being established and groups are grappling with the challenge of dealing with each other. In post-war situations these uncertainties can cause conflict to re-emerge.

Differences may have been addressed on a macro-level, but bitterness and hatred between people who were former 'enemies' can persist. Conflicts can also emerge when combatants who are used to using force to achieve their objectives, find themselves subjected to civilian laws. For example, ex-soldiers can struggle to submit to democratic processes they may feel do not serve their interests. The challenge of dealing with these uncertain situations can be exacerbated in situations where weapons have become widely available. Similarly, as countries change from authoritarian to democratic rule, state security agencies, such as the police, intelligence services and the military may resist having to account to a civilian authority.

- **Goal incompatibility**

There are many instances where parties' goals might be incompatible, and which might result

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6. Anstey, 2008, p.29

in conflict. A village might want to clear indigenous forest for growing crops while conservationists want to see the forest protected. A developer may want to build on seemingly vacant land, while a community wants to protect the graves of ancestors buried there. The list of possible confrontations is endless. The challenge is to find ways to meet the needs of all parties to a satisfactory degree. It does not matter whether parties' goals are actually incompatible, the fact that they perceive them to be so is all that is necessary for the conflict to exist.

It is notable that this discussion does not mention ethnicity or religion as a cause of conflict. Although conflicts are often explained in terms of ethnic, religious, cultural or national differences

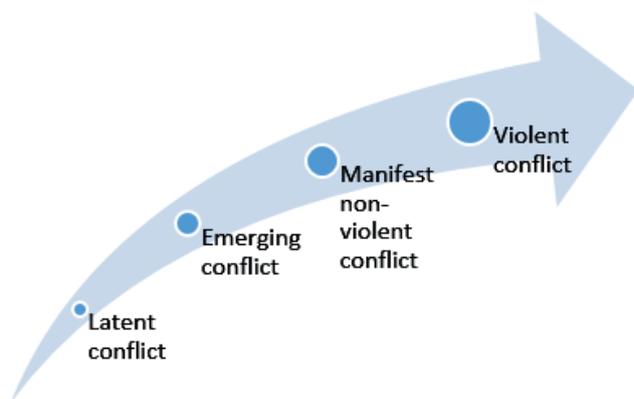


Figure 1 Stages of conflict development

- **Latent conflict**

**Latent conflict** occurs when conditions that have the potential to result in conflict exist but have not yet been recognised by the parties. Latent conflict might be said to exist when a group decides to pursue a goal without recognising that this might be, or appear to be, incompatible with the goals of another group. The following are some examples of latent conflict:

- Farmers decide to set traps to stop predators stealing their sheep. In their minds the animals are vermin who are threatening their livelihoods. The farmers may be unaware that using traps might lead to conflict between themselves and animal rights activists.
- A minority group in a particular country decides it no longer wishes to remain part of the country or province dominated by people from another group. The conflict can remain latent until people decide they want to take action. The moment the minority group begins making demands for a territory of its own the conflict begins to emerge.
- Community members may have tolerated poor service delivery for years. However, when they observe that other communities are getting services their frustrations can develop.

It's possible to think that so long as a conflict remains latent, all is well, but the problem with this approach is that issues never get addressed and people can become increasingly frustrated and less tolerant of others. This makes it harder to solve a conflict when it does begin to emerge. It can be important to identify latent conflicts and to make the issues visible so that they can be addressed.

- **Emerging conflict**

Emerging conflict begins when groups perceive they have mutually incompatible goals. For example, conflict can begin to emerge when a disadvantaged group decides that conditions are unjust and that they are no longer prepared to tolerate the status quo. Conflict begins to emerge when one group starts to express the need for change, while the other makes it clear that they will

resist change. At this stage it can be clear that parties acknowledge the existence of conflict and they may well have identified their opponents.

- **Manifest nonviolent**

Conflict reaches this level when groups begin to mobilise their power to effect change, while others prepare to resist them. This stage is often characterised by attempts by parties to persuade others to see the conflict from their point of view and to persuade them to change their views. Parties will seek to mobilise as much support as possible at this stage to demonstrate their capacity to either force the other party to submit or to resist efforts to force them to capitulate. Parties will also try to convince outsiders that their cause is just, hoping external pressure discourages opponents from pursuing their goals. This stage of conflict can include relatively benign attempts to persuade others to concede to demands, but these attempts at persuasion can escalate to threats.

- **Violent conflict**

Actual violent conflict begins when parties start inflicting harm on one another. This can mark the beginning of an extremely destructive phase that introduces a mass of new dynamics. Not only will parties need to address the issues that originally led to the conflict, but they will also have to find ways of reconciling people who have suffered losses during confrontations.

The progression from one level to the next is generally marked by a triggering event - something that happens which can push parties to escalate the conflict. Once conflicts become manifest this can mark the start of a spiral of conflict. Conflict triggers can take on many forms and may even be only tangentially related to the conflict. For example, when tensions exist between different political groups living in an informal settlement a dispute over a stolen chicken can trigger a massive confrontation between people from different factions.

When it comes to reporting on conflict, journalists tend to concentrate their coverage on the last two stages of conflict escalation, frequently ignoring the latent and emerging stages. This focus on the moments of real action rather than on the overall process can lead to audiences developing a distorted understanding of events. Instead of recognising that a conflict has welled up over time and in response to a range of issues, audiences can be left thinking the conflict flared without warning. Under these circumstances people will commonly blame belligerents without understanding that these people may have made repeated attempts to address issues without threats and violence. It can also mean that journalists miss out on opportunities to sound early warning signals about impending confrontations and that people don't respond to conflict in time.

#### **1.2.5. Moderators and aggravators**

Whether or not a conflict progresses through the four stages of escalation depends on a number of factors which can either moderate or exacerbate the conflict. If these factors can play a moderating role then it is possible that when events occur that might trigger escalation, the parties will be able to manage the situation and prevent it from escalating. If these moderators are absent or present,

but in a negative sense, this can increase the likelihood of conflicts escalating, being violently expressed and sometimes spiralling out of control. Being conscious of these factors can help reporters anticipate the likelihood of conflicts getting worse and equip them to ask questions that highlight the potential consequences of growing antagonisms. Anstey identifies a range of factors that can either serve to moderate or aggravate a conflict. These include:

- History. Where parties share a common history of addressing previous conflicts peaceably this can help to reduce tensions and provide them with mechanisms and approaches they

can draw on in preventing escalation. They are also able to work together on the basis of trust. A history of antagonism and violence, however, will generally aggravate the conflict. Confronted with a conflict trigger, people may reflect on past experiences and fall back on old prejudices leading to elevated levels of anger which enhances the potential for violence.

- Shared values. Where parties recognise each other's legitimacy and right to exist, this can contribute to creating conditions for peaceful dialogue. When parties refuse to acknowledge each other's rights to property, citizenship and political representation then the prospects for negotiation are limited and conflicts are likely to spiral.
- The availability of alternatives. Parties who recognise a range of possible solutions are less likely to allow conflicts to escalate. Where confrontation seems to be the only options, the potential for a rapid escalation of conflict increases.
- Acceptable conflict management forums. If parties have access to mutually acceptable forums for dealing with conflict, this can help to prevent violence. Without these forums' parties may feel they have no choice but to resort to force.
- Perceptions of justice. If parties are convinced their goals are legitimate and that their opponent's goals are not, this will increase their desire to pursue goals and to mobilise resources to achieve them. When competing groups refuse to acknowledge their opponent's claims this can lead to severely escalated conflict.
- Communication. Where communication channels exist between parties the likelihood of conflict escalating is reduced. Conversely, if there are no effective communication channels then the possibility of misunderstandings and conflict spiralling increases.

#### **1.2.6. What happens as conflicts escalate**

Drawing on the work of several theorists, Anstey offers a useful model of conflict escalation that tracks what happens as conflicts escalate. The model can help journalists anticipate what is likely to happen as a conflict grows and this can inform the kinds of questions we ask and the decision we make about who to talk to. These shifts can include:

- Issues and demands. Early in a conflict parties are likely to have a relatively limited range of demands and the issues they are talking about can often be quite well defined. As the conflict develops and parties become more entrenched, the number of demands can increase, and the issues become less clearly defined. This makes it harder to establish what the conflict is all about which can complicate attempts to reach agreements.
- Resources. Parties will only have invested a limited amount of resources in pursuing their goals at the start of a conflict. However, as the conflict continues and the number of issues increases parties increase their investment in the conflict. The more they invest the harder it can be to withdraw or compromise without achieving tangible benefits.
- Participants. The number of groups involved in a conflict tends to increase as it grows. Each new player brings a new set of demands making the conflict more complicate to resolve.
- Perceptions. How groups perceive each other can change radically as conflict develops. Stereotypes and prejudices become more entrenched and groups begin to demonize each other, projecting their own fears onto their opponents. Groups also tend to believe the other side bears full responsibility for aggression and conflict and they can feel they are not responsible for resolving the conflict themselves.

- Communication. Communication between groups changes from being relatively open and accurate to becoming hostile and antagonistic. These communications can also be distorted by parties' perceptions of each other to the extent that gestures towards reconciliation can be dismissed as deceitful attempts to gain tactical advantages.
- Internal power dynamics. It's common in times of crisis for groups to want decisive leadership and for them to push more authoritative (less democratic) people into leadership positions. Conflict situations often see more hawkish leaders being given a chance to dominate over more peace-orientated doves. The dominance of the hawks in conflict can lead to greater intransigence and see parties becoming less amendable to compromise.

As these changes happen within and between parties there are also likely to be significant changes in the tactics parties employ in trying to achieve their goals (see Figure 2- How tactics change).



**Figure 2 How tactics change**

It's evident from this model that, as a conflict begins to emerge groups feelings about each other will generally be neutral or even positive. As such they will still be in a position where they feel they can engage in joint problem-solving. This is the stage at which parties are most likely to be able to resolve conflict constructively. As the conflict escalates, they begin trying to persuade the other to compromise, back-down or surrender. If parties cannot convince opponents to concede then they are likely to begin using threats, which can involve warnings of the use of force, or the withdrawal of rewards. They can also involve parties mobilising resources to convince opponents of the seriousness of their threats. If opponents do not respond to threats, parties are likely to resort to force, including violence. At this stage parties will do whatever they can to mobilise their power, while simultaneously trying to reduce the goal-seeking potential of their opponents. In some situations, where the relationship between groups is already low, parties may leap directly to threats and violence when a latent conflict begins to emerge.

Just as a group's tactics can change as conflict escalates, so goals can also shift. When conflicts start parties are generally concerned with achieving the goals, they have identified for themselves. They focus on their own interests and are less concerned with what other parties are doing. However, as conflict escalates, parties become more aware that other parties are frustrating their attempts to achieve their goals. They begin throwing more resources into the conflict in the hope that their opponents will back down. The more parties invest in a conflict the more important it becomes for them to succeed. The more they feel their opponents are deliberately frustrating their cause, the more they will want to defeat the other party. Winning, not just achieving their goals, can become a motive for continuing the conflict. If the conflict escalates to the point where parties are inflicting harm on each other, they may reach a point where winning is no longer enough and feel opponents must be punished. Groups may lose sight of their original goals and begin concentrating their energies on inflicting harm on each other and getting revenge and this can involve the use of extreme violence and tactics designed to inflict pain.

### 1.2.7. Hazards of escalation<sup>7</sup>

The primary problem with conflict escalation is that it relates to what was earlier referred to as the spiralling effect. As conflicts continue they become more and more complex and intense with issues increasing along with costs. Acts of violence attract acts of retaliation and this in turn attracts further retribution. The process becomes self-reinforcing as parties inflict more and more harm on

**each other. The more harm parties inflict, the more issues there are to address before a climate of calm can be established and restored. The following are some consequences of conflict escalation that can complicate peace processes:**

- Groups fear losing face. As conflict escalates it becomes increasingly difficult for leaders to argue in favour of compromise without losing face or being seen to be weak. During the course of a conflict leaders will spend a great deal of time posturing to their supporters and opponents. It is difficult to step back from hard-line positions without appearing to be weak.
- Groups develop tunnel vision. As conflict escalates parties become locked into promoting and defending their positions and it becomes difficult for them to consider proposals from others. They often experience tunnel vision and find it difficult to view conflict creatively or recognise other parties' also have needs and interests.
- Groups become more cohesive. As conflicts escalate group bonds become stronger and groups apply pressure on their own members to conform. Group members advocating a moderate or a conciliatory approach to conflict can be discredited or branded as traitors.
- Groups seek revenge. The suffering caused in conflict often leaves people with a strong desire to see opponents punished. Groups seldom recognise that harm is often inflicted on both sides. Groups that have been involved in human rights violations may fear reprisals once the conflict has ended and may feel it is better to continue fighting. How these issues are addressed can become deal breakers as peace processes unfold.
- Groups don't know how to start looking for peace. The fact that conflicts can become so complex can leave groups unclear as to where to start.

### 1.2.8. Recognising when violence is likely<sup>8</sup>

**It is important for journalists to be able to recognise when a conflict has reached the point when, given the right triggers, it can become violent. Knowing the signs can leave journalists well placed to ask questions that may raise awareness about the dangers of a conflict being allowed to escalate and which help to encourage interventions before violent outbreaks occur. Being able to anticipate what might happen also places journalists in a better position to be able to manage conflict more effectively, rather than being caught by surprise when violence emerges. Keep a look out for the following trends:**

- A high level of discontent and frustration on the part of one or all of the groups.
- One or more of the parties is threatened by the demands of another or by the prospects of change.
- There is an absence of trusted forums where people can turn to resolve conflicts.
- Systems of social control, e.g. the police force, cannot be trusted.
- Parties cannot see alternatives to violence which might allow them to further or protect their interests.

7. Pruitt, D. 2007 Social conflict: some basic principles. Journal of Dispute Resolution, 151

8. See Anstey, 2008, p. 324-325

- Parties believe violence is ideologically acceptable and, given the circumstances, legitimate.
- There is a track-record of violence in the relations between the parties.
- There is a breakdown of social norms as people struggle to find new ways of dealing with difference or change.
- Individuals do not see themselves as responsible within their group for preventing violence.
- There is evidence that group members have lost the ability to empathise.
- Crowd situations create a feeling of anonymity and decreased responsibility.
- Communication channels in the conflict are poor, allowing for rumours of potential attacks and violence and prompting people to misread situations.

### **1.2.9. Approaches to conflict**

Not all conflicts need to result in direct hostilities between groups. Parties have a range of options that they can choose from. Some of these options can be highly advantageous to all the stakeholders, while others are likely to be detrimental to some parties in the short term and to all of them in the long. If journalists are aware of the challenges and benefits offered by these different approaches, they will be equipped to ask relevant questions that shed light on the parties' strategies and on the likely consequences of their choices.

The following are different approaches parties in conflict will commonly employ in order to achieve their goals. The first four of these approaches can be regarded as competitive processes involving winners and losers, while the final approach is marked by collaboration in which parties seek to find solutions that satisfy all stakeholder to an acceptable level.

- Domination or total victory

Parties attempt to use their power to defeat the other party and to force them to concede. Such attempts can involve the use of physical force, mobilising people to participate in consumer boycotts, mass demonstrations and legal challenges.

#### **Outcomes of this approach include the following:**

- Parties come to believe that whoever can mobilise the most force will get what they want. The more frequently this happens the more this belief will be reinforced.
- Parties will mobilise as much force as they can to secure an outright victory. Both groups will be forced to commit more and more resources, and both will sustain heavy losses.
- Parties do not get to address the real causes behind the conflict.
- Parties deny themselves the opportunity to develop relationships with members of the other group which can help to mitigate future conflicts.
- Defeated parties remain unsatisfied and it is likely the conflict will resume at a later stage, possibly with more devastating consequences.
- Avoidance or accommodation

Parties fearing that the costs of engaging in conflict may be too high often either try to ignore the problem or try to accommodate their opponents. One example could involve a dominant group refusing to acknowledge the needs and interests of a minority group out of fear that this might disrupt the status quo. Another example could involve a weaker party making substantial concessions because it fears the power of the stronger contender.

**Outcomes include:**

- Avoidance generally only postpones the inevitable. Parties will eventually have to deal with the issues causing the conflict.
- Parties are deprived of the opportunity to grow because they do not get to tackle the problem jointly.
- Parties do not get to learn about the other parties' needs and interests.
- Parties don't get to clarify misperceptions or question their own stereotypes.
- Groups whose needs are not addressed can become increasingly frustrated which can make conflicts more difficult to resolve at a later stage.
- Small concessions made by a group that hopes to avoid the real issues are unlikely to satisfy the other party and more and more demands may be made.
- **Quick fixes**

Parties attempt to find the quickest and simplest solution to the problem, without trying to address the real issues behind the conflict. Rushing to make compromises may satisfy everyone initially, but unless real care is taken to ensure that agreements made address the substantial needs of all stakeholders, problems are likely to emerge down the line.

**Outcomes include:**

- The illusion is created that the problem has been addressed.
- Failure to address the substantive issues means the solution is likely to be temporary.
- If agreements fail, parties may lose confidence in the value of working together.
- The person responsible for the 'solution' may receive undue recognition despite the fact that it is likely only to be temporary.
- Bargaining

Parties enter a process of give and take, with each trying to make as few concessions as possible while trying to get as much from the opposition as they can.

**Outcomes include:**

- Parties become focused on the issues on the table instead of trying to find solutions which will address the underlying causes of the conflict. Rather than spending time trying to find the best solution for everyone, parties dedicate their time to calculating how to make the smallest concessions possible and to extract the highest concessions from their opponents.
- Power becomes defined by each parties' ability to extract greater concessions from others.
- Parties see conflict as having a definite winner and loser (zero-sum game).
- Losers are likely to feel frustrated and this enhances the likelihood of further conflict.
- Parties are forced to give up on things that may be important to them.
- Relationships are likely to deteriorate or stagnate.
- The process is time-consuming because parties become locked into positions, and for various reasons such as the investment of extensive time and resources, are unwilling to budge.

**Each of the four approaches described above come with a range of negative consequences that may impact on the parties, both in the long and the short-term. These impacts can be summarised as follows:**

- They tend to result in zero-sum gains. What is gained by one side is conceded by the other.
- Parties work against each other rather than developing working relationships that might help them address future conflicts. They are likely to build up deeper resentments and long-lasting antagonisms resulting in future conflicts flaring more easily.
- Solutions may often be short-term ones.
- If the conflict is needs-based, then the failure to satisfy needs will result in the conflict re-emerging in a different form and very often with additional vigour.
- Deep resentment and frustration can result in a lowering of inhibitions that in normal circumstances might prevent violence.
- Collaborative approaches

Collaborative approaches can circumvent these negative outcomes because parties will recognise that achieving their own goals at the other's expense will not lead to the conflict being resolved. Instead of working against each other, parties will seek to

Collaborative approaches to conflict begin with parties recognising that achieving their own goals at the other's expense will not lead to the conflict being resolved.

tackle the problems together and find solutions that satisfy everyone's needs and interests to an acceptable degree. It's possible that parties will not automatically turn to collaborative approaches. They may agree to participate in such processes only once they have tried to gain the upper hand in competitive confrontations and have reached a stalemate. Even when parties are collaborating they will still seek to get the best deal that they can for themselves, but they must acknowledge that unless the final solution also benefits others the outcome will not be in their interests.

**Collaborative approaches to conflict will generally achieve results that are characterised by:**

- Positive-sum gains where all parties feel that they have gained from the final outcome.
- Parties working together to jointly agree on solutions that will satisfy everyone's concerns.
- The generation of creative solutions that often benefit all parties to a greater degree than a compromise solution would have done.
- Enhanced levels of communication between the parties. These communication channels can pave the way for managing conflicts peacefully in the future.
- Increased levels of trust and improved relationships. Parties should develop a stronger understanding of each other's values, fears and needs which should also promote more peaceful approaches to future conflicts.

It's natural to assume that a collaborative approach to conflict offers the best conditions for the development of an agreement that will satisfy all groups concerned and allow parties to establish processes and relationships that will enable them to manage future conflicts peacefully. However, it's seldom that simple. Reaching the point where parties can approach conflicts collaboratively can take time and the intervention of third parties.

### 1.2.10. Third party roles in conflict management and resolution

It's important for journalists to understand the roles that third-parties play in conflict so they are able to report on these processes effectively and recognise when different third party interventions are appropriate. Conflict theorists tend to distinguish between three different kinds of third party intervention, namely: peace-keeping, peace-making and peacebuilding. Each of these roles can be critical in different situations although they will involve very different processes.

- **Peace-keeping** can be necessary when a conflict has escalated to the point where there is potential for violence or when fighting has already broken out and/or when the relationships between parties have deteriorated to the point where groups will not trust each other to uphold peace agreements. Peace-keeping generally involves a form of armed intervention by an external force but might also include the presence of unarmed observers. The objectives in peace-keeping are to prevent parties from inflicting further harm on each other and to create a space that allows for negotiations and dialogue to take place. Peace-keepers are frequently drawn from the military, but in more localised conflicts the police force can also play a peace-keeping role. It's essential for peace-keepers to treat both sides fairly and to establish credibility with contending parties and local communities as soon as possible. Peace-keepers will not always be welcome by all parties. This is especially so where one party is militarily dominant and peace-keepers prevent them from maximising the gains they might achieve through the use of force.
- **Peace-making** involves the intervention of a third party who assists parties to find solutions to conflict. Often this third party comes from outside the community affected by conflict. The peace-maker's role normally involves helping to create bridges between parties, allowing them to seek creative solutions and to explore problem-solving processes. The intervention of peacemakers is often aimed at helping parties take the first steps towards a longer lasting process in which they cooperate in solving conflict. However, the peacemaker's role is primarily to help parties address issues of immediate concern.
- **Peace-building** is the long-term approach of looking at ways of helping parties to secure peace in the future. Peace-building is aimed at helping parties find solutions to the social, economic and psychological problems that are likely to result in conflict breaking out in the future. Peace-building is particularly concerned with improving the quality of life for people at grass-roots level and is intended to have long-term reconstructive and preventative goals. Central to the process is a focus on enabling social restructuring to take place to ensure that marginalized and excluded groups can participate actively in the political and economic life of a society. The peace-building process can include truth and reconciliations commissions (TRCs) designed to address the emotional trauma resulting from a conflict and processes, such as constitutional revisions that are designed to change the political and economic structuring of a society.

The objective in peace-keeping is to prevent parties from harming each other while creating space for dialogue to take place.

### 1.2.11 . Mediation

Mediation is a common form of third party intervention in conflicts and it is important for journalists to understand the roles that mediators play and how they go about the process of helping parties to resolve conflict. There is no single kind of mediator or mediation process. Some mediators restrict their roles to helping participants find their own solutions, while others can be more forceful in encouraging parties to accept particular outcomes. Most mediation happens in-between these two extremes. This is the form of mediation discussed below.

Mediation specialist Chris Moore <sup>9</sup> provides the following useful definition of mediation:

Mediation is the intervention into a dispute or a negotiation by an acceptable, impartial and neutral third party, who has no authoritative decision-making power, to assist parties in voluntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement of the issues in dispute.<sup>14</sup>

**In breaking down this definition into its main parts, several issues stand out:**

- Firstly, mediation needs to be carried out by an acceptable, impartial and neutral third party. Theorists have argued that it is possible for a mediator to be drawn from one of the groups involved in a conflict as long as everyone involved is willing to accept him or her as the mediator. The key word is acceptable. Mediators cannot promote any party's interest over others and must be seen to be acting impartially.
- Secondly, the mediator has no authoritative decision-making power. The mediator is not in a position to force parties to accept a solution or to make decisions about what should or should not be included in any agreement. The mediator may have some control over the procedural issues involved in the mediation. Mediators cannot force parties to agree, but they can help parties find ways of ensuring agreements are upheld.
- Thirdly, the mediator's role is to assist parties in voluntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement. It is not the mediator's role to give parties answers; instead he or she should help them find their own solutions. In many instances mediators are likely to restrict their contributions to asking questions. The understanding is that parties will be more likely to accept and defend agreements that they have constructed themselves.
- Lastly, it is important for participation to be voluntary. There is little to be gained from forcing parties to participate unwillingly in a mediation process.

The main aim of any mediation process is to help parties find solutions to their conflicts. These solutions should satisfy the needs and interests of all parties involved, at least to an acceptable level. Ideally the outcomes should be self-enforcing and maintaining them should ideally not require the intervention of an external party.

The aim of mediation is to help parties find solutions to their conflict that satisfy all parties involved.

**In achieving this objective, mediators will strive to do the following.**

- **Try to** get the parties to a point where they no longer need to rely on the assistance of a third party to continue negotiating in a constructive and peaceful manner.

9. Moore, C. 1986. The mediation process: Practical strategies for resolving conflict. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

- **Help** the parties **reduce tensions** in their relationships. In many cases this involves allowing parties to speak frankly about their feelings and emotions in a safe environment without repercussions. This process, known as 'venting', allows parties to put their feelings on the table and to learn how other parties feel about them.
- **Help** parties **define issues** more clearly. The mediator can help parties to see which issues are most important, both to them and to their opponents. In doing this the mediator will help parties prioritise which issues need to be dealt with and in what order.
- Broaden the **search for solutions**. By helping and encouraging parties to consider conflict from a different perspective, mediators can help parties consider different ways of meeting each other's needs.
- Help to **improve communication** between parties. In many negotiations parties get locked into situation of accusation and counter-accusation. A great deal of noise gets made, but little is heard. Parties can be so busy pursuing their own concerns that they do not listen to each other. Mediators help facilitate real discussions between parties.
- Help parties to **clarify misperceptions**. Because parties in conflict tend to think and expect the worst of each other, misperceptions are common. Any action taken by one party may be perceived as a threat by the other. Mediators will help parties understand each other's actions and intentions.
- **Empower** weaker parties. Most conflicts are asymmetrical involving people with different levels of power. Mediators need to recognise these differences and ensure people negotiate on an equal footing.
- Promote parties' abilities to make the best decisions they can by **providing** them with information that may not have been previously available to them.
- **Protect** parties from each other and limit personal attacks.

Having looked at the roles that mediators play, we will briefly examine the characteristics they must display if they are to be effective. If mediators want to make a positive contribution in helping parties to resolve a conflict, they need to:

- have credibility. Mediators will fail if they are unable to secure the trust of all parties involved and to ensure parties feel they are being treated fairly.
- be sensitive to the needs of parties. Mediation involves more than simply listening to parties expressing their needs and interests; mediators also need to be able to pick up on problems that parties are not talking about and to get these issues onto the negotiation table.
- understand that different situations require different responses.
- display concern for human suffering. Mediators must be able to empathise with people and to understand how emotionally draining conflict can be.
- have an in-depth understanding of the issues involved in conflict.
- be able to understand the way parties in conflict feel about each other.

### **1.2.12. Beyond mediation**

While mediation between the leaders of groups in conflict can be an effective way to move conflict towards a peaceful solution, such processes will seldom, if ever, be enough in themselves.

Efforts to resolve conflicts need to happen at a wide range of different levels and between people at all levels of society. Some reasons for this are suggested below:

- Leaders do not operate on their own. They can't openly enter into negotiations or participate in mediation processes without, at the very least, the tacit agreement of their followers. Similarly, they cannot simply emerge from negotiations and expect followers and supporters to support agreements that do not address their needs and interests.
- Parties may be able to reach agreement on the issues that initially caused the conflict but may be unable to deal with the relationship damage that occurred as the conflict escalated. Specific processes designed to bring about reconciliation between groups may be needed.
- Sometimes leaders can have very different interests to followers. Elite groups can often continue to exist in their own enclaves without having to engage with members of other groups. This is seldom the case for people further down the economic ladder who often need to be able to work together, to trade and attend schools without fear that the conflict will flare up again.

For Jean-Paul Lederach<sup>10</sup>, a leading scholar in the field of peace and conflict studies, societies experiencing deep-rooted social conflict need to be transformed into, what he calls, "mediative spaces" where people across the social and political spectrum can contribute towards finding solutions. He suggests that:

Building sustainable [peace] processes through which individuals, groups and societies change from relationships defined by cycles of violent conflict toward modalities of nonviolent interaction requires the careful nurturing of social mediative capacity. Lederach proposes that we should look at social conflict as being made up of a web of relationships in which every set of social relationships can be defined by the divisions brought about by the conflict. People who might once have been neighbours, have done business, worshipped or played sport together become separated by the conflict and start seeing each other as enemies. These people are unlikely to be involved in formal mediation processes and yet they must deal with the emotional and physical harm caused by the conflict. In cases of violent conflict, they may have lost family members, property and land. For a society to move beyond conflict, the concerns of these people will also need to be addressed.

Top-down approaches to resolving conflicts will only address some of these problems; spaces also need to be created for people at grassroots levels to engage with each other and to find ways of dealing with these problems. In many respects people need to engage in the same processes as those employed during the elite negotiations, but these need to happen on a much broader level.

Top-down approaches to resolving conflicts will only address some problems; people at grassroots levels need to engage with each other to find ways of dealing with their grievances.

### **1.3. How journalists can contribute to peace-keeping, peacebuilding and peace-making**

*An outsider will very often see things the parties don't see themselves as they're too close ... You may wonder whether the people will be willing to talk with you, and my experience is they are, because they love to talk about their conflict, and they love to try to explain what's going on. Each time you listen to a new conflict party, the conflict changes colours and you see it from a new angle, and a new angle, and once again a new angle. And since they often don't talk with each other, the mediator gets a much better overview than they have themselves.<sup>11</sup> – Johan Galtung*

10. Lederach, J.P. 2002. Building mediative capacity in deep-rooted conflict. In The Fletcher Forum for World Affairs, 26 (1).

11. Barach, Ben. 2012. Interview with Johan Galtung. Peace and Collaborative Development Network. Available at <http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/an-interview-with-johan-galtung> [Accessed 12 March 2012].

These observations, by Professor Johan Galtung, widely regarded as the father of Peace Studies, show the advantages of having external mediators intervene in conflict situations. This handbook argues that journalists share many of these advantages. Journalists should generally be able to establish a degree of professional distance from the conflict, which enables them to get a perspective that is not available to the parties. Journalists are generally, but not always, able to talk to people on all sides of a conflict and people are frequently willing to spend time explaining their positions to reporters. Having access to all sides means journalists get to understand the conflict from a range of different angles and this makes it possible for them to help people to see different parties' perspectives.

Part Two will explore a range of roles journalists can play in reporting on conflict. Many of these roles are similar to the roles played by mediators, but it is clear journalists and mediators have different functions. There is no suggestion that journalists should deliberately seek to mediate between parties. Instead it is suggested that good journalism can play a mediatory role in society and can contribute to the creation of a 'mediative space' that makes it possible for communities to explore conflict in a more collaborative manner.

All of these roles that will be discussed below are consistent with a traditional understanding of good journalism. These roles do not ask journalists to take sides with parties, but they do ask journalists to consider how their work might contribute towards the peaceful resolution of conflict. They do not ask journalists to tell parties how to behave, but they do suggest journalists should hold parties accountable for their behaviour. They do not promote particular solutions to conflicts, but they do ask parties to consider the potential impact of their choices. They do not ask journalists to abandon ideals of fairness and accuracy, but they do require that journalists go beyond the conventions of many established reporting routines. They ask that journalists do not accept what they are told at face value, but continuously dig deeper to uncover the real causes of conflict and the motives behind parties' actions. They also require that journalists go beyond the usual sources to seek out others who, while often ignored, also have important stories to tell.

The remainder of this section is dedicated to a discussion of how journalists can make a difference to helping parties manage and resolve conflict effectively. In considering these roles, it is critical to note that they cannot all be accomplished at the same time in every story, but it is hoped that the accumulated effects of these different roles can make a difference over time.

### **1.3.1. Journalists can provide a channel for communication between parties**

Journalists are constantly providing opportunities for parties in conflict to communicate, not only with each other, but also with people who are not directly involved in the conflict. By speaking to people representing different parties in a conflict, journalists can provide an opportunity for groups to communicate with each other through our stories. Parties will frequently want to use the media to press their points of view and to insult opponents in ways that are not constructive. It is not the media's job to serve as a platform for parties to fire off volleys of insults and accusations at each other. Instead the journalist's role is to explain what is happening in the world around us and this means asking the kinds of questions that help parties to explain their needs, values and interests; to talk about their emotions and their fears. Rather than simply scripting a statement issued by a party into a news story, journalists can encourage parties to use the media as a channel for real communication that allows people to learn

By speaking to people representing different parties in a conflict, journalists can provide an opportunity for groups to communicate with each other through our stories.

about each other, to explore differences and to look for solutions. This means getting beyond the rhetoric and beyond accusations and counter-accusations.

It is also important for media to be inclusive. There is also a tendency for journalists to concentrate on the views of elites, but if journalists are going to allow for real communication between groups then it's equally important to provide opportunities for a diverse range of people to speak. The people affected by the actions of elites must also be heard.

### **1.3.2. Journalists can provide information parties need to make wise decisions**

Journalists provide people with the information that they need to make informed decisions. Some conflicts occur because parties are acting on incomplete information about the situation, while in other instances they may not have enough information about each other to adequately understand why their opponents feel so strongly about an issue. In some instances, elites may distort the information they share with followers in order to provoke antagonism towards members of another group. In all of these instances journalists have a contribution to make by recognising when information is lacking or being distorted and clarifying matters through their reports.

By speaking to people representing different parties in a conflict, journalists can provide an opportunity for groups to communicate with each other through our stories.

Journalists can also play a role in preventing conflict, by ensuring that communities receive timely information about developments that have the potential to cause conflict. This role is evident in the following simple example relating to elections and voter registration. Voters who are turned away from the polls because they have not registered to vote are likely to be angered and feel that their rights have been betrayed. This can lead to violence. If, in the run up to an election, journalists

are able to determine that large numbers of people have not understood the voter registration requirements, they can play a role in educating people about what they need to do. They can also question whether authorities are providing an adequate level of voter education.

The process of providing information means identifying areas where people lack information and spending time with experts who can help people understand why decisions are being taken and whether these are wise decisions. It is also useful to speak to people at a grassroots level to find out what they know and do not know about a conflict so that journalists can provide people with up-to-date and accurate information.

### **1.3.3. Journalists can educate parties about ways of managing conflict**

It's common for parties in conflict to behave in antagonistic ways because they have not considered how other approaches to dealing with conflict may result in better outcomes. Journalists can play an important role in this regard by helping to educate people about different ways of dealing with conflict. This education can take a number of forms. Journalists can draw people's attention to other conflicts that have been solved amicably and help people to consider whether they can benefit from using similar approaches. They can invite conflict management specialists to share ideas about how conflicts can be resolved without violence. They can also draw attention to the consequences that parties may suffer if they are not able to find peaceful solutions to their conflicts. Journalists also have a contribution to make in educating people about matters of

Journalists can help educate people about the consequences of failing to resolve conflicts by drawing attention to the suffering that might follow if peaceful solutions are not found.

national and international law that might impact on the conflict. While journalists should never be telling people what they should do, they can encourage people to consider a wider range of options. When journalists equip audiences with knowledge about conflict management processes they can help empower groups with information that can use to call on their own leaders to adopt more peaceful approaches to resolving conflicts.

#### **1.3.4 .Making it possible for parties to trust each other**

A lack of trust is a vital impediment to parties being able to work collaboratively in identifying solutions during times of conflict. Journalists can contribute toward the creation of conditions that allow parties to build trust in the following ways.

By publicising the outcomes of peace agreements journalists make it possible for people to insist that leaders keep their promises.

- They can ensure commitments made during negotiations are widely publicized. This can enable communities and stakeholders to hold leaders accountable for their promises.
- They can ensure audiences are fully informed about and understand the implications of agreements reached during negotiations. This can involve speaking to people and learning about their understandings of peace agreements.
- They can publish stories about parties making progress in negotiations which can help people see conflicts can be peacefully resolved. By helping parties develop confidence in the process and in each other, journalists can reduce tensions and the likelihood of violence.
- They can ensure small gains are recognized. Whenever parties begin to make progress in the search for solutions, this is news and is worth covering. For people caught up in conflict, even the smallest sign of progress can offer hope and make it possible for them to begin considering an alternative, more positive, future.

#### **Case Study: Getting it wrong**

*Things were very tense in the build up to South Africa's first free elections as people who had previously been enemies came together to build a new country and a new democracy.*

*As a way of bringing people together the National Peace Committee, charged with trying to ensure the transition took place without excessive violence, organised a special peace rally in Port Elizabeth, the country's fourth largest city.*

*The rally was attended by tens of thousands of people and speakers from all of the main political movements and were given a chance to talk. All but one of the speakers stressed the need for tolerance and of the importance of South Africans embracing each other in the interests of building a shared future. One speaker from small a radical movement spoke out against unity and in favour of the need for retribution.*

*The following day one of the local newspapers carried a single report about the rally. This report ignored all of the parties that had spoken in favour of peace and only covered the speech by the leader of this radical movement.*

*Evidently, the journalist who covered the story felt that this was the most dramatic moment at the rally and would consequently be of most interest to the readers.*

*The speech may well have been the most dramatic event of the day, but it was by no means the only one. By focusing on this one event the journalist provided a distorted picture of the day. Readers were denied the chance to see that there were multiple important political players who had made a public*

*commitment to building peace. As a consequence, important positions taken by these parties was not acknowledged, while a small radical organisation was given undue prominence.*

*The newspaper also gave up some of its credibility. Thousands of people attended the rally and many of them would have seen the story. For these people it would have seemed the newspaper placed drama and sales above providing a true reflection of the day.*

*A conflict sensitive approach to reporting would have recognised the importance telling the whole story. It would not have ignored the radical statements made by this smaller party, but it would have acknowledged that many other parties favoured a peaceful transition without retribution.*

### **1.3.5 . Counteracting misperceptions**

Journalists should be constantly talking to different sides about a conflict and learning about how they feel about each other. Through these interactions journalists can learn whether people have misperceptions about each other which are contributing to prolonging the conflict. They can then gather information that

Journalists can challenge stereotypes by reporting on stories that challenge people to re-evaluate how they see other groups.

clarifies these misperceptions and publish stories that illustrate the danger of misperceptions and which help people to get a better understanding of each other. This can be important because it is common for people in conflict to see all members of the other group in the same way. If some members of a group behave in a racist, sexist or intolerant manner, everyone in the group can be seen to share the same faults. These stereotypes can see radical views expressed by a minority of members of one group, being attributed to all members of this group. By reporting on stories that show people failing to conform to stereotypes, journalists can challenge people to reevaluate how they look at members of other groups.

### **1.3.6. Analysing conflict**

Through careful analysis of events journalists get beyond actions and help people understand the causes of conflicts.

Journalists can help parties to better understand conflict through careful analysis, considering the conflict from different angles and showing how it affects different people. There is a tendency among journalists to simply report on what is happening, but this does not help our readers, listeners and viewers to really understand the underlying causes of a conflict and what needs to happen for it to be managed and resolved. Journalists need to go beyond reporting on events and to help people to understand the processes that are involved.

#### **Going beyond events can mean addressing a range of different questions:**

- Who are the different parties involved in the conflict? Consider those that are directly involved and other stakeholders with an interest in the conflict. Who stands to profit from the conflict continuing?
- What would appear to be the factors that have caused the conflict?
- How has the conflict developed thus far?
- How has it impacted on the parties involved and other stakeholders with some interests in the conflict?

- What factors may have contributed to the exacerbation, moderation or transformation of the conflict?
- What might it take to bring this conflict to an end?

The principle purpose of conducting an analysis of this nature is to help journalists to determine which sources they should be speaking to and what questions they should be asking of these sources. Journalists can also approach experts and commentators to provide their analysis or to comment on the views that they have developed.

### 1.3.7. Help identify underlying interests

In many conflicts parties tend to make their positions public, but are reluctant to clearly express the interests underlying these positions. Parties get locked in a tug-of-war with each side trying

By asking informed, probing questions journalists help to uncover the hidden interests of parties involved in conflict.

to move the other off positions without being aware of the underlying causes. If parties are able to learn about each other's interests, they will be better able to assess whether there are ways of accommodating or compromising

with one another. Journalists asking informed, probing questions can play a role in uncovering these interests. This can be done by speaking to leaders as well as by interviewing ordinary members of the different groups about what they think is important.

### 1.3.8. Allow parties to express their emotions

When parties are experiencing growing frustration, journalists can provide emotional outlets by allowing them to express their feelings through the media. This does not mean allowing parties to use the media to insult and attack others, instead it means allowing them to talk about their frustrations and their fears. In their highly influential book *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton<sup>12</sup> discuss the importance of separating the people from the problem during negotiations. Journalists can encourage parties to do the same. Allowing people to hurl insults at others through the media may make for exciting stories, but it does not help our audiences understand what is really taking place. When people are able to talk to journalists about their needs and concerns and see these raised in the media they are able to vent some of their frustrations.

Allowing people to insult each other through the media can make for good headlines, but it fails to promote understanding.

### 1.3.9. Empowering parties

Journalists can play a very important role in allowing weaker groups to negotiate with powerful groups on a more equal footing by giving a voice to marginalised groups. If our coverage is balanced

By giving a voice to marginalised groups, journalists can help to empower people and to enable to negotiate from more equal position.

and we treat weaker groups in the same way as powerful groups, we help to place both groups on the same level and this can be empowering for weaker parties.

It is also common in conflicts for dominant parties to dismiss their opponents by refusing to acknowledge them at all; often this involves dismissing them as 'thugs' or 'criminal elements'. In doing so they demonstrate that they are unwilling to try and understand why a group is engaging in conflict behaviour and are ignoring underlying issues that may continue to provoke conflict in the future. This limits the chances of any peaceful dialogue happening between the parties. Journalists

12. Fisher, R., Ury, W. & Patton, B. 1999. *Getting to Yes*. London: Random House

should not allow dominant groups to dictate the way in which other groups are represented and should strive to treat everyone fairly.

### **Case Study: Bringing attention to a community's concerns**

*The media's potential to both protect and empower weaker parties in times of conflict has been clearly demonstrated in an ongoing confrontation between rural villagers living on South Africa's east coast and powerful mining interests. wanting to extract titanium from local dune fields .*

*The conflict has been ongoing since the turn of the century when an international mining company indicated that they wanted to extract titanium and other minerals from dunes fields along the coast. Since then there has been conflict between powerful local stakeholders (including a tribal chief) who favoured extraction and community members who oppose it.*

*Some of those favouring the mining stood to make substantial gains, while those opposed predict a disaster. Those opposed believe mining will only create work for a few people for a few years and will destroy the areas' agricultural economy. It will also, they say, ruin efforts to transform the area into an eco-tourism destination and obliterate the people's traditional way of life. The Wild Coast, as the area is called, is among the most picturesque and unspoiled parts of South Africa.*

*Ever since the foreign company started showing an interest in the area and elite stakeholders saw an opportunity for financial gain, the community has been rocked by violence. Anti-mining advocates have been targeted in attacks by men believed to sponsored by the pro-mining lobby and several people have been killed.*

*For the people of this beautiful but remote part of the country the ongoing in-depth coverage of this story by one of South Africa's top investigative newspapers has been critical. The newspaper has ensured that people who may have been marginalised and ignored have had their voices heard at the highest level. They have been able to show that they value their way of life over the possible financial benefits that might come from mining.*

*The ongoing coverage may also have played a role in protecting the community. People in out of the way places are frequently bullied by powerful interests, but everyone involved in this conflict knows that acts of violence will be thoroughly investigated and exposed by the media.*

*It's uncertain how the conflict will end and whether the parties will find an amicable solution, but it is evident that in this case journalists have made an important difference.*

### **1.3.10. Broadening the search for solutions**

While it is not the journalist's job to tell parties how they should be dealing with their conflicts, journalists can play a role in helping parties to identify possible solutions they may not have considered. As impartial observers who are in contact with all the major stakeholders, journalists can sometime see solutions others may not be aware of. It's never the journalists job to advocate a particular set of solutions, but there is nothing preventing a journalist from putting a possible solution to the parties and asking for their views on this.

Journalists don't tell people what to do, but they make it possible for people to think more expansively about possible solutions.

### 1.3.11. Monitoring human rights abuses

The mediating role that journalists can play must be extended to include a monitoring role in which

they track how conflicts are emerging and report on human rights abuses of any kind. These can

abuses can range from low level instances of intimidation to reports on the most horrific atrocities. In all cases the journalist's work entails two core responsibilities: firstly, providing detailed coverage so that people can decide how to prevent further attacks and to assist those in need, and, secondly, following up

By raising awareness about events and by tracking how authorities are responding, journalists can help ensure human rights abuses are not committed with impunity.

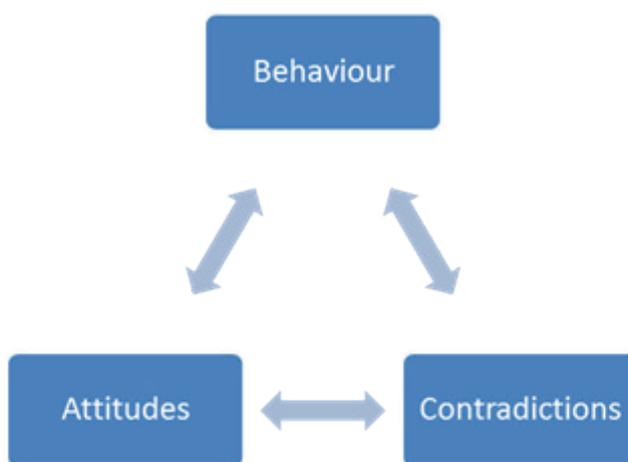
on how those charged with the responsibility for preventing abuses and attacks are responding to these situations. By raising awareness about events and by tracking how authorities are responding, journalists can help ensure human rights abuses are not committed with impunity. Journalist's roles, however, do not extend to judging the actions of parties involved, but they do include providing our audiences with fair and accurate information so they can reach their own conclusions.

### 1.4. Conceptual tools for journalists covering conflict

The following four strategies draw on the theory covered in Part One to help journalists consider how they can provide audiences with a more comprehensive understanding of a conflict. These strategies or tools require us to go beyond a simple reporting of what is immediately evident to asking some more probing questions.

#### 1.4.1. Moving beyond behaviours

One of the most common complaints made about the news media by people involved in peace- building work is that journalists tend to focus on the behaviour of groups involved in conflict without explaining the reasons behind people's actions. By focusing primarily on the parties' actions reports can leave audiences uncertain as to what caused groups to respond in particular ways. Such reports can make it appear that groups are involved in mindless violence or protest action. It is only when we begin to contextualize what is happening that people can begin to understand the complexities involved. Johan Galtung proposes a model for understanding conflict that is useful to journalists.



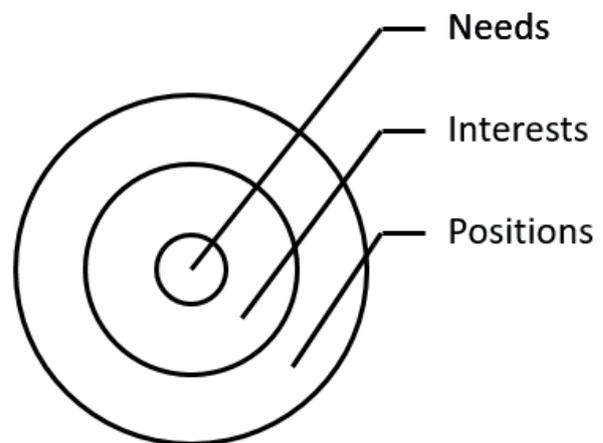
Galtung's conflict triangle suggests that to really understand a conflict we need to look at the contradictions (context) that exist within the societal context that are causing the conflict. We also need to understand the groups' attitudes towards each other and finally how these things play out in terms of behaviour. All of these aspects impact on each other – aggressive behaviour can cause a hardening of attitudes and this can impact on the group's willingness to compromise or accommodate others.

The model demonstrates how reports can only be comprehensive if they provide a context against which audiences can understand behaviour(s). We need to find out about parties' attitudes towards each other and the histories parties might have that have shaped the way they view each other. We

also need to explore what it is about the social, political and environmental context that has led to the conflict. It may be that we will never be fully able to explain what has started a conflict, but it's important to speak to the different parties involved and to give them an opportunity to explain what is happening from their side.

#### **1.4.2. The onion model: Getting beyond rhetoric<sup>13</sup>**

When groups approach conflicts from a competitive standpoint they tend to express a range of demands about what they want and how they feel their opponents should behave. However, these demands are generally only positions which conceal underlying interests which are representative of the group's real needs. Often there might be a significant gap between what the parties say they want – their positions – and what they are really after – their interests. These interests are comprised of the different ways in which groups feel their underlying needs can be addressed.



It's common for groups in conflict to become completely locked into their positions and to refuse to move beyond these, even when their actual needs and interests could be addressed in other ways. The end result is that groups see each other as being stubborn and uncompromising and never really come to learn about the things that are important to their opponents. This can eliminate the possibility of groups finding creative solutions to conflicts or alternatively significantly delaying the transformation of the conflict. This will not be easy, because it means doing more than simply accepting people's demands at face value. It means asking the probing questions that can get beyond the rhetoric. It also means going beyond a single source. By speaking to a range of people at different levels within a group you may get a clearer picture of what the conflict is really about.

#### **The following are questions a journalist might ask in trying to get beneath the surface:**

- You are making a specific demand, but why is this important to you?
- Could there be other ways of addressing your concerns?

It's unlikely that parties will respond openly to such questions the first time they are posed, but as you continue to probe you might be able to gain a deeper insight into the real needs and interests which you can follow-up on. It also important to pose these questions to a range of different people at different levels within an organization. Doing so can enable journalists to determine whether demands really represent the views of those across the group or whether they simply reflect the view of the leaders.

13. The conflict onion is used by many to explain the layers of positions, interest and needs. An example of this usage can be found in Fisher, S., Abdi, D.I., Ludin, J., Smith, R., Williams, S. & Williams, S. 2000. Working with conflict: skills and strategies for action. Responding to conflict. London: Zed Books

### 1.4.3. A question of time and place

The fact that conflicts often only make the headlines when they erupt can mean that news can leave people confused. Reports about a sudden outbreak of violence can portray the groups involved

Reports about sudden outbreaks of violence can conceal the fact that tensions have simmered for years.

as being irrational and acting without cause, whereas the real causes for the conflict may date back years or even decades. Classic examples of this can be seen in clashes between ethnic

groups over land, when the origins of the conflict may have stemmed from colonial interventions centuries before. Journalists need to describe what is happening at a particular moment in time – the visible behaviour – but they must also ask what might have happened in the past that shaped the present. They need to show when a conflict is part of an ongoing process rather than a single event.

### 1.4.4. Questions journalists can ask

If journalists spend time thinking about the things people need in order to resolve conflicts this can help to shape the questions they ask of the parties. The following are some questions journalists can ask that will help to address the issues raised above.<sup>14</sup>

If journalists spend time thinking about the things people need in order to resolve conflicts this can help them to shape the questions they need to ask.

- **What is the conflict about?** Who are the parties involved and what are their real goals? Also consider what other parties, beyond the conflict arena where the violence is taking place, are involved?
- **What are the deeper roots of the conflict?** Are there structural imbalances that need to be addressed? What is the history behind the conflict?
- **What kinds of ideas exist about the outcomes** other than the one party imposing itself on the other?
- **Are there any particularly creative or new ideas about how a conflict might be resolved?** Can such ideas be sufficiently powerful to prevent violence?
- If violence does occur, **what impact will the invisible effects**, such as hatred and the wish for revenge and for more glory, **have on the possibilities for peace?**
- **Who is working to prevent violence?** What are their visions of the conflict outcomes?
- **What methods are they using and how can they be supported?**

### 1.5. Reporting on conflicts as they develop

As conflicts develop and unfold there are a range of useful questions journalists can pose which will help audiences, including the groups involved in conflicts, to better understand what is taking place. These sets of questions are discussed below.

#### 1.5.1. Approaches to conflict

Part One we explored the different ways in which parties can approach conflict and identified five distinct strategies, namely:

- Avoidance

14. From Galtung, Johan. 1998. High Road, Low Road: Charting the Course for Peace Journalism. In Track Two, 7(4). Available at [http://www.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7\\_4/p07\\_highroad\\_lowroad.html](http://www.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7_4/p07_highroad_lowroad.html). Accessed: 14/05/2010.

- Total victory
- Bargaining
- Quick fixes
- Collaboration

Each of the first four of these strategies was shown to have distinct disadvantages which could impact on the conflict being sustainably addressed. Armed with these understandings of how groups approach conflict, journalists can

If journalists can identify the way in which parties are approaching a conflict, they can ask useful questions that shed light on the likely outcomes of this approach.

be well-placed to ask some very useful questions. For instance, if it is evident a group is seeking to avoid a conflict by simply backing down, journalists could ask questions along these lines:

- It seems to me that you are trying to avoid a conflict, even if this means absorbing unwelcome costs ... you may be willing to do this now, but are you going to feel the outcome is fair and just in the future? If not, what could this mean for the conflict resuming at a later point?
- How can you be sure that having made these concessions now, you will not be asked to make more concessions in the future?
- How will the way you are approaching this issue impact on your potential to resolve future conflicts with this party? How has it contributed to the development of relationships of trust? Has it led to the opening up of better channels of communication?
- What have you learned about the other group that might make it easier for you to resolve future conflicts? What do you think they have learned about you?
- Alternatively, if a party is using its power to dominate a conflict and to force another party to make humiliating concessions journalists will want to tease out how parties feel about the impact of their actions. The following are some questions we could ask:
- From the outside it looks like you are not willing to make any compromises to accommodate the needs of the other party. Is this the case?
- How do you expect that this will impact on your future relationship with this party?
- It seems certain you will be able to secure a victory in the short term, but how do you think this will play out in the future? Can you be sure the other party won't be back to challenge you again in the future?
- What would your reaction be if you were placed in the same position as the other party?

### ***1.5.2. Covering peace processes***

When groups engage in peace processes there are a range of things journalists can do to ensure that the audience stays informed, without interfering with the process. The starting point is to recognise that while parties may genuinely be trying to find ways of resolving conflicts, the processes they are employing may not always be well designed or appropriate. Processes may favour people in power and seem destined to undermine the interests of particular groups. Journalists need to be vigilant and to monitor processes carefully.

Journalists have a key role to play in keeping people informed about peace processes and keeping parties honest.

**When covering peace processes there are several things journalists can do that can help parties to reach lasting agreements:**

- Journalists should not simply accept that because people are engaged in dialogue that they are genuinely looking for solutions. There have been conflicts in which parties have entered into peace negotiations simply to gain time to regroup and to prepare for more fighting. While journalists focus on what is happening at the negotiation table, they must also keep a careful eye on other activities the parties are engaged in.
- As negotiations continue and parties make public the progress that has been made, journalists need to update audiences about the progress that has been made. They also need to hear from the people how they feel about the agreements that are being reached.
- Journalists should be aware that negotiations can be extremely sensitive and that there will be times when parties cannot afford to let the general public know what is happening until they have formally reached agreements.
- Identify people who have been left out and ask questions about how these people will be accommodated.
- Recognise that peace-making takes time. People often grow impatient as negotiations continue and journalists can help people understand that good agreements can't be rushed.
- Remain critical of the processes being used by peace-makers. Peace processes do not always fail because the parties are unwilling to pursue solutions; they also fail because of badly designed peace processes. If we do not have the knowledge and expertise to comment on these issues, then it can be useful to speak to experts who do.

**1.5.3. Questions to ask about peace proposals or agreements**

By asking wise questions journalists can help to point out potential flaws in peace processes.

The following questions have been suggested by Johan Galtung<sup>15</sup> for journalists reporting on peace proposals and agreements. They provide a valuable guide for journalists on the key issues that need to be considered when

reporting on peace agreements. Each of these questions relates specifically to the likelihood that a peace agreement will last.

- What was the method behind the plan? Were all parties involved in the dialogue?
- Is the plan acceptable to all parties? If not, what can be done about it?
- Is the plan, if realised, self-sustainable? If not, what can be done about it?
- Is the plan based on autonomous action by the conflicting parties, or does it depend on outsiders?
- To what extent is there a process in the plan? Does it spell out who shall do what, when, how and where?
- To what extent is the plan based on what only the elites can do?
- Does the plan foresee an ongoing conflict-resolution process or a single shot agreement? Why?

15. From Galtung, Johan. 1998. High Road, Low Road: Charting the Course for Peace Journalism. In Track Two, 7(4). Available at [http://www.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7\\_4/p07\\_highroad\\_lowroad.html](http://www.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7_4/p07_highroad_lowroad.html). Accessed: 14/05/2010.

- If there has been violence, to what extent does the plan contain elements of rehabilitation/reconstruction, reconciliation and justice?
- If the plan does not work, is it reversible? Even if the plan does work for this conflict, does it create new conflicts or problems? Is it a good deal for all involved?

#### **1.5.4. Go beyond the usual suspects**

It's common in conflict coverage to see the same representatives of the different parties being quoted time and time again. While it is naturally important to speak to leaders, it's also important to speak to a broader cross section of people who can provide a more comprehensive picture about how people in different groups feel. Not everyone may be as committed to a particular outcome as the leaders. There is value showing that others may be satisfied with different outcomes. Just because people belong to a group, it does not mean they have a single social identity. There are likely to be areas where people share common interests with members of other groups that go beyond the issues involved in a particular conflict. These commonalities can be fascinating to explore and can show that there might be prospects for enhanced understanding and communication that are not immediately evident.

#### **1.6. Some strategies for conflict sensitive reporting**

This section proposes a number of strategies journalists may want to consider in reporting on conflict.

##### **1.6.1. Profiling peace-makers**

Profiles of people involved in peace work can be a very useful way of raising awareness about peace processes and alternatives to violence when reporting on conflict. Sometimes these profiles might be about people with high status within a society, but some of the most interesting stories can be about normal people who, in the course of their daily lives, are making a difference. They may include people who build bridges between groups at a local level, organizers of peace committees that intervene when violence seems likely, and people running peace gardens or crèches for children from different groups. Such stories can play an important role in challenging stereotypes and can challenge enemy images that people have of each other.

##### **Case Study – Football for peace**

*Towards the end of the 2007 and at the start of 2008 the West African nation of Kenya was rocked by a wave of fighting that followed a general election in which supporters of the two leading candidates accused the others of electoral manipulation.*

*When it was announced that the incumbent president had been re-elected, opposition supporters took to the streets in protest. Both leading candidates had strong support from different ethnic groups and these groups turned on each other. Fierce fighting broke out in different parts of the country and battles continued throughout January as international leaders sought to mediate between the leaders.*

*By the end of the month, when the fighting eased off, more than 1300 people had been killed and more than 600 000 had been displaced.*

*Many journalists were accused of having played a part in fuelling the conflict, but in the aftermath of the fighting others played a role in helping to rebuild communities. In one instance a journalist heard of an NGO that which organising football tournaments to promote reconciliation. These tournaments were different to normal events with the rules stating that competing teams had to made up of equal numbers of people from the different ethnic groups.*

*The events were very successful and provided an important space for youth who, just months before may have been engaged in life and death struggles with each other, were now cooperating on the football pitch.*

*It was just a small human interest story, but the journalist recognised its potential to show readers from the rival ethnic groups that it is possible for people to find each other again. The story helped to showcase the constructive role the NGO was playing and potentially provided a model that people in other parts of the country could adapt to their contexts. The report meant that the positive impact of NGO's actions helped many more people than those directly involved.*

*This was the kind of story that could easily have been ignored. There were no important figures or celebrities involved, just a group of young people trying to make a difference. It took a journalist with a conflict sensitive mind-set to see the potential and share it with her audience.*

### **1.6.2 . Joint interviews**

Journalists can get very interesting stories from sitting down with people from different groups and interviewing them together.

Journalists can get very interesting stories from sitting down with people from opposing groups and interviewing them together. Leaders may be unwilling to participate in these discussions because they don't want to be seen

speaking to the opposition, but it can be possible to get ordinary members of groups involved. Some interesting combinations of people might include:

- People who were friends before a conflict broke out and who have managed to sustain their friendship despite being on different sides.
- Young people who attend or have attended the same school.
- Mothers who had children at the same time, but who are now separated by the conflict.
- People who grew up together.
- Couples from different backgrounds who are managing the challenge of keeping their families together.

The list is endless, but these joint interviews can result in engaging stories that audiences will find both moving and entertaining and which can help to challenge stereotypes and help people from different groups to recognise their common humanity.

### **1.6.3. Exchanging questions**

In this example the journalist asks members of conflicting groups to think of questions they would like to ask of members of the other group. These might relate to why groups are behaving in particular ways, or why groups feel that a

By asking questions on behalf of people from different groups journalists can promote understanding.

particular issue is important to them. Having gathered the questions from the one group, journalists then ask members of the other group to respond. Journalists can then ask the party that has just responded to the questions if they have questions for the other side. The value of this approach is that it gives parties in conflict the opportunity to engage with their opposite numbers in ways that would normally be impossible to them. The results of these exchanges of questions can be exceptionally informative and contribute towards enhancing the understanding between groups. They can also help people located on the periphery of the conflict to get a much better sense of what the issues are and what the parties are concerned about. This approach will also result in compelling stories that

people will want to engage with. Journalists may want to consider using social media tools as a way of promoting the exchange.

#### **1.6.4. Asking the same questions of all parties**

By asking each party involved in a conflict the same set of questions journalists can help people to identify where they have concerns in common and where they differ. While the questions asked will need to be contextualised, the following are some questions a journalist could ask each of the parties.

- What do you believe is the primary cause of this conflict?
- What, for you/your party/organisation, are the priority issues that you want resolved?
- What would be the most constructive way of approaching this conflict?
- How do you think you could satisfy your demands, while at the same time addressing the concerns of the other party?

Presenting a news feature for print or online which positions the parties' responses to these questions alongside each other could be a way of generating fascinating content that could enhance people's understanding of the issues, the parties' positions and the prospects for resolution.

#### **1.6.5. Helping people understand each other's values**

The fact that different people operate according to different value systems can also play an important role in conflicts and journalists can help people to understand each other's values. This can serve to assist parties in two ways: firstly, if parties' values clash, explaining these values to other parties through the media can help promote understanding. We can do this by asking people several different types of questions, including the following:

- What do you feel people from the other group need to know about you in order for them to understand you better?
- What do you think needs to happen to improve the potential for understanding and tolerance between your group and the others?
- What do you need to learn about the other group that would help you and your supporters understand them better?

Secondly, if parties discover that they share many similar values this can help them to recognise their common humanity and this can play a key role in reducing tensions. In seeking to help parties to understand each other's values we can play an important role in breaking down harmful stereotypes which:

If parties discover that they share many similar values this can help them to recognise their common humanity and help to reduce tensions.

- interfere with a group's abilities to develop and express their own identities,
- contribute to polarisation by lumping people into groups where they may not even feel they belong,
- reinforce parties' negative perceptions of each other, and
- affect the way parties feel about themselves.
- We can do this by:

- trying to show parties as being collectives of different individuals who, while sharing some of the same values, also have different feelings about issues,
- showing that not all members of a group favour specific types of behaviour or want to be identified with the actions of other members of the group (look for evidence to support this).

### **Case Study – A constructive approach to covering border conflicts**

*Clashes between Tajik and Kyrgyz villagers living on the border left one person dead and many others injured when civilians confronted each other on the evening of 22 July 2019.*

*The confrontation began when Tajik residents living in the Vorukh enclave erected a flagpole on disputed land and quickly escalated as residents on either side of the border fought each other with stones and firearms.*

*The altercation forms part of an ongoing series of border disputes that have flared up periodically since administrative boundaries under the former Soviet Union became fully fledged national borders.*

*Over this time the media coverage of these confrontations has been partisan with reporters from the different countries tending to rely on sources in their homelands which has resulted in in-depth, but often one-sided reports .*

*During the most recent incident the media support group New Reporter (NR) monitored the media’s coverage and conducted an impartial content analysis.*

*NR reached the following conclusions:*

- *Kyrgyz and Tajik journalists did not take into account each other’s opinions and did not publish these.*
- *Journalists from the different countries accused citizens from the other country of instigating the conflict and blaming them for provoking violence.*

*NR observers concluded that, having observed how the national mass media houses of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan highlighted such incidents, it would be beneficial if journalists could engage in joint “patrolling” and monitoring of the conflict areas. In so doing they would replicate the work being done by monitoring teams working for the different countries. The intervention by NR has played an important role in helping to ensure that the Tajik media group Asia Plus and the 24.kg Kyrgyz news agency are able to get a real-time picture of what is happening and to share information. The two news organizations have signed an innovative joint Memorandum of Cooperation to ensure coverage of border issues is more comprehensive, fair and inclusive. The two leading media outlets of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have agreed to:*

- 1. Ensure there is an ongoing engagement between their editorial boards when it comes to covering events on the border of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*
- 2. Exchange information about the situation at the border in real time.*
- 3. Publish the information on the situation at the border using comments, eyewitness accounts and other materials that enable audiences to form a complete picture of the events at the border of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.*

*Both editorial boards are confident that by working together they will be able to provide timely and comprehensive information about what is happening at the border. They are convinced that objective and balanced reporting of such conflicts can contribute towards preventing violence on the border and believe that through such cooperation they can talk about what is happening at the border in a more honest, impartial and comprehensive way.<sup>16</sup>*

16. <http://prevention.kg/?p=4134>

### **1.6.6. Avoid simple labels**

It is common for journalists to use simple labels to describe different kinds of conflict based on who is involved or what it is that the parties seem to be fighting over. This kind of approach seeks to capture the issues quickly so that the journalist can get on with his or her description of the latest actuality. Unfortunately using labels as a quick way of explaining conflicts often means journalists provide distorted and de-contextualised accounts of conflict stories. Such labels often focus on just one aspect of the conflict and neglect the fact that most conflicts are the result of a range of different conditions and dynamics. Examples of such labels could include 'black on black violence', a term once frequently used in apartheid South Africa, the 'Hutu-Tutsi' conflict in Rwanda, 'Christian-Muslim' wars in Indonesia and so on. Using a label like 'Christian-Muslim conflict', or 'religious war' creates the impression that conflict between faiths is inevitable. Using labels like this makes it seem like difference is a sufficient cause for conflict and negates the fact that across the globe people of different faiths and ethnicities live side by side without ever coming into conflict.

Using simply labels to describe conflicts can provide a distorted picture of what is really happening.

### **1.6.7. Watch your language**

The language journalists use in their reports will impact on the way in which audiences understand a conflict, but it will also impact on the way in which they will view media. If audiences pick up that that language used is sensational or biased this will impact on the media's credibility and the journalist's ability to make a constructive contribution. Journalists must be exceptionally careful about the words they use and should always look for the most neutral terms when describing people involved in conflict. It is suggested that journalists avoid adjectives such as 'vicious', 'brutal', 'cruel' and 'barbaric' as these will always place the journalist in a position where he or she is seen to be siding with one party over another. It is better for journalists to provide the facts and to audience reach their own conclusions. Similarly, terms such as 'terrorist', 'extremist' and 'fanatic' should be used very carefully as they suggest the people being described are not rational actors. Journalists should also avoid adopting the terminology and jargon of the people they are reporting on. This can be especially important for journalists who spend time with the military and where terms such as "collateral damage" have come to serve as euphemisms for civilians killed in action. Using the jargon of a particular group can make journalists sound like they sympathise with that group and this can impact on both the journalist and his or her media organisations credibility.

The use of sensational and biased language can impact on the journalists credibility.

### **1.6.8. When your opinion can count**

It's seldom acceptable for journalists to inject their own opinions into news stories about conflict, but there are many spaces where they can do so. The editorial pages of a newspaper and the introductory segment to a radio talk-show are prime examples, as are blogs and other social media platforms. There are also occasions when journalists themselves become sources in other journalists' stories and other occasions when the only way to tell a story is to describe how you experienced something.

**The following are some suggestions for journalists presenting opinion pieces on conflict.**

- **Respect your audience.** Do not take advantage of the platform you have been given to promote your own interests or the interests of your group. It's vital to consider the concerns of other groups involved in a conflict and to use the space you have available to help people understand each other's positions.
- **Promote a diversity of opinion.** Rather than promoting a single approach or solution to a conflict, show that there might be a range of different options available to parties. When you do feel the need to present a position, do so in a way that lets audiences know you are contributing to the debate and that you encourage additional opinions.
- Do your research. Just because you are not presenting hard news does not suggest that you should not be drawing on solid research. Explain where the information you are relying on comes from. We need to give people credible and reliable background information so that they can fairly assess whether the opinions we are presenting are worth considering.
- **Consider the response.** Be aware of the diversity of your audience. Consider how what you say might impact on people in different communities. This does not mean censoring yourself, but it does mean being cautious about unwittingly offending others - particularly members of minority groups. Being provocative for the sake of being provocative may be entertaining, but it is seldom helpful in a conflict situation.
- **Respect yourself.** Be conscious of what your work says about you. Have you used sexist, homophobic, classists, and ethnically divisive language? What you say in your opinion pieces can impact on your audience's view of your hard news stories, your credibility and the credibility of the organizations you are affiliated with.
- **Draw on your observations.** Find out about people who are making a difference in times of conflict and write about them. Discuss what they have accomplished and suggest how others might make similar contributions. Use the space you have to speculate about possible solutions and encourage people to consider your ideas. You don't need to be right, but you do want to contribute to promoting creative thinking.

It's worth noting that the same principles should apply when using social media. As journalists we are never completely off duty. What we say on our social media pages can reflect on our media organisations and on our professions.

## **1.7. Reporting tips**

### **1.7.1. Some practical tips for conflict reporting**

- Be Proactive.

Journalists should not sit back and wait for conflicts to erupt. Instead, they should be monitoring the communities they work in and looking out for the signs of emerging conflict. When journalists observe that conflicts are moving from the latent to the emerging state they need to start speaking to people on the ground to get as many view points as possible about what is happening.

Don't wait for conflicts to erupt. Monitor communities and look out for the signs of emerging conflicts.

- Cultivate Sources

Journalists can only be proactive if they have their ears to the ground and are in contact with people who know what is happening in a community. The only way this can happen is if journalists get out of the newsroom and spend time in meeting people and making contact with a wide range of organisations. Find out about the local NGOs and CBOs that are working in the area, spend time talking to small business owners and make contact with the local churches, mosques and temples. If journalists make time to get to know people, they will have valuable sources to turn to when a conflict does break out. This is especially important if conflicts turn violent and parts of the community become no-go areas.

- Lost in translation

For journalists who are working in multi-lingual societies there is always the danger of translation errors which can distort the essence of what people have to say. It's clearly important for journalists to be as careful as possible when translating quotes into another language and to double-check everything. Even when a translation is technically accurate there is always the possibility the nuance of what the person is trying to say may get lost. It is often advisable to paraphrase what someone is saying rather than to quoting them directly. Alternatively, journalists can make it clear that the quote is a translation thereby alerting the audience to the possibility that the interpretation may not be flawless.

- Being explicit about reporting constraints

There are times when journalists have to rely on others to gain access to conflict arenas and in these circumstances it's important for reporters to be clear about the any constraints on their reporting. Journalists who accompany military or police patrols into conflict zones are often accompanied by "minders" who ensure they do not speak to certain people or visit certain places. Under these circumstances it's vital for journalists to be clear about the fact that their reports are unlikely to reflect what is really happening on the ground. The same can be said for situations where journalists accompany aid agencies or ambassadorial delegations into the field.

### ***1.7.2. Interviewing people affected by conflict***

Interviewing lies at the heart of conflict sensitive reporting. It is only through their interactions with people that journalists can come to understand people's real needs and interests and why these are important to them. It is only through conversations that get beneath the surface that journalists can come

Conflict sensitive reporting involves speaking to people at all levels in conflict groups, from leaders who make the decisions, to the people on the ground who are most likely to feel the consequences of those decisions

to understand how parties are experiencing conflict, what it is they fear and what it might take to allay those fears. Conflict sensitive reporting involves speaking to people at all levels in conflict groups, from leaders who make the decisions, to the people on the ground who are most likely to feel the consequences of those decisions.

### ***1.7.3. Some general tips for conflict sensitive interviewing***

Avoid phrasing questions in terms of winners and losers. When asking questions about goals, objectives and strategies encourage parties to move away from zero-sum game ideas. How we phrase a question will have an impact on how people respond. Asking, "what will it take to satisfy you?" is a very different question to "What will it take for this conflict to be resolved in a way that satisfies everyone?" The first begs a zero-sum response while the latter asks people to think more broadly.

Both are fair questions, but the second is more likely to encourage a constructive response.

- Encourage interviewees to consider the other parties involved. Instead of just asking parties to outline their needs and interests – we should be trying to get beyond positions – we should also be asking them how they understand the needs and interests of others involved in the conflict.
- It's not our job to censure interviewees, but we do not want to be manipulated by parties who want to use our channels to further provoke conflict and to launch attacks on others. It's often worth following up on insulting and provocative statements with questions that ask the person to take responsibility for his or her statements. Asking parties to explain how they expect others to respond to their attacks can be a useful way of encouraging people to reflect on the impact of their messages.
- Be firm. Being conflict sensitive does not prevent journalists from being tough on interviewees when necessary. For instance, if an interviewee is making claims that seem untrue or exaggerated we need to challenge these claims. Similarly, if they make demands or promises that seem unrealistic we need to question the feasibility of these promises.
- Listen carefully and paraphrase people's responses back to them. We cannot afford to misrepresent what people say during times of conflict. Lives could depend on our getting a particular quote right. There is never any harm in making sure that you fully understand what a source is telling you. For example, repeat the interviewee's position back to them, saying: "Am I correct in saying your position on this is a,b,c ... ?"
- Ensure your interviewee has been given the best opportunity to convey their message in the way they want to get it across as possible. Be as sure as you can be that what you say in your report will reflect what the person intended to say. Be aware that if you distort what people are saying you may well be aggravating or prolonging the conflict.
- Don't put words into people's mouths. Avoid the: "Would you say XYZ...?" questions that are deliberately intended to get people to say what journalists want them to say. Rather take your time and be patient with speakers. Let them express themselves in their own words.
- Adopt a tone that suggests even-handedness. Don't pretend to be a sympathiser, rather make it clear that you are interested in what everyone has to say.
- As journalists we often have to speak to people whose views and ideologies we find objectionable and sometimes abhorrent. Take the time to think about how your feelings might influence your behaviour in an interview. Be aware that unless you are willing to give the interviewee an opportunity to be heard you will not be able to contribute constructively to mitigating the conflict.

Conflict sensitive reporting involves speaking to people at all levels in conflict groups, from leaders who make the decisions, to the people on the ground who are most likely to feel the consequences of those decisions.

### ***1.7.3. Interviewing people affected by conflict***

The following tips on how to interview people affected by conflict are based on ideas from senior journalists who have worked in conflict zones and spent years interviewing people affected by trauma.

- Don't pretend to understand what someone who is caught up in a conflict is going through. Take the interview slowly and let the person tell his or her own story. There's no harm in showing that you care, but this does not mean you sympathise with a particular group. Let people open up slowly and respect the fact that people may have experienced and seen things you may not even be able to imagine.
- Begin the interview gently and do what you can to make the person feel comfortable before you start asking the more difficult questions. Let the person know that they are in control of the interview. They can decide on how much or how little they want to tell you. It can help to ask probing questions, but be sensitive to the interviewee's emotional needs. It can help to be silent for a moment to give people the chance to think and to collect themselves if they are feeling emotional.
- Asking open-ended questions encourages people to tell their stories in their own words. Closed-ended questions leading to "Yes" and "No" answers tend to foreground the journalist's thinking instead of the interviewees' explanations.
- It's often better to conduct one-on-one interviews with people who have experienced trauma, but this is not always the case. There may be times when a source will feel more comfortable if they have others there to support them. We need to make allowances for these requests to make interviewees feel as comfortable as possible.
- Be aware that, when conducting group interviews, the unexpected might happen. Interviews conducted in group situations can become challenging if people disagree with each other and begin to fight among themselves.
- Make absolutely sure that people understand how what they have said is likely to be used and whether or not they will be identified in the story.
- Be sure you understand what the source is saying. End the interview by highlighting the points that you think you will use in your story and check with the source whether your understanding is accurate. It's also worth checking on whether the source feels you are missing anything important.
- Prepare yourself emotionally. Journalists tend to get hardened over time, but there will often be cases where something about an interview or an interviewee touches us deeply. We need to be alert to that possibility and to consider how we will respond if this happens.
- Never make promises you cannot guarantee. The best we can generally do is to promise to try to tell the person's story accurately and with respect so that others can understand what they have been through and what they need. We cannot promise our stories will bring about change or attract aid. Most of us cannot even guarantee our media houses will use the stories. It can be worth explaining that this decision rests with the editor.

Make absolutely sure that people understand how what they have said is likely to be used and whether or not they will be identified in the story.

## Part Two: Enhancing our understanding of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism

Part One of this handbook focused on how journalists can contribute constructively to the resolution of conflict through a conflict sensitive approach to their reporting. The focus narrows in the remainder of this handbook to address conflicts in which extremist groups use violence and terror to pursue their goals. From this point forward the handbook aims to show that the principles of conflict sensitive journalism can also be applied in these situations and can contribute to limiting the harmful impact of radicalisation and extremism. We begin our focus on radicalisation and extremism in Part Two, with an exploration of some of the core concepts that journalists need to understand if they are to respond sensitively to these kinds of conflicts. In doing we draw on the views of experts who have studied radicalisation, extremism and terrorism over the years to provide insights into these questions. However, it will soon become clear that the field is contested and that specialists do not always agree. It will also be clear that no two situations are identical and that every story will have unique elements that need to be examined and understood.

Reporting on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism is a complex business and this handbook assumes that the more we know about these issues the better equipped we will be to report on them. For this reason, Part Two of the handbook is dedicated to exploring

Reporting on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism is a complex business and this handbook assumes that the more we know about these issues the better equipped we will be to report on them

these concepts and the factors that are believed to contribute to people becoming radicalised, joining extremist organisations and participating in terrorist activities. It also examines some of the strategies being employed by governments, NGOs and individuals in trying to prevent radicalisation and extremism. By focusing on these issues, the handbook aims to lay the ground work for our exploration of how a conflict sensitive approach to journalism can contribute towards preventing extremism and terrorism. Readers who are interested in finding out more about this topic can jump ahead to Part Three, but we recommend that you familiarise themselves with the issues discussed in Part Two.

Note: There is tendency for people to think of Islamic terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al Qaida and Boko Haram when they talk about extremism and terrorism. This assumption hides the fact that there are numerous extremist groups and that each is driven by a different ideology and purpose. For this reason, the handbook has not focused exclusively on religious extremism and many of the principles addressed are generic to many extremist groups. To provide readers with specific information about radicalisation, extremism and terrorism in Central Asia the handbook also includes insightful articles by regional specialists that address each of the five Central Asian countries. These articles can be found .... [this will up the designers to locate them either as appendices or as links. The text needs to be adapted accordingly].

### 2.1. Exploring key concepts journalists must consider when reporting on radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism

One of many challenges facing journalists, academics, policymakers, security agents, and the general public when it comes to discussions about the challenges of radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism is the lack of a shared understanding of what these words mean.

This can have significant consequences for the way in which people understand these terms and has the potential to result in real confusion.

The lack of a shared understanding of words such as radicalism, extremism and terrorism can lead to misunderstandings between people addressing these questions.

When a politician means one thing when referring to radicalisation, a reporter understands something else and the audience interprets this in third way we have a recipe for confusion, not something we need when dealing with such a sensitive subject. For journalists the one way around this problem is to continually check in with sources about what they mean when they use particular terms and then to explain their understandings to audiences in our reports. In this section we'll discuss some of the essential terms and explore some of the ways these are used by different parties. Many of these terms have been given official meanings by governments in Central Asian countries and these are discussed in the Country Reports by Regional Experts (see – [hyperlink to these reports](#)).

### **2.1.1. Radicalisation**

A survey of experts writing about radicalisation confirms the argument presented above regarding the many different understandings that people bring to terms. Some describe radicalisation in a broad sense, suggesting it is process through which individuals and groups come to identify far reaching and often dramatic changes they want to see in society and begin to take steps towards achieving these objectives. They suggest that the pursuit of these changes may or may not constitute a threat to the democratic order and may or may not involve the use of force or the threat of violence. Others tend to conflate the process of radicalisation with one in which people accept the need to use violence in order to achieve their goals.

A distinction is made between non-violent radicalisation and violent radicalisation. In the former groups advocate for dramatic changes in the way the state, religious bodies and corporations function, but their demand for change is expressed through non-violent means. This does not suggest they are passive, only that their ideological or strategic choices prevent them from directly harming people or property. Those who think of radicalisation as part of a process leading to violence frequently suggest that violent radicalisation is a process through which individuals are encouraged to take part in terrorist activities or to support and assist terrorists in their activities.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to distinguishing between the violent and non-violent processes of radicalisation it's also important to determine whether we are talking about the radicalisation of attitudes or of behaviour. Some experts distinguish between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation. In doing so they argue that the process of developing radical or extremist ideologies or beliefs (cognitive radicalisation) does not necessarily culminate in people engaging in violence or terrorism. There may be connections between radical ideological beliefs and the use of extreme violence, but actions and beliefs are not dependent on each other.

These theorists argue that there are other paths to violence (behavioural radicalisation) that do not require the adoption of extremist ways of thinking. These will be discussed later in this handbook, but they include peer pressure and acting in solidarity with friends and loved ones. Other experts argue that one cannot separate political beliefs from political action and suggest that actions must be underpinned by beliefs. They would suggest that the cognitive and behavioural aspects of radicalisation cannot be separated.

Some theorists argue that there are other paths to violence that do not involve the adoption of extremist ways of thinking.

17. Dzhekova, R., Stoyanova, N., Kojouharov, A., Mancheva, M., Anagnostou, D., & Tsenkov, E. 2016. Understanding Radicalisation: Review of Literature. Centre for the Study of Democracy, p.7 -13.

It's notable that definitions of radicalization that are used by law enforcement and security agencies frequently draw a direct link between radicalisation and support for the use of violence and acts of terror.<sup>18</sup>

Expert in terrorism and extremism Anja Dalgaard- Nielsen<sup>19</sup> presents a useful definition of radicalisation that distinguishes between broader ideas of radicalisation and violent radicalisation.

**She writes that:**

*A radical is understood as a person harbouring a deep-felt desire for fundamental socio-political changes and radicalization is understood as a growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a direct threat to the existing order [...] violent radicalization [is] a process in which radical ideas are accompanied by the development of a willingness to directly support or engage in violent acts.*

It is clearly important for journalists to be able to understand how our sources are using the term and for us to be able to explain these usages to our audiences. This means taking the time to clarify how our sources understand the term and explaining these understandings in our stories. It is also important to recall that many people who today are hailed for the contribution they made to freedom and equality were regarded as radicals in their day.

It's important for journalists to understand how our sources are using these terms and to explain this to our audiences.

**2.1.2. Extremism**

Extremism is another term that has multiple meanings. It may be used to describe ideas that are diametrically opposed to a societies core values, or to the ruthless methods people use in trying to impose their ideas on others. It is also a term that is frequently used to describe the ideas or actions of people who have been radicalised<sup>20</sup>. But these terms should not be conflated. Researcher Alex Schmid suggests that we distinguish between radicals and extremists. Radicals may be seen as people who want to bring about dramatic change in society, but who accept diversity and believe in the power of reason and the possibility of compromise. In contrast, extremists strive to “create a homogeneous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets; they seek to make society conformist by suppressing opposition and subjugating minorities”<sup>21</sup>.

Extremists strive to “create a homogeneous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets; they seek to make society conformist by suppressing opposition and subjugating minorities”.

Schmid suggests that all extremists, whether from the left or the right, religious fundamentalists or ethno-nationalists support the same methods and ideals when it comes to pursuing their objectives. These include the use of force and violence over persuasion, uniformity over diversity, collective goals over individual freedoms and giving orders over dialogue. They are also totalitarian and see the world in black and white. “You are either with them or against them, part of the problem or part of the solution”. Their political programmes tend to:

- be anti-constitutional, anti-democratic, anti-pluralist, authoritarian;

18. Dzhenkova, 2016, p. 13-14.

19. Dalgaard-Nielsen, A. (2010). Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 33(9), 797-814, p. 798.

20. Neumann, P.R. 2017. Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Lead to Terrorism: Ideas, Recommendations, and Good Practices from the OSCE Region. International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), King's College London.

21. Schmid, A. 2013. Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussions and Literature Review, p. 8

- be fanatical, intolerant, non-compromising;
- reject the rule of law while adhering to an ends-justify-means philosophy;
- aim to realise their goals by any means, including, when the opportunity offers itself, the use of massive political violence against opponents.

Not all specialists agree with the assertion that extremism is necessarily violent and some government agencies distinguish between ‘violent extremist’ and ‘non-violent extremist groups’. Some see non-violent extremists as providing a path that leads to involvement in violent activities such as terror, while others have argued that non-violent extremist groups can play a role in preventing people from turning to violence. Schmid<sup>22</sup> proposes that it’s not always easy to make a distinction, arguing that groups which reject values such as “democracy, (gender) equality, pluralism, the separation of state and religion, freedom of thought or expression, man-made laws, respect for human rights and humanitarian law make dubious allies in the fight against terrorism”. Such groups he argues, may not support the methods of terrorists, but they do tend to support the goals of groups that turn to violence.

The term extremist is often used loosely by people in governments and political organisations to marginalise domestic opponents. It’s not a term that journalists should use lightly and we should not allow groups to simply label others as extremists, without challenging them to define what they mean when they use the term. Simple opposition to the status quo does not constitute extremism, groups must want to impose their way of thinking on others in ways that do not tolerate difference.

The term extremist is often used loosely by people in governments and political organisations to marginalise domestic opponents. It’s not a term that journalists should use lightly and we should not allow groups to simply label others as extremists without explaining what they mean.

### **2.1.3. Terrorism**

Like radicalism and extremism, terrorism is another term that has proved difficult to define. In fact, some commentators have argued that the term has been used so loosely that it has lost its meaning. It has become a pejorative term that is used freely by any actor wanting to denounce the activities of their political adversaries<sup>23</sup>. Oppressive governments invoke the term to refer to groups fighting against them to achieve national liberation and self-determination. Ruling elites also use the term to demonise political opponents engaging in justifiable acts protest and civil disobedience. For many it seems to be a matter of point of view, clearly expressed in the frequently used expression that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”.

While the struggle to define the terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” continues, some specific indicators feature in many of the definitions academics and policy makers have developed and these can prove useful to journalists when deciding whether or not to use these terms. These features have been identified by researchers Tao Wang and Jun Zhuang<sup>24</sup> in a paper that explores the similarities and differences between the different definitions:

- Terrorism is a methodology or strategy which involves systematic use of violence to realise certain political, religious, or ideological goals, tightly connected with faith and beliefs in times of peace or conflict.

22. 2013: 10

23. Wang, T. & Zhuang, J. 2017. The True Meaning of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism. *Social Sciences*, 6(6), 160 – 168, p. 161

24. Wang & Zhuang, 2017, p. 165 -166.

- Car bombs, shootings and random stabbings may have the hallmarks of terror attacks, but we cannot label them as such until we know the attackers' actions are motivated by a religious, ideological or political objective. Violent acts motivated by personal desires for self-aggrandisement, revenge and spite do not have a long term goals and should not be seen as terrorist acts.
- Terrorist attacks are carried out by groups of people working to achieve commonly held objectives. Once off, lone wolf, acts of violence are criminal acts, but should not normally be seen as acts of terrorism. That said, in some instances, actions carried out by individuals or small groups in the name of terrorist organisations may be seen as terrorism even when attackers do not belong to the organisation on whose behalf they are acting.
- The essence of terrorism lies in its intent to generate a psychological impact in a society that goes beyond the immediate victims. Attacks are intended to be dramatic and to cause widespread fear in communities. Violence can be deployed indiscriminately, thus sowing the maximum amount of fear when people realise nobody is safe. Even failed attacks can be considered successful if they cause fear and panic.
- To be regarded as a terrorist acts attacks should generally target non-combatants. Here the term non-combatant refers to civilians, but it could also include members of the security forces who are off-duty or who are not involved in conventional combat between regular or irregular armies. Terrorist acts can also involve the destruction of property that is highly valued by those being targeted. Examples could include the destruction of important public buildings, places of worship and ancient artefacts.

The essence of terrorism lies in its intent to generate a psychological impact in a society that goes beyond the immediate victims. Attacks are intended to be dramatic and to cause widespread fear in communities

What this suggests is that journalists need to be exceptionally careful about how and when they describe individuals or groups as terrorists or their actions as terrorism. Taken together these criteria can provide journalists with a useful set of indicators they can draw on in deciding whether or not the term terrorism is applicable to a particular context. They can also enable us to decide on whether people who accuse opponents of being terrorists are using the expression fairly and, if not, we can ask them to explain what they mean. In so doing we can avoid simply perpetuating one party's narrative.

#### **2.1.4. Counter terrorism<sup>25</sup>**

Primarily the responsibility of law enforcement agencies, intelligence services and in some instances the military, counter terrorism activities include all measures aimed at preventing terrorist attacks and at dismantling and eliminating terrorist organisations. These activities include the arrest of suspected terrorists, disrupting attacks, interfering with terrorists' recruitment drives, disrupting logistics, cutting off sources of finance and protecting potential targets. It can also involve investigations in which agencies gather and share information about terrorist groups with people in other countries. Neumann<sup>26</sup> describes counter terrorism as "a central pillar of any effort aimed at countering threats from violent extremism" and suggests that:

... when targeted and effective, counter-terrorism not only helps to prevent attacks and protects lives, it also preserves the integrity of the state and its institutions, and sends a powerful message to the terrorists and their supporters that violence is ineffective.

25. Based on Neumann, 2017: 18-19.

26. Neumann, 2017, p.18

Neumann suggests that as long as the number of terrorists can be contained these law and order approaches may be sufficient to prevent the spread of terror. These approaches can, however, be perceived to be inadequate when threats become more “persistent and widespread”. Counter terrorism operations may stop some attacks, but they may not be able to prevent the spread of radicalisation and the rise of extremism in communities. Direct threats may be countered by such actions, but law and order approaches will do little to address social and political drivers of extremism. In fact, a repressive response that is framed by ideas of security and law and order can aggravate the problem. If people feel government agencies are being heavy handed in combating terrorism and persecuting particular groups, this can cause them to be more sympathetic and supportive towards extremist groups. Terrorist groups are well aware of this and will frequently try to provoke governments into responding with heavy handed tactics in the hopes of winning sympathy from people who bear the brunt of State oppression.

If people feel government agencies are being heavy handed in combating terrorism and persecuting particular groups, this can cause them to be more sympathetic and supportive towards extremist groups.

### **2.1.5. Countering and preventing violent extremism**

The fact that counter-terrorism programmes have not been able to stop a large number of attacks has caused governments and international agencies to explore alternative strategies for preventing violence. These approaches do not aim to directly target terrorists and their activities, but instead seek to intervene in the process of radicalisation by countering radical narratives and by changing the social and political conditions that contribute towards people becoming radicalised. Their objective is to help build resilience in populations that are seen to be potentially vulnerable to extremist ideas and to equip vulnerable people to resist being recruited into these organisations.<sup>27</sup>

As with all of the other concepts discussed in this section, there is a lack of clarity about the terms that have been used to describe these newer approaches that are not contingent on the work of security forces. The terms Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) have sometimes been used to describe very similar approaches, but the distinctions between the way these terms are used have become clearer over time. CVE seeks to promote alternative narratives to terrorist recruitment efforts or to re-socialising former terrorist into society. It also aims to respond to “push factors” that encourage people to join extremist groups, such as “unresponsive and alienating governance.”<sup>28</sup> PVE does not seek to counter extremism, but to prevent it from happening in the first place by reducing people’s cause for grievances such as “marginalisation, social discrimination, lack of opportunities, corruption and other by-products of weak or bad governance [that] often pervade areas where vulnerabilities to extremism are high.”<sup>29</sup> These will be discussed further in this handbook. PVE approaches seek to provide a framework for involving all sectors of society in the process and sees this as a collective task involving, among others, government departments, local government agencies, educational institutions, religious leaders, social workers, youth agencies, bloggers and students.

The PVE approach has been criticised by some experts when it singles out particular communities as being vulnerable to radicalisation. People fear these programmes can contribute towards the stigmatization of

Preventing violent extremism approaches seek to provide a framework for involving all sectors of society in proactively preventing the spread of terrorism.

27. Neumann, 2017, p. 19 -20.

28. MacDonald, G. & Waggoner, L. 2016. From countering to preventing violent extremism, 22 November, Open Democracy, np.

29. MacDonald & Waggoner, 2016: np.

targeted communities which can result in others feeling unjustifiably threatened by them. However, experts have suggested that this need not be a problem and that a more broad-based approach to PVE could help to prevent this unintended process of othering.

## 2.2. Categories of radical organisations that resort to violence and terrorism

Scholars have identified a range of different categories of radical organisations that have chosen to use violent means in attempts to draw attention to their demands, bring harm to the people they view as their opponents and to impose their will on others. They suggest that these groups can include the following:

- **Extremist nationalists or separatist organisations** who are either intent of winning independence, changing the power dynamics within a state and ensuring that particular minority groups are afforded equal opportunities within the state. In many instances the objectives of such organisations may appear to be legitimate in terms of international law, although they are often banned in their own countries. However, their actions may be called into question when they resort to terror tactics in pursuing their ends.
- **Left-wing extremist organisations** who are willing to use violence as they advocate for a Marxist or Maoist revolt against capitalist domination. Attacks might take the form of bombings of banks and financial institutions and can also be directed against individuals who are seen to be representing or defending capitalist power. In some countries violent left wing extremists may target government institutions and infrastructure as fighters seek to dominate territory.
- **Right-wing extremist organisations** are motivated by a range of ideologies that include extreme nationalism, fascism, racism and other forms of prejudice. They tend to advocate for authoritarian approaches to government. Committed to promoting the interests of a single racial group these groups tend to target more progressive political opponents, ethnic minorities, homosexuals and people of different religions. They are frequently anti-Islamic, anti-Semitic and anti-immigration. Right-wing attacks are often treated as isolated incidents and seldom attract the same degree of media attention as actions by other extremist groups with actions often treated as hate-crimes, rather than as politically motivated. However, the number of right-wing attacks is considered to be on the increase and many experts believe the threat from these organisations is growing. Experts also believe that in some countries there may be clandestine collaboration between violent right-wing extremists groups and right-wing political parties that are legitimately contesting elections. Attacks by right-wing groups include mass shootings, bombings, armed assaults against minority groups and government institutions. The objectives of such attacks may be to destabilise governments and to create opportunities for neo-Nazi groups to rise to power<sup>30</sup>.
- Single-issue extremist groups are made up of radicalised individuals who want to target one specific concern. Members of these groups tend to be on the fringes of social movements with special interests such as the anti-abortion movement, environmental activists, animal rights campaigners and people opposed to the use of nuclear technologies. For the most part violence committed by these groups has been restricted acts of civil disobedience and sabotage, although anti-abortion activists have been linked to assassinations and other terrorist acts. Some writers<sup>31</sup> have argued that environmental extremism may increase as the climate change threatens the security and livelihoods of more and more people. It's not inconceivable that people whose lands have become uninhabitable may one day target the

30. See Koehler, D. 2016. Right-wing extremism and terrorism in Europe: Current developments and issues for the future. *Prism*, 6(2).

31. See for instance Bartlett, J, 2017. The next wave of extremists will be green. *Foreign Policy*, September 1.

industrialised nations they blame for their destitution.

- Like other extremist groups, religious extremists demonstrate a commitment to imposing their belief systems on others, with the violent extremists among them being willing to use force and terror to compel others to conform to their beliefs or to punish them for holding alternative beliefs and leading different lifestyles. Many observers hold that religion is not really the cause of extremist actions, but that religious language is a tool used for mobilising people. Others<sup>32</sup>, suggest faith plays a very real part in people's lives and that understanding "the appeal, motivations and logic of violent extremist groups that adhere to a religious ideology requires genuine engagement with the religious discourses they use".<sup>33</sup> Recognition of faith-based communities' religious ideologies should not obscure the fact that they also have political agendas. These could include the need for recognition, social justice, economic parity and end to discrimination. It's also critical for policy makers and journalists to recognise the diversity between and within religions. While sub-groups within a religion may interpret their sacred texts as promoting violence, other groups who share the same fundamental religious convictions are likely to be completely opposed to such actions and interpret holy text very differently. Religious doctrines are open to multiple interpretations and should not be seen as a reliable guide to behaviours.

In a guide to the drivers of violent extremism developed for the United States Agency for International Development, Guilain Denooux and Lynn Carter<sup>34</sup> distinguish between two different categories of extremist organisations. They suggest that some organisations have concrete, specific grievances, while others have a much broader more ideological appeal. Some of the distinctions between these types of extremist organisations are summarised below.

Extremist groups take on two forms: those with concrete specific demands and those with much broader and less containable ideological positions.

- Organisations with concrete grievances. The demands of these organisations tend to be specific and simple to understand, although this does not mean they are easy to accommodate. These organisations normally have grievances that are specifically tied to a particular geographic area and frequently have to do with questions of freedom and national liberation. They are likely to have a strong nationalist orientation. Operations are normally confined to a particular territory and groups do not export violence to other areas although the operational arena may extend across borders. The decision to resort to violence is generally strategic and has a specific purpose in helping the group to achieve its objectives. This can change over time with violent members of these organisations becoming addicted to violence. Some organisations that are involved in violent acts can also have non-violent political wings that engage in negotiations, contest elections and participates in civic activities. These members of these organisations frequently come from the areas where they are operational and can be well-embedded in local populations. These organisations may often be involved in providing services to the local communities where they operate and may be responsible for community development. This can make it difficult to combat these organisations as they can win over community support.

32. See Frazer, F. & Jambers, A. 2018. Religion and the prevention of violent extremism: five tips for Western governments on a religion-sensitive approach to PVE. *Policy Perspectives*, 6(6), October.

33. Ibid.

34. Denooux, G. & Carter, L. 2009. Guide to the drivers of violent extremism. United States Agency for International Development, February, p. 63 – 68.

- Organisations with broad ideological appeals. Often religious in nature, these transnational organisations are driven by broad ideological convictions that are not always easily expressed and which cannot realistically be accommodated. Their objectives may be hazy or grandiose, such as fighting the spread of modern values or establishing a Caliphate. Enemies may be vaguely defined and could include large segments of the global population such as all members of specific religious groupings.

These organisations may temporarily align themselves with groups engaged in geographic struggles to win support, but their goals can go well beyond specific grievances. Members tend to have extreme views on most subjects and have little interest in partaking in mainstream political activities. These ideologically motivated groups often see violence as intrinsic to their existence and believe that it has redemptive virtues. Violence may be seen as having its own end. They may feel that engaging in violence against an enemy is a religious obligation that is part of a timeless battle between good and evil. These groups are transnational in character and their operational areas are not limited to specific geographical areas. They tend not to invest in communities and contribute little in the way of social development.

For policy makers and others working to preventing the spread of extremist violence and terrorism the distinctions between these two types of movements is consequential because each requires a different response. While it may be challenging to address the concerns of grievance-based organisations there is scope for negotiations and concessions to be made on all sides. With ideologically-driven groups pursuing grandiose goals this is not possible. Preventing these groups from carrying out violent acts is generally seen to involve actively defeating them and undermining their ability to carry out attacks. However, the transnational nature of these movements makes this a particularly daunting task. One alternative is for governments and other actors to initiate projects that help to ensure people who are vulnerable to extremist recruitment develop the resilience to resist these appeals. Another is for governments to recognise the conditions that contribute towards people becoming vulnerable to recruitment and take steps to resolve these problems. This can mean engaging in social development projects, but it can also mean curtailing activities that people from vulnerable communities find angering and humiliating. Examples could include the mistreatment of people in prisons or the restriction of religious freedom. Some of these factor will be discussed in the next section where we focus on the drivers of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism. Explanations of why people turn to violent extremist acts and terrorism frequently focus on underlying causes that have frustrated and angered them to the extent that they choose to resort to extreme violence. These causes often include widespread poverty, unemployment, inadequate services and the lack of economic opportunities. They also include political factors, such as poor governance, repression and the abuse of power. These are all factors that can be addressed with development assistance that aims to reduce vulnerability to radicalisation by easing the economic and political pressures people confront from day-to-day. However, while it's true that addressing these concerns can help, it's essential to recognise that addressing these macro-level factors may not be enough. Other issues relating to identity, culture and ideology that must also be considered.

### ***2.3.1. Push and pull factors in radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism***

Denoeux and Carter<sup>35</sup> suggest that we cannot assume poverty or oppression alone are the root causes of extremist action. Masses of people, they argue, face extremely difficult conditions, but only a very few ever resort to violence. Furthermore, they note that extremist

We can't assume that poverty and oppression are direct drivers of extremism, many people are poor and mistreated but only a few become extremists.

35. Denoeux & Carter, 2009

groups have emerged from many different socio-economic contexts. Some have indeed grown up in abject poverty, but others are well educated members of the middle classes. Simple generalisations are not useful. Social, economic and political conditions are not irrelevant, but they do not provide explanations by themselves. The decision to join an extremist group and to support or participate in violent activities is based on a complex combination of contextual, individual and circumstantial factors. An exclusive focus on underlying conditions suggests that people are pushed into extremism, but this explanation neglects the many pull-factors that attract people to join extremist organisations and to commit violent acts. These pull factors, to be discussed in more detail in a moment, can include, among many others, self-esteem, personal empowerment, adventure, emotional satisfiers and material rewards.

An exclusive focus on push factors or root causes also ignores the role of human agency, both with regard to the people who join extremist groups and those who recruit them. Radicalised people are not automatons. They make choices for themselves, but many are influenced by charismatic and influential recruiters and leaders who will work to convince them to support their causes. The push and pull factors cannot be seen in isolation from each other. Rather we should understand that it takes a complex combination of different factors to bring someone to the point where they are ready and willing to be drawn into the process of radicalisation.

### **2.3.2. Political push factors**

While they may not, by themselves, be enough to drive people to join radical groups or engage in violent extremist activities there are a number of factors that can provide a favourable environment for the rise of these organisations. A range of these are captured in literature review aimed at understanding the models and drivers of radicalisation written by Neven Bondokji, Kim Wilkinson and Leen Aghabi for the West Asia-North Africa Institute. In this review they highlight the following as drivers of radicalisation emerging from political circumstances.

- Political upheavals can provide a favourable environment in which armed radical groups can operate. The collapse of governance in these areas and political power vacuum can provide a safe haven for these groups that enable them to expand their power and increase their reach. In these circumstances radical groups can come to dominate areas and to control territory.
- Where governments are oppressive and violate human rights they are likely to meet legitimate resistance from populations wanting to bring about political change. However, such abuses of power can also feed into the desire of extremist groups who want to radicalise recruits and encourage people to join their struggles. People who feel their rights to freedom of movement, access to information and freedom of association (including freedom of religion) are being restricted may also prove vulnerable to extremist recruitment. The same can be said of those who witness widespread corruption and poor governance.
- In some instances, prisons have provided to be fertile recruiting grounds for extremist groups because they provide a ready audience among the inmate population of people who may be receptive to radical ideas. Prisoners may harbour resentment against the state or feel marginalised by society and anxious to find acceptance and a sense of worth within a group of like-minded individuals<sup>36</sup>.

Another expert in violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, Professor

Broadly targeting people from the same ethnic or religious background as terrorists can be counterproductive and see people sympathising with these groups.

<sup>36</sup>. See Schmid, A. March, 2013. Counter-Radicalisation: A conceptual Discussion and Literature Review. ICCT Research Paper

Peter Neumann<sup>37</sup> develops some of these ideas. Writing specifically about terrorism, he argues that when terrorists attack, governments want to formulate strong and immediate responses that protect lives and preserve the integrity of the state. This can sometimes involve broadly targeting “supporters of wider political or ethnic, or religious causes” because they may share the same ideas and aspirations as the terrorists. The results of such abuses can be counterproductive, because they can strengthen the terrorists’ narrative about oppressive regimes. In so doing they can create a self-fulfilling prophecy as people decide that non-violent opposition is futile and become more inclined to support or join terrorist groups. Neumann<sup>38</sup> argues that:

*... governments fail to consider that their (excessive) response may, in fact, be part of the terrorists’ plan. Many terrorist groups actively seek to provoke an over-reaction, which targets entire populations and allows the terrorist to portray themselves as ‘defenders’ of their communities.*

Picking up Bondokji et al’s (above) points regarding political upheavals, Neumann<sup>39</sup> writes that conflict frequently goes hand in hand with terrorism and extremist action and notes that the vast majority of terrorist attacks take place in countries that are involved in violent conflicts. He suggests that in these situations violence leads to more violence. People often become involved in seemingly endless and vicious cycles of revenge. Conflict zones also tend to produce cultures of conflict where thousands of ordinary men and women are turned into fighters who become accustomed to war and dependent on fighting for their livelihoods. Neumann<sup>40</sup> also points out that countries outside of the immediate conflict zones can be affected. This happens when neighbouring states provide bases for terrorist networks, planning and recruitment. Attacks can also be launched against countries outside of the conflict zone in retaliation for interference by these countries. Extremist involvement in external conflicts can also destabilise their home countries as these people cross borders to operate as foreign terrorist fighters and return home as battle hardened veterans.

### **2.3.3. Intimidation and coercion**

Not all people participating in extremist groups are there voluntarily. Some will have been pushed into groups or forced to provide support to these groups against their will. This is particularly likely in situations where a government lacks the resources, ability or will to provide adequate security and protection for all of its citizens. Coercion can take on a range of different forms. Communities in conflict areas may be forced to provide lodgings, logistics and supplies to extremists. While there have been many examples of extremists kidnapping young boys and girls with a view to turning them into combatants, suicide bombers, and sex slaves. This poses deep dilemmas for authorities combating these groups, because, on the one hand they may be actively involved in terrorist activities, on the other, they did originally choose to be part of the group.

### **2.3.4. The impact of socio-economic factors**

When it comes to the socio-economic drivers of violent extremism the literature warns us against assuming that financial incentives play a significant role in people’s decisions to join extremist groups. There are certainly instances where people from poor backgrounds cite the economic and material rewards as having played a significant role in their decision to join the ranks of extremist armies, but there are also many examples of cases where people have given up well-paying jobs to take up arms<sup>41</sup>.

There are cases where people have cited poverty as their reason for joining extremist organisations, but there are also many cases of well-off people joining these groups.

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37. Neumann

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid

40. Neumann, 2017: 24-25

41. Ibid.

Referring specifically to terrorists, Denoeux and Carter<sup>42</sup> report that researchers have concluded that “while individual terrorists tend to be better off than the average citizen in the societies to which they belong, impoverished countries tend to generate more terrorism than wealthier ones”.

They also note that in poorer countries an increase in per capita income reduces people’s vulnerability to terrorist recruitment, whereas in richer countries a drop in income can have the opposite effect. Poverty does play a role in promoting the growth of violent extremist organisations, but the conditions under which this happens are not straightforward. We cannot simply assume a direct causal link between poverty and radicalisation. As journalists, we need to be extremely cautious about simply accepting claims by authority figures that people involved in extremist activities lack conviction and are only interested in the financial rewards. In doing so we dismiss the fact that sometimes people have legitimate grievances that need to be addressed.

Many writers have suggested that the drive to radicalisation is not underpinned by people’s absolute poverty, but rather the result of tensions that develop from the discrepancy between what they feel entitled to and what they actually get. The theory of relative deprivation suggests that people’s frustration at not being able to achieve the political, economic or social levels they aspire to, and feel they deserve, can play a key role in raising levels of frustration<sup>43</sup>. It’s also believed that frustrated expectations can contribute towards people adopting extremist positions. Denoeux and Carter suggest that:

*More often than not, discontent arises not so much from the system’s inability to deliver goods, services, and adequate standards of living, but from its inability to keep up with the expectations of, in particular, the educated, upwardly mobile and achievement-oriented elites that emerge in the process of modernization and economic development<sup>44</sup>.*

They argue further that the frustration of relative deprivation may be especially evident when it comes to youth. This is because young people are often more aware of global trends than previous generations and have different expectations. Expectations which cannot be met because of weak economies, educational systems that have not prepared people for the labour market, a global economy that has sidelined developing countries and political or societal discrimination.

*Those most likely to experience relative deprivation on a significant scale include youth who attended or completed high school; university students and graduates with grim economic prospects; and youth who, coming from disadvantaged or modest economic backgrounds, lack the social connections that often remain so critical to economic and political success in developing countries<sup>45</sup>.*

The anger at not being able to build a decent future can be shared by both middle-class and under-privileged youth, with both classes feeling that the ruling classes and society at large have denied them a fair opportunity to be financial independent and to live relatively comfortable and contented lives. Of significance here is that the frustration of the youth can cut across class barriers. Of course there are also people who join extremist organisations who have no interest in the benefits of modernisation and who, instead, yearn for a return to the way they believe things were in the past.

Researchers have also found indications that for people living on the margins of society, the acute lack of basic services, including running water, sewage treatment, health care, education and housing impacts on people in multiple ways. Not only must they cope without the infrastructure many take for granted, but they must also deal with the sense of abandonment by their government and the feeling

42. Neumann, 2017, p. 19-20

43. Bondokji et al, 2016, p. 16.

44. Denoeux & Carter, 2009, p.20.

45. Ibid.

that the broader society has turned its back on them. For them this extreme neglect sends a message about the way in which society denies their humanity, their individuality and their dignity. Some writers have warned authorities should not assume that communities that have been marginalised and discriminated against are inevitably likely to be hot-beds of extremist radicalisation. They argue that if authorities do target certain particular religious or ethnic communities as “suspect” based on assumptions, they can impact on community cohesion and possibly even trigger radicalisation<sup>46</sup>.

### **2.3.5. Identification with a religious or ideological group as a pull factor**

Writing about Islamic radicalisation specialists Neven Bondokji, Kim Wilkinson and Leen Aghabi<sup>47</sup> argue that “the most important

There is often no correlation between a person’s knowledge of a religion and their decision to join and extremist religious group.

contribution from the literature on the religious drivers of radicalisation is that an individual’s knowledge of Islam does not correlate with her/his propensity for radicalisation”. They point out that many radicals do not lead particularly pious lifestyles, nor are they always deeply familiar with the holy texts of their religion. Instead, they suggest it is often an

individual’s identification with a persecuted religiously-defined group that leads to radicalisation<sup>48</sup>.

Referring to the roles religious agents, preachers or recruiters play in the radicalisation process, Bondokji et al suggest that it is questionable whether their involvement in promoting a religious perspective is the cause of the individual’s radicalisation. Instead, they argue, it is more likely that they are a facilitating factor in promoting radicalisation by “introducing individuals to radical ideology and justifying radicalism in religious terms as a higher moral order.”<sup>49</sup>

Bondokji et<sup>50</sup> al suggest that religion allows individuals to construct a narrative that “offers individuals a role to play in the cosmic war of good versus evil” and that political groups often make use of this narrative in radicalising individuals. By encouraging potential recruits to accept religious narratives, radical groups are able to “connect individual behaviour to larger causes that can offer an individual a sense of purpose and pride.”<sup>51</sup> These narratives are underpinned by the use of religious texts that offer promises of rewards in the afterlife or improved status in this life for those who are willing to make sacrifices for the cause. They are also used frequently to justify the use of political violence.

Discussing ways in which religious, and other beliefs, can contribute towards radicalisation and ultimately to extremist action, Denoeux and Carter<sup>52</sup> suggests that ideas, beliefs, identity and faith can play three different roles in the rise of extremism, namely:

- They can provide the inspiration, motivation and mechanisms for joining and staying in extremist groups. Some may join extremist groups out of self-interest, to address grievances or personal advancement, but others are attracted by grand ideas and their belief that their values are superior to others. To understand these militants’ motivations, we need to grasp the extent of their passions, emotions and their commitment to these values. A shared vision of how beliefs, ideas and faith can shape how society should be organised can play an important role in bringing extremists together, as can a mutual scorn for the way in which existing societies are organised. Denoeux and Carter argue that:

46. Dzhekova, R. et al., 2016.

47. Bondokji, et al. 2016, p.19

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid

50. Ibid

51. Ibid.

52. Denoeux and Carter, 2009

The critical role played by firmly held beliefs must be considered if one is to account for the strength of the commitment displayed by members of many violent extremist groups, their persistence in the face of overwhelming odds and their frequent realization that they are unlikely to see the objectives they pursue achieved during their lifetimes<sup>53</sup>.

- They can provide a moral justification for violence which can be necessary if people are to participate in attacks, because most people need a compelling moral imperative to convince themselves it is acceptable or necessary to harm or kill others. Even when violence is used tactically and strategically, perpetrators will want to believe they are acting with honour or out of a duty to defend cherished principles or people. Regardless of their faith or cultural background violent extremists share a common conviction that “violence is a logical and acceptable form of retribution for the deprivation they feel they are made to endure”.
- They can provide extremists with links to bodies with organisational coherence and capacity. People who come together because of beliefs or cultural commitments often form religious and cultural communities that provide an institutional home for these ideas. These bodies can play a role in promoting the use of violence in the pursuit of goals and supporting the activities of violent extremists. Support can take the form of, among other things, funding, logistics, accommodation and the provision of hideouts.

### ***2.3.6. How personal and group humiliation contribute to radicalisation***

Another factor influencing whether people join extremist organisations has to do with individual and collective perceptions concerning the way communities they identify with have been historically victimised. When people perceive that their communities have been subject to collective humiliation, coupled with feelings of individual humiliation, they

When people perceive that their communities have been subject to collective humiliation, coupled with feelings of individual humiliation, they can become more open to recruitment or seek to join up with radical organisations

can become more open to recruitment or seek to join up with radical organisations. Perceptions of victimhood and humiliation are common among people whose countries have been subject to colonialism and other forms of interference, particularly where countries continue to be occupied by foreign powers. Subjected citizens who experience victimhood can see the use of violence as more than retribution for past wrongs, they can also see violence as a necessary defence against outsiders who threaten the survival of their culture or faith. Extremist organisations frequently promote narratives of victimization in their recruitment activities. If people can be shown that they, or their loved ones, are suffering because of some other group or nations actions, this can enhance the likelihood of people resorting to violence.

In responding to this sense of victimisation it's clear that many extremists do not just blame people in their immediate environment for their grievances, but they are also likely to see others from distant and more powerful countries as their antagonists. When people belong to international terrorist organisation they do not see themselves as bound to a particular territory, but as members of a global movement. They don't limit themselves to developments in their homelands, but are also concerned with events unfolding on a regional and global level. Satellite television and the Internet have made it possible for militants to become aware of and react to events happening thousands of kilometres away. It also means extremists can identify with people sharing the same faiths and beliefs in completely different geographic locations and can carry out violent acts out of sympathy

53. Denoeux and Carter, 2009, p.12

with those people.

Members of a faith community living in one region can respond to the grievances of others from that faith community in a different part of the world, by committing acts of terror in an entirely different country.

### **2.3.7. The role of group-belonging and identity**

While so called lone wolf terrorist attacks do happen, it is generally accepted that radicalisation involves a social process in which “authority figures, charismatic leaders or tightly knit peer groups are key to generating trust,

The desire to be with friends can often be a more important motivation for joining extremist organisations and becoming involved in violent acts than a commitment to a faith or ideology.

commitment, and peer pressure”<sup>54</sup>. In fact, several researchers studying radicalisation and extremism have concluded that the desire to be with friends can often be a more important motivation for joining extremist organisations and becoming involved in violent acts than a commitment to a faith or ideology. This peer influence is connected to the individual’s psychological need to belong to a group and the satisfaction they obtain from being able to identify with others who have a stated purpose in the world. The individual sees him or herself as having a significant role to play within the group and their identification as a member of the group shapes how they perceive themselves and their role in society. This identity also shapes their behaviours<sup>55</sup>.

People will often join groups because they have social bonds with others who are already involved in extremist activities, rather than joining to satisfy deeply held religious or ideological beliefs. These deep seated religious or ideological beliefs will often only develop once the individual has joined the group.

Denoeux and Carter point out that there is compelling evidence to suggest that being part of a small group involved in a radicalising process can have a dramatic impact on individuals. They write that:

*... when someone’s life revolves around a small group of like-minded individuals<sup>56</sup> who, collectively, are cut off from the rest of society, that person’s judgment and behaviour becomes, to a large extent, a function of group dynamics, and should be analysed from that perspective. As the group drifts ever further away from mainstream society, the propensity of its members to adopt increasingly radical views rises as well.*

They suggest that research has also shown that group dynamics can contribute to members setting aside moral inhibitions when it comes to the use of violence and make it possible for people to disregard the moral standards they once believed in. They argue that:

Such “moral disengagement” – the ability to justify to oneself engaging in what one previously would have disavowed as inhuman, cruel, and therefore morally unacceptable conduct – typically takes place incrementally, within a small, tightly-knit community of individuals engaged in intense personal interactions and insulated from mainstream society.

Other researchers have suggested that a number of group-related phenomena can shed light on the way in which extremist groups behave. Randy Borum proposes that the following dynamics are likely to be found in extremist groups:

54. Neumann, P.R. 2017.

55. Bondokji et al. 2016: 19

Group polarization occurs when individual opinions and attitudes become more extreme within the context of a group. Likewise, the opinions and attitudes of a group are frequently more extreme than those which are held by individual members.

- Groupthink occurs when the desire within the group to reach consensus becomes stronger than the desire to reach the best and most rational decision. Members will avoid pointing out problems or weaknesses in positions and strategies in order to avoid conflict.
- In-group/out-group bias involve the attitude in which members of groups hold a much more positive view of the ones inside the group and a much more negative view of the ones outside. Behaviours of those within the group tend to be positively regarded, while behaviours of those outside the group are viewed negatively.
- Diminished sense of responsibility results in individuals feeling less responsible for group actions because they can distribute the responsibility across the entire group. The result is that individuals can lower the threshold for violent behaviour they are prepared to engage in because they feel that the group, and not them alone, is responsible for what happens.
- Expectations of incentives and rewards. People can have vastly different expectation about the rewards they are likely to get from joining a group. In some instances, they are seeking social affiliation and a means towards meeting a personal need for meaning in life. Others may be after excitement (discussed next) or access to resources such as money, food and shelter.
- Rules controlling member behaviour. Groups can have strong expectations about how they expect members to behave and draw on social pressure within the group to ensure members conform. Group conformity is stronger when groups are isolated and where high costs are imposed for dissent.

Together these phenomena ensure that once individuals become committed to groups it can be very difficult for them to go against the group's wishes. They also mean that groups do not always take the most rational decisions and that these decisions can frequently support more extreme forms of violence.

### ***2.3.7. Revenge for harm done to loved ones and communities***

Researchers have found that in many instances people involved in terrorist activities have been motivated by a personal desire to inflict pain on individuals, groups or even nations who are perceived to have caused harm and suffering to loved ones. This desire for revenge may not be limited to cases where individuals have suffered personal losses, they can also be in response the suffering the target group is perceived to have inflicted on the extremist groups community.<sup>57</sup> Denooux and Carter<sup>58</sup> write that "... such personal factors can trump the appeal or an ideology, religious fervour, the search profit, or broader political, social or economic grievances." They also observe that in contexts of communal trauma, distraught individuals looking for meaning and support can come together to form a brotherhood anxious for revenge. Suggesting that violence does not necessarily come naturally to people, Neumann<sup>59</sup> points out that people seeking revenge will often have been brutalised after being exposed to violence themselves.

In contexts of communal trauma, distraught individuals looking for meaning and support can come together to form a brotherhood anxious for revenge

57. Denooux and Cater, 2009, p.71-72

58. Ibid.

59. Neumann, 2017, p. 18

### 2.3.8. Influence of mentors and ideological leaders

Another factor that can contribute to individuals being attracted or pulled into extremist organisations is the presence of a charismatic mentor or role model who can inspire people to seek to fulfil their identity needs by joining or supporting violent movements.<sup>60</sup>

Charismatic mentors and role models can inspire people to seek to fulfil their identity needs by joining violent movements.

These leaders are generally perceived to have a deeper insights into the religious and ideological principles that inform a group's actions and the ability to communicate these principles with others. They are able to gain the support of followers by showing through their actions that they don't just "talk the talk" but they also "walk the walk". They are able to gain the trust, respect and often allegiance of followers who are looking for guidance and the opportunity to engage with a figure who can help them to develop their individual identity. Such leaders or mentors are generally able to provide followers with:

*a simple, but persuasive, ideological framework that weaves into a single narrative local and global injustices, perceived personal indignities and a broader sense of collective humiliation, as well as current events and much older historical trends*<sup>61</sup>.

Having convinced followers of the extent to which they and their communities are being humiliated, marginalised or abused, the mentors will then show that they have the power to transcend their "wretched" conditions". They will aim to persuade followers that they do not have to be the victims of history, but that they can be agents of change by fighting back against their enemies. In this way they can give hope to followers, even if this hope comes through their own deaths and self-sacrifice.<sup>62</sup>

Experts have noted that the marginalisation of some communities following conflict has contributed towards the "manufacturing of radical leaders" who have been able to draw on people's frustration and anger to grow extremist groups<sup>63</sup>

### 2.3.9. Boredom and the prospect of adventure

Many experts suggest that unemployment and the lack of opportunities has played an indirect role in increasing membership of extremist groups. They suggest that in societies that are marked by bad governance and oppression young people may find that their lives are unfulfilled and that they often have too much time on their hands. Denoeux and Carter<sup>64</sup> argue that "in general it is difficult to over-estimate the extent to which boredom significantly enhances youth

Disaffected young people can be attracted to extremist organisations by the prospects of adventure and the of doing something that seems meaningful.

vulnerability to extremist ideas and activities". These young men and women have the time to listen to the messages of extremists wanting to encourage them to join their movements. They are also likely to be attracted to extremist organisations by the prospects of adventure and the opportunity to participate in something that will give them status and provide meaning in their lives. Other experts argue that "adolescents like intensity, excitement, and arousal ... It is a developmental period when

60. Allan, H., Glazzard, A. Jersperson, S., Teddy-Tumu, S. & Winterbotham, E. 2015. Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypothesis and Literature Review. Royal United Services Institute, p.20.

61. Denoeux and Carter, 2009, p.77.

62. Ibid.

63. Bondokji et al., 2016, p. 24

64. Denoeux and Cater, 2009, p. 21

an appetite for adventure, a predilection for risks, and a desire for novelty and thrills seems to reach naturally high levels”.<sup>65</sup> By joining extremists groups these young people open themselves up to the possibility of participating in something thrilling and outside of normal experience.<sup>66</sup>

This factor, in part, may help to explain why so many extremists and terrorists tend to be from younger generations.

### **2.3.10. Triggering events**

Writers on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism stress that it's important to distinguish between root causes and preconditions for terrorism and the situational factors that actually trigger specific attacks. These can

It's important to distinguish between root causes or a problem and situation factors that trigger attacks.

include calls for revenge or action following events that promote outrage on the part of the extremist group. These triggers or precipitating events can include the desire for revenge following violent attacks against the in-group, police brutality, any action that existentially threatens the in-group, evidence perceived discrimination, and even speeches by public figures that denigrate the extremist groups community.

Triggering events can also occur at a point where perceived injustices or abuses have reached such a peak that communities are prepared to go beyond simple disengagement and disaffection in order to express their outrage and bring about change. For instance, revelations that officials have been guilty of corruption on a grand scale can provide a powerful motivation for communities to turn to or support terrorist acts as people recognise how these have impacted on them. Such anger could result in violence being directed at specific individuals involved, government institution that allowed looting to happen, or external groups or countries that have provided support to corrupt individuals or institutions<sup>67</sup>.

### **2.3.10. In summary**

Experts studying radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism have developed multiple frameworks to explain the factors that contribute towards the acts of extreme violence committed by extremist organisations. These frameworks may differ in terms of labelling and how they group different factors, but they also share a common recognition that the factors leading to radicalisation are complex, involving an intersection between structural conditions, intrinsic motivations and individual vulnerabilities. Fundamental to this understanding is the recognition that it's possible to overstate the impact of social and economic issues as a driver of extremism and to overlook issues relating to personal identity claims, relationships and ideological or religious commitments. Simultaneously, it is possible to focus in on one of the attributes displayed by an extremist – for instance, commitment to a particular religious sect – and to ignore extremists' legitimate grievances concerning, for example, of political injustice and/or corruption.

### **2.4. Pathways to radicalisation and joining extremist groups**

It's common for people discussing violent extremist and terrorist groups to refer to

Not everyone who joins an extremist group is recruited, many enlist themselves.

members being recruited into these organisations, but experts have warned that the term recruitment must be used judiciously to avoid distorting how the process happens. If we understand recruitment

65. Ronald E. Dahl, "Adolescent Brain Development: A Period of Vulnerabilities and Opportunities. Keynote Address," Annals New York Academy of Sciences 1021 (2004): 1-22, in Bondokji, 2016, p. 17.

66. Ibid.

67. Denoeux and Carter, 2009: 38.

to involve individuals being persuaded and incentivised to join violent extremist groups by dedicated agents, then such recruits would only represent a fraction of the members of such groups. In fact, research has shown that a large percentage of those joining extremist groups could better be described as having enlisted themselves. Many of these radicalised people actively sought out groups they believed could accommodate their ideological and religious beliefs and allow them to develop their identities further. Extremist groups do, of course, seek to promote their agendas and to attract members, but responding to these calls is only one of the ways people come to join these groups.<sup>68</sup>

In this section we look briefly at some of the models experts have put forward to explain the pathways people follow on their way to being radicalised. We then examine some of the social groups that extremists have been known to target as they seek to swell their numbers and enhance their support.

#### ***2.4.1. Models of radicalisation***

While they have many different theories about how people come to join extremist groups, experts agree there is always a process involved. Nobody joins an extremist organisation on whim, instead people progress through a number psychological stages as they make the decision to join and act on behalf of violent extremist organisations. What follows are a few of the models that have been developed to outlines the steps involved in radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism.

Bondokji et al<sup>69</sup> suggest that a model for religious conversion developed by Professor Lewis Rambo offers useful insights into how people's convictions can change to allow for the adoption of a new religious-political ideology and how this can impact on behaviour. The model includes seven components that do not necessarily follow in a linear sequence. It begins with the specific individual's context and the surrounding factors that can prevent or facilitate conversion. Context can relate to educational background, employment, social life, cultural trends and experience among many other determinants. The individual then experiences a crisis in which some event or realisation destabilises his or her religious identity. The crises could result from physical injuries, illness or bereavement, or from the realisation that current beliefs do not match with individual experiences. To address the crisis, the individual embarks on a quest to find an alternative belief system that corresponds with a new understanding of the world. The individual then experiences an encounter with someone who can introduce them to a new faith experience. This person will normally impress the seeker by appearing genuinely spiritual, well-grounded and kind. This person may answer the seeker's questions, provide guidance and offer literature and tracts that can attract the individual to a new organisation. During the interaction phase the individual will be introduced to the organisation whose members are likely to be very welcoming and warm. Members will take care to present the new recruit with a united front and ensure that he or she remains oblivious to any problems within the group. The encounter period ends when the individual makes a commitment to the new group and starts to be fully integrated into it, taking up its rituals and moral obligations. In the final phase, known as the outcome phase, the new member become fully invested in the new group's ideology and participates in actions intended to further its cause.

Bondokji et al suggest that forensic psychologist, Randy Borum's four stage model for ideological development highlights the important role factors in the individual's immediate social, economic and political context play in raising awareness about their disadvantaged position in society. Radicalisation, Borum argues, begins when individuals experience social and economic deprivation.

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68. Borum, 2011: 13-14

69. Bondokji, et al. 2016, p.12

They then compare their situations with those of others and recognise the inequity in their treatment, developing a growing resentment about their positions. Individuals then attribute blame to others who they see as being responsible for the hardship they experience. In the final phase of the model they develop a justification for violence through a process known as moral disengagement in which opponents are demonised and dehumanised. This process makes it possible for people to commit acts they would normally see as going against their normal ideas of moral behaviour. While the model outlines one clear path to radicalisation and violence, it has been criticised for largely ignoring the role that ideology has to play in the individual's journey towards radicalisation

One other model Bodokji et al.<sup>70</sup> suggest offers useful ways of understanding radicalisation is one proposed by Fathali Moghaddam called a Staircase to Terrorism. This model helps to explain how, while there are many disgruntled people in society, only a few ever become terrorists. The model envisages that people must ascend six steps to reach the point where they are willing to engage in terrorist attacks. These steps grow narrower and narrower as they ascend leaving space for fewer and fewer people. The first wide step accommodates large numbers of people who feel alienated and marginalised. The second somewhat narrower step accommodates people who are prepared to take action to improve their lot in life, but would not be willing to resort to violence. When these people fail to find solutions a portion of them will proceed to the next even narrower step where their feelings of anger can be manipulated by radical/terrorist figures who convince individuals to attribute their frustration to a specific enemy. A smaller group of individuals can be persuaded to adopt a terrorist mind-set and have the potential to engage in violence. These individuals are considered to be fully recruited when they see the terrorist organisation and its goals as completely legitimate and they are prepared to commit acts of sometimes hideous violence in the names of these groups. The final step is achieved when individuals are trained to perform terrorist acts with some being deployed to carry out attacks.

All of the models described above outline a pathway a person can follow individually or within a group that may lead to their becoming radicalised and willing to engage violent acts. In some instances, individuals will progress along these pathways by themselves, but in most they will be guided through the process by extremist group members who are assigned to attract new members.

#### ***2.4.2. Some groups that may be targeted for radicalisation***

Extremist groups will naturally target specific categories of people for radicalisation based on their own specific needs and on the likelihood that people belonging to these social groups will respond positively to their messages. Potential targets may include a diverse range of people including well-educated middle class professionals, unemployed marginalised youth, frustrated university students, and impoverished subsistence farmers. This section examines a few of the categories of people extremists have been known to target. It also explores why they may be interested in these groups and why members of these groups may be vulnerable to or attracted by the extremist's messages.

Potential targets for extremist recruitment could include including well-educated middle class professionals, unemployed marginalised youth, frustrated university students, and impoverished subsistence farmers.

#### **Migrants as potential recruits**

In the International Organization for Migration's 2018 World Migration Report, Khalid Koser and Amy Cunningham observe that "political leaders, reflecting varying degrees of popular sentiment, are linking migrants and migration with the rising threat of violent extremism and terrorism."<sup>71</sup>

70. Ibid.

71. Koser, K., and Cunningham, A. 2018. Migration, Violent Extremism and Social Exclusion. In International Organisation for Migration.

They, however, note that the reality is generally quite different to the spectre of heightened threat raised by these politicians. In fact, the evidence suggests that migrants are no more likely to commit violent acts than people from other populations that are assumed to be at risk of being recruited into violent extremist organisations. Neumann<sup>72</sup> suggests that “only a miniscule percentage of migrants will ever turn to terrorism.” While research suggests that that migrants are much more likely to be fleeing acts of violent extremism than planning to execute these acts in the countries that have fled to.

The numbers appear to be small, but there are cases where people who have undergone the process of radicalisation have been identified among migrant populations. The following are some examples of how this can happen:

- Fake migrants is the term often used for terrorists who pose as refugees and use migration routes to cross international borders. Their migrant status should not be seen to have anything to do with their radicalisation, because they are only exploiting migration flows as a way of entering a foreign country.<sup>73</sup>
- Some examples have been identified of people who have been radicalised while living in refugee camps. It’s been suggested that radicalisation to violent extremism can take root in camps because people often have limited education and camps provide no opportunities for people to work or occupy their time productively. The limitations on freedom of movement can also exacerbate frustrations which enhances the possibility of people becoming sympathetic to extremist promises of a better life.<sup>74</sup>
- A study by Mohammed Elshimi, Raffaello Pantucci, Sarah Lain and Nadine Salman <sup>75</sup> focusing on migrant labourers from Central Asia working in Russia found that the numbers of people who were radicalised was very limited. Where people were recruited they found that this had to do with a range of complex facts, including: i.) people being exposed to more radical religious ideas than they generally encounter in their home countries, ii.) people having greater access to the Internet where they could be exposed to online propaganda, iii.) people feeling isolated and wanting to adopt a more fixed identity, iv.) people being convinced by recruiters that they needed to fight in Syria and Iraq to protect Muslims against the West. The study found that people directly involved in recruiting tended to come from the migrant’s home country which helped them to build a relationship of trust, but that these people normally worked for people of other nationalities. It was also noted that people were sometimes tricked into joining organisations after being promised secure, well-paying jobs in countries such as Turkey.
- Another category of migrants who are seen to be vulnerable to recruitment are new migrants. These people are known to experience a sense of social dislocation as they are overwhelmed by life in a new country and struggle to adapt to different cultures and languages. This sense of dislocation can be amplified by “thwarted expectations, experiences of rejection and economic frustration”<sup>76</sup> as finding life in a new country is harder than anticipated. These people may be looking for others who can provide them with support and give them a sense of belonging. This is a need which can be exploited by recruiters who may take advantage of the migrants’ isolation and encourage people to channel grievances and resentment they may have into violent activities.<sup>77</sup>

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World Migration Report 2018.

72. Neumann, 2017, p. 25.

73. Neumann, 2017: 26.

74. Koser & Cunningham, 2018, p.6-7.

75. Elshimi, et al. 2018. Understanding the factors contributing to radicalisation among Central Asian labour migrants in Russia. RUSI.

76. Neumann, 2017, p. 24.

77. Ibid.

- It's not only new migrants that experience difficulties, studies have also shown that descendants of new migrants, i.e. people born in the country their parents migrated to, can become vulnerable to recruitment.

This despite the fact that they speak the language of the country and are often full citizens. These children of migrants can experience a crises of identity because, while they no longer identify with the traditions and cultures of their parents and grandparents, they can feel “equally alienated from their countries of residence, where they feel unaccepted and sometimes experience discrimination”<sup>78</sup>This experience has been described as “double sense of non-belonging” and has been frequently applied to Muslim immigrants living in Europe. The feeling of alienation experienced by some of these people can see them looking to find meaning and purpose by either seeking out extremist groups or succumbing to the seductive narratives of recruiters. This explanation for why a tiny minority of people get involved in extremist activities, fails to account for the fact that so many others facing the same structural conditions do not get involved<sup>79</sup>.

What should be evident about the different forms of migration discussed above is that they all contribute to creating conditions that can leave people vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups, but only a fraction of the people experiencing these conditions are actually radicalised. In most of these incidences it's the fact that people feel alienated and cut off from their identity groups that makes them vulnerable to approaches by recruiters. The literature is also consistent in warning that attempts by authorities to crack down on migrants will only result in people becoming resentful and that this will play into the hands of organisations seeking to recruit members from within migrant populations.

### **Recruitment of children**

A recently produced handbook by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) notes that there is growing concern regarding the number of children who have been drawn into extremist organisations and the way in which they are being used. The handbook observes that while children are often recruited along with their parents, there are many examples of children being targeted for recruitment by themselves. The reasons why the groups target children, defined as human beings under 18 years, can be especially disturbing. These include the following<sup>80</sup>:

- Visibility and propaganda - There is enormous shock value for organisations that are able to show images of children being exposed to or engaging in violent acts. By making public images of children involved in brutality, extremist groups signal to the world that they are ruthless and that their power lies in their ability and willingness to commit extreme acts of violence.
- Demography- In some countries where adult populations have been decimated by fighting or illnesses children can be easy targets for recruitment. Left without adult caregivers, children can be vulnerable to groups that initially offer comfort and sustenance, but who ultimately want to use them to promote their own agendas.
- Community expectations - There are cases where communities perceive that armed groups, including terrorist organisations, are protecting them from attacks from other groups or abuse by the State. In these instances, families and communities have been known to expect youth to join these groups and participate in their defence.

78. Neumann, 2017, p. 27.

79. Ibid.

80. UNODC. 2017. Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The role of the Justice System. United Nations Officer on Drugs and Crime. Vienna, p. 10-11.

- **Economic benefits** - Armed groups, again including extremists and terrorists, benefit economically from using children because they can be paid very little or nothing at all for their contributions in both fighting and supportive roles. The prevalence of small arms in conflict zones has meant children can often be as effective as adults in combat situations.
- **Control** – Children can be more easily intimidated into carrying out orders than adults, while at the same time being more inclined to quickly show loyalty to leaders. They are also more likely to adopt the “beliefs and behaviours of those they love and respect”.
- **Tactical advantages** – Children can be especially useful for delivering messages, conducting surveillance, transporting materials and undertaking suicide acts. They tend to arouse less suspicion and can get into places adults may not be able to access. They also have less understanding of the risks they being asked to undertake, show less anxiety and are more likely to carry out orders.

Extremist groups employ a range of methods to draft children into their ranks. Note: The term recruitment can never be applied without reservation in this case, because the power differences between recruiters and children will always mean some degree of coercion or duress will be involved. The following are some of the primary ways in which groups draw children into their activities<sup>81</sup>:

- Forced recruitment is one of the main ways in which extremist groups bring children into their ranks. They can do so by abducting children by force, coercing them with threats or by buying them from human traffickers. They often prey on children living in situations of poverty and who lack parental care.
- When communities have ties with extremist or terrorist groups then children may receive encouragement from community leaders to join these groups. This is especially the case when communities believe the extremists are protecting them from other external forces.
- Groups may offer economic enticements to young people or to their parents to encourage them to join their struggles and to be loyal to their leaders. These enticements can include cash, but they can also include payments in the form of food, accommodation and protection.
- Transnational recruitment occurs when children are taken from their home countries to participate in extremist activities in foreign lands. Some children act independently in crossing borders to join transnational terrorist groups, while others can accompany their parents. Children are also abducted by transnational terrorist groups and forced to travel to other countries.
- Schools can provide fertile recruitment grounds in areas where extremists have territorial control over areas and where they can dictate what goes into the school curriculum. Children are often indoctrinated in these schools and encouraged support the aims and objectives of the group.
- Extremists can use sophisticated propaganda to attract children. This can include dramatic images of well-armed men in smart uniforms offering children the chance to be heroes. It can also include footage of people from the recruits religious or ideological community being victimised. Children are then encouraged to defend or avenge the ills suffered by these people. Propaganda can also take the form of cartoons and video games.

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81. UNODC. 2017, p. 11 - 13.

- The fact that many children are active users of the Internet opens up the door for online recruitment efforts which can include the propaganda strategies noted above as well as person-to-person recruitment methods.

### Recruiting youth

The United Nations categorises youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age, covering the period when young people make the progression from puberty to adulthood. It is a time when many young people are vulnerable and impressionable as they becoming increasingly aware of the social and political world around them, while simultaneously struggling to establish their own adult identities and to locate themselves within this world. It is a time of uncertainty that radical groups will often seek to exploit and it is no accident that youth make up the majority of people these groups are able to attract<sup>82</sup>. It's also a stage at which the push and pull factors discussed in Section 2.4 can exert a strong influence on youth as they become increasingly independent of family supervision and responsible for their own choices and behaviours.

It is no accident that youth make up the majority of people these groups are able to attract.

As with all situations the factors that enhance the likelihood that youth will respond to radical messages are complex and contextual. In poor and marginalised communities, the sense of frustration and relative deprivation may enhance the likelihood of youth joining extremist groups. But poverty is not the only driver, radical recruiters will also target well-educated youth from middle class and wealthy families. Research has shown that both poor and middle class youth are attracted by the idea of fulfilling a “social purpose” and being of service to people that they identify as being members of their identity group. This is especially the case when youth perceive that their communities are being subject to domestic or foreign oppression. Engaging in militant activity to resist this oppression can be appealing, because it allows youth to respond to what they see as a noble calling whilst relieving some of the sense of powerlessness they may be experiencing.<sup>83</sup>

Several factors make it easier for recruiters to reach out to youth and to draw them into extremist organisations. These include the fact that, in areas where youth have access to the Internet, they tend to spend more time online than other segments of the population. This can enhance the prospects of youth being exposed to the often very sophisticated online propaganda developed by radical groups. It also enhances the chances of youth engaging with extremists on social media. For the recruiters, who monitor these sites with a view to initiating contacts with likely recruits, the Internet provides an environment where they can operate comfortably without being easily traced. Recruiters are able to groom potential recruits with minimal risk online and only risk face to face meetings once they are relatively certain their targets are committed

When it comes to exposure to religious indoctrination, research has found that “recruiters place a heavy emphasis on religious obligations and have been successful in luring young recruits by presenting their agendas as a holy wars or causes”<sup>84</sup>. Not only may youth responding to these obligations experience a sense of purpose, a sense of adventure and a feeling of agency, but they can also hope to gain spiritual benefits, such as rewards in the afterlife, which make “radical choices even more appealing for young people”. The recruiter’s task in manipulating young people with religious messages is often made easier by the fact that youth often have an underdeveloped knowledge of religion. Writing about youth vulnerability to extremism in the Indo-Pacific, Iffat Idris suggests that:

82. Cachalia, R., Salifu, U., & Ndung'u. August 2016. The dynamics of youth radicalisation in Africa: Reviewing the current evidence. Institute for Security Studies Paper 296.

83. Ibid.

84. Chaichila, et al. 2016, p. 17.

*Ignorance of religious teaching opposed to violence makes youth more vulnerable and susceptible to recruitment. Religious institutions have the potential to capture the mind of the young people with misconstrued interpretation of religion. These youths are manipulated into believing that they are actually struggling for a nobler and worthier cause, with the assurance of victory in this world and in the Hereafter<sup>85</sup>.*

It's noteworthy that, while religious schools such as Muslim madrassas are often believed to be fertile grounds for radical extremism - and some are - it is often the youth from secular schools who fall prey to religious recruiters. Youth, who have been schooled in more moderate, religious schools often have a more grounded knowledge of religion and are able to resist the teachings of extremist preachers<sup>86</sup>.

From a recruiter's perspective youth can be very useful members of an extremist or terrorist organisation. For instance, the knowledge many young people have when it comes to producing and packaging content for social media can be highly valued when it comes to producing propaganda. Youth are also valuable, because they seldom have prior police records and are thus able to move more freely without being hindered by security agencies.

### **Recruitment in Prisons**

A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC)<sup>87</sup> handbook on radicalisation in prisons warns that the problem should not be overstated, but concedes that "violent extremist prisoners may network in prisons, gain access to a large pool of potential recruits, and coordinate extremist crime outside the prison." Other specialists, such as Neumann<sup>88</sup> have described prisons "as 'hotbeds' of radicalisation, because they are places in which (predominantly) young men experience personal crises and are cut off from traditional social relationships, such as family and friends". The reality seems to be that the situation will differ from prison to prison, and that even if the numbers are low, this remains a concern.

The UNDOC<sup>89</sup> handbook suggests that it is not the prisons themselves or the prison conditions that lead to prisoners being radicalised. Rather, they argue "... prison conditions can activate social and psychological mechanisms that may, under certain circumstances and for certain individuals, induce a shift toward violent extremist attitudes and behaviour that is then interpreted as radicalisation to violence." Many of the factors that result in people outside of prison being radicalised are also applicable in prisons.

Prisons can provide ideas places for those wishing to radicalise others to study their targets and to gradually

However, the experiences can be more intense because of the conditions and confined spaces, for instance, people looking to radicalise and recruit individuals have time to study potential recruits and carefully select who they wish to target. People with grievances will feel these more acutely, while charismatic leaders will be able to promote narratives of unfairness and exploit feelings of deprivation. Prisoners may also feel compelled to join extremist groups to "obtain food, somewhere to sleep and protection regardless of whether they identify with and intrinsically adhere to the groups violent extremist ideology or not"<sup>90</sup>.

85. Idris, I. 2018. Youth vulnerability to violent extremist groups in the Indo-Pacific. (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1438). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

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86. Ibid.

87. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2016. Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons. New York, p.107.

88. Neumann, 2017 p. 48.

89. UNODC. 2016, p.109.

90. UNODC, 2016, p. 113

Other factors that can enhance the chance of radicalisation taking place in prisons are the fact that prisoners are isolated from their support structures, including their families, friends and religious mentors. This separation “of an individual from his/her former life, [can] encourage him/her to adopt and accept a new social identity” this can involve being exposed to “religious instruction that is based on violence, and open up opportunities for training in violent extremist activities”<sup>91</sup>. People frequently turn to religion during times of incarceration as they seek to change their lives, but they are often not well informed about the doctrines they are choosing to follow. This opens up opportunities for recruiters to introduce them to a distorted theology that advances violence and the recruiting group’s ideological position.

One point of general agreement is that the chances of prisoners being radicalised whilst incarcerated is reduced if the prison conditions are of a reasonable standard and they are not singled out for harsher treatment than other prisoners. It’s also worth noting that when prisoners belonging to radical religious or ideological groups are discriminated against this can have an impact in terms of radicalising friends and family members outside the prison.

### **Extremists targeting women as recruits**

The role of women in violent extremist organisations has frequently been overlooked because men are generally seen to be the people most actively involved in carrying out violent attacks. However, the fact that women seldom make the headlines for being at the forefront of raids and strikes in no way suggests their contributions are of less significance to extremist organisations. Primarily involved in behind the scenes supportive roles, women are frequently relied on to provide the infrastructure and resources that make it possible for men to engage in combat. Their roles can include participating in propaganda and recruitment campaigns, raising funds and caring for wounded fighters. They also include smuggling weapons, money and messages and gathering intelligence. In instances where extremist organisations hold territory and are trying to establish communities, women are also highly valued in traditional domestic roles as wives and mothers<sup>92</sup>. For groups making claims to territory and nationhood, it is important to be able to claim that lives of people living in these “states” allow for normal domestic settlements. While it is generally less common, some extremist groups do use women in combat situations and involve them in attacks, including involving them in suicide bombings. There are thus multiple reasons why extremist organisations seek to radicalise women and to recruit them into their ranks

The fact that women seldom make the headlines for being at the forefront of raids and strikes in no way suggests their contributions are of less significance to extremist organisations

The reasons why women join violent extremist groups are as varied and complex as they are for men and the push and pull factors are largely context dependent. In some instances, women have been attracted to extremist organisations as a way of contributing to the development and defence of particular ethnic or religious groups. Others have joined religious groups because they feel these organisations can provide them with a chance to live “pious” religious lives where they are honoured as women of faith. For some, joining Islamic groups, the decision has been based on a rejection of individualistic Western values that are seen to be materialistic and superficial<sup>93</sup>. Women in these positions are also likely to reject feminist ideals. Recruiters will play on these desires, promising women an opportunity to contribute towards the growth of a religious community.

91. UNODC, 2016, p.111

92. See De Leede, S. et al. 2017. Radicalisation and violent extremism - focus on women. How women become radicalised, and how to empower them to prevent radicalisation. Policy Department for Citizen’s Rights and Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament.

93. De Leede, et al. 2017, p.24.

These promises are often augmented with pledges that women will find husbands and be able to find fulfilment as wives and mothers. In some instances, women targeted by extremists have included adolescent girls from loving households who are encouraged to leave their families to join extremist communities.

Research has also shown that women do not necessarily join religious groups because of a deep commitment to the faith. They may also join to maintain strong relationships with male partners or family members who have joined these groups. They may also be driven by economic imperatives, becoming part of extremist groups as a way of sustaining themselves and their families financially. It's also evident that in some cases the decision may not be voluntary. Women have been coerced into joining extremists by families and relatives and made to marry fighters. In many instances they may have been abducted as girls and forcibly integrated into extremist dominated organisations or communities.<sup>94</sup>

### ***2.4.3. The place of propaganda in extremist recruitment strategies***

The extent to which vulnerable people are exposed to the propaganda produced and distributed by violent extremists can be a key factor in determining whether they are likely to become radicalised and support or join extremist and terrorist organisations. These powerful messages are designed to convince potential recruits of the legitimacy of the extremist's objectives and to convince them that the use of often extremely violent methods in pursuing these objectives is justified<sup>95</sup>. When extremists are driven by religious goals then their propaganda will often be underpinned by references to sacred scriptures that lend divine substance to the extremist ideologies. These messages can be distributed through multiple channels which include traditional and social media, word of mouth, pamphlets, DVDs and on radio or television channels controlled by extremist groups.

When extremists are driven by religious goals then their propaganda will often be underpinned by references to sacred scriptures that lend divine substance to the extremist ideologies

Specialist in violent extremist communication Alexander Ritzmann<sup>96</sup> writes that propaganda produced by extremists is intended to promote a world view that “reduces the complexity of life to a simple black and white picture”. In doing so propaganda promotes the simplistic binary perspective that underpins extremist ideology and which divides the world into two groups: us, the in-group, and them, the outgroup. The in-group is projected as victims struggling against the evil machinations of the out-group, who are represented as the aggressors. By representing the world in this way the extremist propaganda can leave potential recruits feeling both guilty (for not helping victims) and duty bound to get involved. It can also leave them feeling empowered, because it offers them a way of getting involved and an opportunity to stand up for the victims and to engage in a noble cause that they see as being bigger than themselves.<sup>97</sup> Recruits will be called upon to defend and fight for their brothers and sisters from the same racial, ethnic or faith groups. Extremist propaganda will often aim to show that failing to join the struggle amounts to a betrayal of the potential recruit's community, while agreeing to engage with the extremist's cause is an honourable act that will attract emotional, social, and in the case of religious causes, spiritual rewards.

Writing about propaganda produced by Islamic terrorist groups, Dzhekova<sup>98</sup> et al. suggest that terrorist organisations employ three rhetorical methods to justify their reliance on violence to

94. Ndung'u, I. & Salifu, U. 2017. The role of women in violent extremism in Kenya. Institute for Security Studies, p. 4-5.

95. Dzhekova, 2016, p. 24.

96. Ritzmann, 2015, p. 26.

97. Ritzmann, 2015, p.28.

98. Dzhekova, et al. 2016, p. 30.

achieve political goals. Firstly, they will claim that terrorists have no choice but to employ violent methods, because violence is the only way in which weaker parties can overcome the dominance of the powerful. Secondly, they will work to demonise and dehumanise their enemies and represent them as the real terrorists. In doing so they will attempt to show that violence is necessary and that followers should feel no sympathy for those that are harmed during the attacks.

The goal will be to shift responsibility away from the extremists and to blame the institutions or nations targeted by the terrorist acts for the violence. In doing so the extremists will present an argument that tries to show they had no alternatives to violence. Some organisations will seek to disguise their violent acts by employing a “diplomatic stance in promoting peaceful solutions” while actually engaging in violence behind their façade of moderation.

Propaganda seldom results in people undergoing 180-degree conversions and it is usually people who already have some sympathies with the cause being promoted who respond positively to the messages. Propaganda is also at its most effective when it is closely to the truth and where people can see evidence of the propagandists claims in the world around them. Ritzmann<sup>99</sup> writes that the radicalisation process that propaganda forms part of is generally linked to a real world crises or conflict such as the “wars in Iraq or Syria or the influx of migrants into Europe”. Extremists, he argues, will make reference to unfolding events and manipulate information to develop a narrative that supports their ideology.<sup>100</sup>

It’s notable that propaganda can work in multiple ways and often includes a combination of messaging and action. When people have been groomed to accept the positions adopted by terrorist groups successful attacks against their “enemies” can raise their profiles and enhance their messages. Such attacks can show potential recruits that organisations mean business and that they have the capacity to make an impact on their world.

However, research has also shown that propaganda only forms part of the recruitment strategy. For the most part, people who are radicalised and join extremist organisations will do so after engaging with others on a face to face basis. This is the case even in a world where the Internet provides opportunities for extremists to create virtual online communities and where they have opportunities for long-term secure engagements with potential recruits. In some isolated instances the Internet has been the sole instrument through which “lone wolf” terrorists have been radicalised, but in most cases recruitment efforts have involved personal contacts in real settings<sup>101</sup>. Ritzmann<sup>102</sup> suggests that:

In most cases, a trusted person provides the necessary credibility that makes it easier for the individual to accept the manipulated information. The trusted messenger could be a family member, a friend or a charismatic recruiter.

Propaganda is clearly an important element in the extremists’ arsenal. It clearly has an important role in radicalising people and attracting recruits to join extremist organisations, but it can also play an important role in winning support for extremist actions. It can also contribute to making it possible for large numbers of people to remain silent or inactive as militant extremists carry out brutal attacks on targeted groups. For both of these reasons journalists need to carefully consider how they can

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99. Ritzmann, 2015, p. 27.

100. The way in which extremists manipulate narratives was evident following the attacks on two Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on 15 March 2019 by a man who shot and killed fifty Moslem worshippers and wounded many more. While the people of New Zealand rallied behind the victims of the attacks, Islamic extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the ISIS used the massacre as an opportunity to appeal to supporters for funds and to attract new recruits. In doing so they made emotive use of video footage of the massacre filmed by the shooter. In their appeals that promoted a narrative that the incident showed that Christian Nations were sponsoring the killing of Muslims around the world. (Washington Post, 20 March 2019).

101. Schmidt, 2013, p. 34.

102. Ritzmann, 2015, p. 28

avoid being used in the propaganda game played by extremists. They also need to consider what role, if any, they have to play in countering propaganda. We return to this question later in the handbook.

## 2.5. Strategies being used to prevent radicalisation leading to violence

In this section of the handbook we examine some of the approaches international organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations have employed in trying to prevent the radicalisation of people and the growth of extremist organisations. These strategies, which involve the use of soft power, can be divided into two categories which are determined by the extent to which they are deliberately targeted at undermining radicalisation processes, weakening extremist organisations and interrupting their activities. On the one hand, there are initiatives that may impact positively in preventing radicalisation and extremism, but where these impacts are indirect benefits of strategies intended to improve the social and political conditions communities are facing. On the other hand, there are initiatives which have the prevention and countering of radicalisation and extremism as their primary objectives and which specifically aim to address the context which allows these to take hold.

In a report focusing on preventing and countering violent extremism in fragile states the British government's Stabilisation Unit<sup>103</sup> identifies broad range of initiatives intended to do more than prevent radicalisation or extremism, but which could make a positive difference. If implemented correctly these initiatives have the potential to bolster resilience to extremism and to address some of the contextual push factors that leave people vulnerable to recruitment. These activities include the following.

- **Making governance more effective and inclusive.** Ineffective governments can enhance perceptions of marginalisation by groups that feel they are being denied the services and treatment they believe they are entitled to. These feelings of abandonment and neglect can leave communities vulnerable to both violent extremists and criminal groups that seek to exploit anger and frustration. Initiatives that help to strengthen governance can contribute to stronger cooperative relationships between civil society and government which can counter the messaging of extremist groups. They can also lead to people taking electoral processes seriously, which enhances their sense of citizenship and involvement and reduces feelings alienation.
- **Counter-corruption efforts.** When widespread corruption exists citizens may conclude that government exists to exploit citizens rather than to serve them. Research has found that where corruption is higher businesses and private individuals tend to pay less tax. Reducing corruption can ultimately result in more money coming into the state coffers which, when spent correctly on economic development and services can improve people's overall quality of life. It can also result in people taking a more active interest in questions of transparency and governance as they demand to see what their taxes are being spent on. Furthermore, the eradication of corruption can play an important part in strengthening a nation's judicial system as policing and justice processes become more honest and more transparent. All of these factors can impact on the "push" factors that make people vulnerable to extremist recruitment.

Initiatives that help to strengthen governance can contribute to stronger cooperative relationships between civil society and government which can counter the messaging of extremist groups

103. Stabilisation Unit. 2018. Countering Violent Extremism in Fragile and Conflict Affected States: Report, p. 8-15.

- **Security and justice initiatives and Security Sector reform.** Improvements in these areas can enhance the citizen's belief in the state's security and justice institutions and in their willingness to cooperate with the state in identifying violent extremist organisations. Research has shown that it's not enough to simply enhance policing, reforms must take place throughout the justice system and that there is a need to ensure both efficiency and fairness. There also need to be a focus on enhancing adherence to principles of defending human rights when it comes to policing and security reform.
- **Addressing poverty and unemployment** can help to reduce the likelihood of people being radicalised and recruited into extremist organisations. Job creation initiatives that promote active engagement and self-esteem can help people build resilience. Employment opportunities can reduce people's vulnerability to economic incentives offered by extremists. It is noteworthy though, that programmes providing vocational training which fail to lead to meaningful employment can damage expectations and exacerbate resentment which might leave people more vulnerable to radicalisation. Similarly, employment projects that privilege certain groups over others can also result in resentment and exacerbate potential problems.
- **Investment in education** may contribute towards reducing the chances of students and youth being recruited by violent extremist organisations, but this will depend greatly on the quality of the programmes provided. Research, as we have noted earlier, has shown that there is no clear link between educational levels and extremism and that both educated and uneducated youth can be vulnerable. Nonetheless, it is possible that exposure to different ideas and understandings through education can result in people becoming more critical thinkers who are less vulnerable to extremist's polarising narratives. It's also believed that religious education that exposes students to more moderate understandings of holy texts can prepare people to resist radicalisation.
- Encouraging independent media outlets and investigatory journalism can provide an effective means of both highlighting violent extremism-related issues and of holding governments to account. This can lead to the reduction of grievances people may experience as governments seeking positive exposure respond responsibly to the needs of people expressed in the media and seek to avoid negative coverage. A free media can also provide the space for independent voices to be heard and for more moderate messages to be expressed which can potentially counter extremist narratives.
- Developments that contribute towards countering organised crime can result in improved governance in some areas and restrict the activities of extremist movements. Extremists and terrorist organisation often work closely with criminal organisations, using the same pathways for smuggling goods and sharing their influence over bribed officials. Areas dominated by criminal syndicates often experience the decline of traditional authorities such as clan leaders and religious leaders which can create a vacuum that extremists can fill bringing with them fundamentalist values and ideologies.
- In a report focusing on good practices in preventing violent extremism in the OSCE Region, Peter Neumann<sup>104</sup> identifies a broad range of specific activities that groups wanting to prevent radicalisation leading to extremism and terrorism have embarked on to erode or

Exposure to different ideas and understandings through education can result in people becoming more critical thinkers who are less vulnerable to extremist's polarising narratives

104. Neumann, P. 2017, p. 45.

disrupt extremist ideologies. These strategies have been used in different ways in numerous countries that sought to erode and disrupt extremist ideologies. They include the following:

- **National Plans of Action.** Some countries have taken up the challenge of identifying local drivers of radicalisation and developing strategies for addressing these so as to prevent extremism from growing in these countries. These strategies are contingent on different departments finding ways of working coherently together in developing a common set of goals and coordinating their activities. Such plans must define objectives, establish priorities and allocate roles and responsibilities. They must also make it possible for agencies to set targets they can achieve and to show how civil society stakeholders can be included in the programme. For these plans to be effective they need to be actively implemented and adequately funded.<sup>105</sup>
- **Prison programmes.** While prisons are frequently regarded as a hotbed for radicalisation because of the fact that they bring primarily young men into close contact with people who have been radicalised. Nonetheless, prisons can also offer valuable opportunities for programmes seeking to de-radicalise people and to assist them in disengaging from extremist organisations. It's believed that radicalisation in prisons can be limited if officers are trained to recognise signs of radicalisation and extremist recruitment taking place. Prisons can then intervene by involving specialists, such as Imams in the case of Islamic radicalisation, who can engage with prisoners and offer them alternatives to engagement with extremist organisations. Programmes aimed at preventing extremism do not need to focus exclusively on religion and can also include vocational training, counselling, family contacts, and assistance with employment and legal difficulties.
- **Policing.** While police are naturally involved in counter-terrorism activities, their contributions in combating radicalisation and extremism can be enhanced by involving them in community policing initiatives. The objective behind such initiatives is to narrow the gap between the police force and citizens and to create a feeling that communities and the police are jointly responsible for stopping crime, reducing radicalisation and promoting safety in communities. The goal must be to foster trust between the law enforcement agencies and people on the ground. Neumann<sup>106</sup> says that in practice this comes down to three core principles, namely: 1.) partnerships with community organisations and leaders that include youth, women's, religious and minority groups; 2.) problem-solving in which they police listen to community concerns and respond to these even they are not at the top of the police's priority list, and 3.) it should be proactive and preventive. The goal should be to educate and mobilise people before problems occur. People involved in these programmes must take great care to ensure that community policing does involve an equal partnership. They will fail if communities are simply seen as a source of tip-offs for the police.
- **Youth programmes.** It should already be clear from discussions earlier in this handbook why it is important to engage with young people when it comes to preventing radicalisation. Neumann<sup>107</sup> argues that in general the "purpose of youth work is to stabilise the lives of young people, strengthen 'protective factors' such as family, friends and education, inoculating them against negative behaviours, and minimising exposure to them". The methods used in preventing extremism among youth are similar. They aim to help young people to seek to strengthen family bonds and build healthy relationships and to develop their "sense of

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105. Neumann provides a number of useful examples in his report about how nations have developed and implemented plans with a view to preventing radicalisation and countering extremism that journalists with an interest in extremism would find interesting.

106. Neumann, 2017, pp.51 - 52.

107. Neumann, 2017, pp. 54 - 55

embeddedness within a local or national community.”<sup>108</sup> They also aim to help young people to work out their problems and to develop the skills and confidence that they need to pursue their goals in life without resorting to violent methods. Successful youth interventions won't just stop youth from joining extremist organisations, they will also empower them to speak out against violence and extremism.

- **Education.** Schools interventions are viewed as important because these are places where young people first make friends and begin to shape their understanding of the world around them. They should not only teach writing, reading and arithmetic, but should also introduce student to concepts such as democracy, citizenship and healthy lifestyles. They can become places where the first signs of radicalisation become obvious and teachers need to be prepared to recognise these signs. Many countries have chosen to offer training to teachers to help them identify problems and to equip them to respond to radicalisation. Programmes targeting radicalisation can also include classes designed to allow students to recognise a common base of shared human rights and to engage them in projects involving intercultural dialogue and discussions of identity.
- **Religion.** We have already noted that religious literacy – knowledge and understanding of one's own religion – can play a protective role and make people more resilient when it comes to the appeal of extremists. Studies have shown that members of terrorist groups often have low levels of knowledge about their religion at the time of their recruitment which made it possible for recruiters to feed them a particular dangerous narrative. There have been many instances where religious leaders have come together to speak out against violent depictions of their faiths. Others have confronted extremist use of religion by developing websites which challenge the justification of violence in the name of religion and equip people with arguments based on holy texts that can help them resist twisted religious teachings.
- **Women.** As noted earlier in this handbook, women have frequently played an important role in extremist organisations and a number of programmes have been developed to discourage them from getting involved. Other programmes have been designed to take advantage of the influence women have in society to counter the effectiveness of radicalisation. Neumann<sup>109</sup> proposes that there are three principle ways in which women can be involved. Firstly, reintegration and rehabilitation efforts should be targeted at women who often have children who were born during times of conflict. Secondly, women can contribute to detecting, influencing and disrupting radicalisation processes, especially when these are targeted at their children or children under their influence. In some countries women have attended training courses intended make them more effective in these roles. Thirdly, gender specific programmes should be considered in all programmes intended to counter extremism and these should not just be aimed at women. Such programmes should highlight the importance of observing the rights of all people regardless of gender.
- **Refugees.** Earlier we noted that, while migration is seldom the cause of violent radicalisation, the experience can leave people with grievances that leave them vulnerable to extremist persuasion. There are also fears of terrorists slipping across borders as fake migrants. It is

Schools can help reduce vulnerability to radicalisation by introducing students to concepts such as democracy, citizenship and healthy lifestyles.

108. Ibid.

109. Neumann, 2017, pp. 66-67.

argued that these people can most effectively be identified if authorities enlist the aid of law-abiding refugees in identifying such people. It's also important to provide refugees with help in identifying the early signs of radicalisation and in encouraging them to pay attention to changes in the behaviours of people around them. Most importantly, however, authorities need to ensure refugees are settled as comfortable as possible. This means authorities must "create certainty, establish clear pathways, ensure that decisions are taken transparently and swiftly, and support their integration as soon as it has been decided that they can stay."<sup>110</sup>

- **Interventions.** These are specific actions that are taken to support individuals who have been radicalised and sometimes recruited into extremist organisations, but who have not yet been involved in chargeable offenses. These interventions involve individually tailored measures intended to assist people with voluntary exits from extremism and can include psycho-social support, theological counselling, assistance in finding jobs and providing educational opportunities. Ideally such interventions should happen before people's views have hardened and they have cut themselves off from the "moderating influences of friends and family"<sup>111</sup> Interventions have three common elements: 1.) they must be voluntary, 2.) they should involve assessment tools which enable people intervening to know whether they have made a real impact, and 3.) they should involve coordinated action by different specialist groups such as government departments, youth groups and religious leaders. Such interventions have been known to be successful, but this is never guaranteed.
- **Returnees.** Work with people who have gone to fight with foreign terrorist groups has increased exponentially since the destruction of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and this has created significant challenges for authorities. Each individual needs to be dealt with individually, because, while some may be disillusioned and want to turn from extremism, others may still pose significant risks. It's important for governments to be able to assess the level of risk posed by these people and to create appropriate structures for dealing with them. Returnees often face arrest and imprisonment on their return, but once they have served their time they need help in re-integrating into society. In some countries these people have benefitted from the support of initiatives that help them access education, find employment and address the challenges of extracting themselves from the extremist milieu.

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110. Neumann, 2017, p. 69.

111. Neumann, 2017, p. 72.

## Part Three: A conflict sensitive approach to reporting on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism

In Part Three of this handbook we explore how, by adopting a conflict sensitive approach to their reporting, journalists can make a constructive contribution towards limiting the harmful effects extremism can have on their communities. We examine how many of the principles covered in Part One: Conflict Sensitive Journalism are applicable to contexts where extremists are operating and how by committing to these principles, we may help to reduce support for violence and terrorism. The question of how journalists should respond to terror attacks is addressed in Part Four.

None of the ideas and approaches we will be discussing fall outside of the norms we generally ascribe to good journalism, including fairness, accuracy, independence and responsibility. We remain committed to the principle that journalists should not direct the course a conflict should take. At the same time, we accept that through our coverage we can enable people to see there are alternatives to violence when it comes to achieving valued goals and improving their lives. We recognise that journalists should not confuse their roles. We are not security agents involved in anti-terrorist operations, nor are we activists working against the spread of radical thoughts and actions. We are story tellers who use our investigative, research, descriptive and narrative skills to provide communities with information they need to make informed decisions. Decisions that can be particularly critical when people are being targeted for radicalisation or where acts of violent extremism, including terrorism, are being planned and implemented. In many instance this can involve exposing people to options and viewpoints they may not previously have considered.

Journalists should not confuse their roles. We are not security agents involved in anti-terrorist operations, nor are we activists working against the spread of radical thoughts and actions. We are story tellers who provide communities with information they need to make informed decisions.

We do not want to overstate the contributions we can make. The impact of our work will always be limited by the context and by the extent to which people are open to different ways of approaching conflict. The constructive potential of our work can also be limited by the restrictions authorities place us. It's hoped that journalists facing excessive controls can argue for more tolerance by drawing on principles presented in this text to show how they can contribute to building peace.

Part Three of the handbook comprises four sections. In the first we look broadly at how the principles of conflict sensitive reporting can be applied in contexts where radicalisation and extremism are impacting on communities. In second we provide some specific strategies journalists can employ when working in these contexts. The third looks at how journalists can get a deeper understanding of their communities by employing the principles of community mapping, while the final section examines how we can deepen people's understanding of extremism by providing in-depth coverage.

### 3.1 . A conflict sensitive approach to covering radicalisation and extremism

One of the key principles of conflict sensitive reporting is the recognition that for journalism to make a difference it must take into account the views and concerns of all members

A one sided approach to the coverage of news will only result in us contributing towards division and the polarisation of people.

of society and report on these in ways that are compassionate and respectful. A one sided approach to the coverage of news will only result in us contributing towards division and the polarisation of people. This by no means suggests we should accept the violent actions of extremists, but it does

mean we should seek to understand what led them to this violence. What is it about our world that makes people vulnerable to extremist messages and which allows people to justify participating in extreme acts of terror? It should be clear from Part Two that there are always underlying reasons why people engage in violence and that unless these concerns are addressed we will continue to confront these problems. For journalism to contribute towards preventing violent extremism it needs to contribute towards the establishment of a just and fair society in which people's needs are adequately satisfied.

In Part Two we noted that many of the approaches that experts hope may contribute to preventing violent extremism have to do with broad political and social issues, such as improving governance and service delivery in communities. These factors include promoting democracy, preventing corruption, addressing poverty and unemployment, providing good education, promoting justice and enhancing security. It should be evident that good journalism which contributes to development and progress in these areas is already playing a role in preventing violent extremism. Such journalism keeps populations informed about factors affecting their wellbeing, helps ensure leaders in the public and private sectors are accountable to the people and monitors whether public funds are fairly distributed. In these situations, the contribution journalism makes to preventing extremism is a natural by-product of good reporting. A conflict sensitive approach to reporting goes further. It recognises its potential to make difference and looks for ways to contribute towards the prevention of violence. In the remainder of this section we'll explore how some of the conflict sensitive roles suggested for journalists covered in Part One can contribute towards preventing radicalisation and violent extremism.

### ***3.1.2. Reducing polarisation by revealing our common humanity***

In our focus on extremism in Part Two we noted that people from extremist groups tend to promote a view of the world that is black and white, where different groups are shown to hold diametrically opposite positions from each other. This kind of polarisation makes it easier for extremists to promote hatred and to justify the use of violence in pursuing their goals. The reality, however, is that people tend to share a

By telling stories that show that people tend value many of the same things and share many of the same values, journalists can contribute towards narrowing the divisions and making it more difficult for those pursuing extremist agendas to promote fear and hatred

great deal in common, even if they come from different cultural or religious backgrounds. By telling stories that show that people tend value many of the same things and share many of the same values, journalists can contribute towards narrowing the divisions and making it more difficult for those pursuing extremist agendas to promote fear and hatred. There is a tendency for media to give the most attention to the groups that make the most noise and these groups tend to be those promoting the most radical positions. Focusing excessively on these groups creates a distorted image of society. Conflict sensitive journalism seeks to be inclusive. It recognises that even when society is split along religious, cultural, ethnic and ideological lines, the groups on the different sides comprise a spectrum of beliefs ranging from tolerant moderates to intolerant extremists. For journalists this can mean actively seeking to learn more about the views of groups who seldom make the news, because they do not belong to radical organisations or to agencies and organisations that are opposing them.

In their efforts to win support and to direct anger and hatred at people from different religious, ethnic, racial or ideological groups, extremists will strive to promote negative stereotypes and prejudices. When journalists allow people to respond to these claims and provide evidence that counters them they can play a role in countering false narratives all for hatred to fester.

### 3.1.2. Disaggregating groups

In their book on Peace Journalism, Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick<sup>112</sup> argue that during conflict situations journalists should “AVOID portraying a conflict as consisting of only two parties contesting the same goal(s).” They argue that the logical outcome is that one of the parties must win and the other must lose. Instead they suggest we should “DISAGGREGATE the two parties into many smaller groups, with many needs and interests, pursuing many goals”. They suggest that when journalists can show that groups are not monolithic and include multiple sub-groups it becomes possible to find creative solutions to disagreements and to reach to people from within other group. This is wise advice for journalists reporting on extremist activities. It’s common for religious or ethnic groups to be blamed for extremist actions, when the actions being condemned have been carried out by small sub-groups who do not represent the general view of the larger group’s membership. Journalism that portrays groups as simple units in which everyone unquestioningly shares the same views – normally the views of the leaders – can badly misrepresent situations and mislead the public. Journalists who are able to enable audiences to recognise that groups can be complex and that they include sub-groups of people who see the world in different ways can contribute to depolarising communities and preventing violence.

When journalists can show that groups are not monolithic and include multiple sub-groups it becomes possible to find creative solutions to disagreements

#### **Case study: Challenging perceptions**

*On 22 May 2017 crowds of music fans were leaving an Ariana Grande concert when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the foyer of the Manchester Arena in the UK killing 22 people and seriously injuring 64 others. The attacks sparked fears about the danger of more attacks when it was learned that the attacker, an Islamic extremist, had been radicalised in Manchester. He was born to Muslim parents who emigrated from Libya to the UK in the 1990s.*

*The tragedy sparked fear among members of the Muslim community that they might be targeted in revenge attacks.*

*The Independent newspaper responded to these fears by publishing an in-depth report that showed how in the aftermath of the attack three members of the Muslim community had played a critical role in saving lives and aiding first responders on the day. It described how a Muslim surgeon rushed to the local hospital to offer his specialised services and how worked through the night to save patients who had suffered extreme injuries.*

*The article also showed how the Muslim owners of a local restaurant had given up their time as they handed out free food and water to victims and emergency workers after the attack. The restaurateur got involved when distressed survivors approached him for water and he realised there was a way he could use his resources to assist.*

*Another example cited involved the owner of a taxi service who despatched all of his vehicles to give free rides to people left stranded by the attack. This human interest story served to show how ordinary people can make a difference. It also served as an important counterpoint to the narratives of people who might have been promoting an anti-Muslim narrative in the wake of the attacks.*

*Stories of this kind can play an important role in encouraging people to examine their own prejudices and to realise that one cannot assume people sympathise with terrorists simply because they share the same religion, nationality or skin colour.*

112. Lynch, J. and McGoldrick, A. 2005. Peace Journalism. Stroud: Hawthorne Press.

### **3.1.3. Creating spaces for dialogue**

Violent extremism tends to flourish in situations where communities are polarised and where groups refuse to engage with each other. In these instances, journalists can play an important role by providing avenues for people to speak to each other and express their views. People who feel their identities are being respected and who feel able to articulate their views and beliefs are less likely to experience frustration and anger. This can be done in many ways. Journalists can go out into the field and canvas the views of people from different groups on issues affecting communities. They can also bring people from different groups together to discuss questions of common concern and to explore how concerns can be addressed in ways that will broadly satisfy everyone. They can also identify situations where groups find themselves in conflict with others and help groups to understand each other's needs and interests.

People who feel their identities are being respected and who feel able to articulate their views and beliefs are less likely to experience frustration and anger.

It is particularly important for journalists provide a communicative bridge between people from poor and marginalised groups and people in a

authority. By spending time with people in marginalised communities, journalists can find out about the kinds of messages these people would want to convey to authorities and other members of the society. They can approach these authorities, share with them what the people have had to say and demand a response. This can mean presenting authorities with the problems that are being experienced by the poor and asking them to explain how they are going to help resolve these problems. When leaders describe how they will respond journalists can report back in their newspapers, over the airwaves and online and demonstrate that dialogue is happening. The result of such reporting is likely to be that people will experience an increased sense of hope, but they are also likely to have their expectations raised. Reporters will need to follow-up on these stories to determine whether authorities have made progress in addressing the people's concerns.

### **3.1.4. Authenticating and countering extremist claims**

It's quite common for extremist groups to make claims about how badly members of the group they claim to represent have been treated by another group. While in some cases they are able to reference real events, in others these claims can be entirely fictional. Extremists have, in the past, used images of massacres to show how people from their group have been slaughtered. However, on closer investigation it has been found these images originated from entirely different conflicts. By counteracting these kinds of claims journalists can not only provide people with the truth, but they can educate people about the need to be sceptical when listening to extremist messaging.

By exposing false claims journalists can counteract extremist propaganda and alert people to the need to be sceptical.

In many instances leaders of extremist groups will claim to speak on behalf of entire ethnic, religious, political or racial groups, suggesting they represent all of these people. Journalists can counter these claims by interviewing people on whose behalf extremists claim to speak to find out if their views are being accurately represented and if they do see the extremists as representing them. It will often be the case that people from a particular religious, ethnic or ideological group are not supportive of claims extremists make on their behalf and it is important for them to be able to communicate this through the media. By clarifying these points journalists can make an important

contribution in reducing the likelihood of violence by allowing groups to see that other groups mean them no harm.

This can have important effects on conflict. If some members of a group are able to make it clear that they have no interest in pursuing the threats made by an extremist group against another group, this can play an important role in alleviating tensions and allowing for groups find peaceful solutions.

### **3.1.5. Highlighting concerns of marginalised communities**

It's difficult to pinpoint the precise reasons why people turn to violent extremism and why communities support these actions, but it is evident that violent extremist groups often emerge in marginalised communities and urban slums. People living in these conditions can feel that society has rejected them and this can potentially result in people, particularly youth, engaging in indiscriminate violence against both the state and civilians. By engaging in violence perpetrators may be saying:

*Through this act, which appears to make no sense, I am forcing you [decision-makers, intellectuals, journalists and pundits who will have to explain to others why I did what I did] to acknowledge that I was here. I did exist. You will have to recognize what you did to me. You will have to come to terms with the fact that it was your ignorance of my very being, and your denying me the opportunity to live with a modicum of humanity, that gave me no choice but to kill myself.<sup>113</sup>*

Journalists cannot singlehandedly change the socio-economic realities confronting people living in these conditions, but they can bring attention to these problems and thereby encourage authorities to take action. They can also spend time in marginalised communities and enable people to tell their stories through the media. By doing this, journalists can contribute to reducing the degree to which people feel excluded.

To ensure specific groups are not marginalised journalists should conduct regular audits of their coverage to assess whether certain groups are being neglected.

Journalists can play similar roles in heterogeneous communities where less dominant ethnic, cultural and religious groups can feel marginalised by ensuring these groups get equitable coverage and representation in the media. To ensure they are not neglecting groups newsrooms should conduct regular audits of their products and assess the extent to which coverage is reflective of the general population. Are women being represented fairly? What about young people? We must continually be asking ourselves the question: "Whose voices are missing from this story?"

### **3.1.6. Combating unrealistic expectations**

Research has shown that rising and frustrated expectations can make a significant contribution to people turning to violent extremism. In fact, it is the state's inability to satisfy expectations rather than its inability to deliver adequate living standards that can cause discontent. When people see their hopes are likely to be disappointed they can feel misled and betrayed and these feelings can play a role in determining whether people are willing to turn violent or not. It's common for people's expectations to rise at points of significant social change, when people expect society to take a turn for the better. In these moments of social change journalists can help to ensure that people, in particular youth, are not unrealistic about what they expect. One way of doing so would involve journalists interviewing a cross section of the society about their expectations and

Journalists have a role to play in helping people to develop realistic expectations about benefits that might follow change.

113. Denoeux, G. & Carter, L. 2009.

then putting these findings to experts. The experts can then provide input into the degree to which these expectations are realistic or not. In this way journalists may be able to reduce tensions by helping to ensure people are more pragmatic about what they expect. Journalists can also ensure that people are aware of the degree to which expectations have been raised and draw attention to the dangers that may present themselves if expectations are ignored.

### ***3.1.7. Provide people with context***

There can be many instances where violent attacks by extremist organisations seem to come out of the blue and catch people largely by surprise. Sometimes they will not even have heard of the organisations that claim responsibility for these attacks. We want to provide communities with as much information as we can so that they can understand why people are engaging in particular actions. We may not be contributing to ending extremism or violence by doing so, but we are at least equipping people with the knowledge they need to assess the threat to and decide if further violence is likely.

We also want to help people to understand why some people are attracted by the messages of violent extremist groups. For instance, people living in comfortable middle class environments might find it hard to understand what drives someone from a poorer community to join an extremist group. We can help promote understanding by helping people to understand the challenges people living in urban slums have to confront on a daily basis and to help them to see how this can make them vulnerable to extremist recruitment. Similarly, we can help to understand how some young second generation migrants can feel marginalised and cut off from both their roots and their parents adopted communities.

By providing context journalists can show that there are underlying factors that can contribute towards increasing the chances of people supporting or joining extremist organisations.

By providing context we are showing that there are underlying factors that can contribute towards increasing the chances of people supporting or joining extremist organisations. At the same time, we need to be very wary of making assumptions about different groups or people and about the extent to which they may, or may not, support extremism.

The Triangle of Conflict discussed in Part One offers journalists a valuable way of looking at the way extremism is working in a community. This model demonstrates that there is an important relationship between the attitude different parties feel towards each other, their behaviours towards each other and the context within which the action takes place and the attitudes develop. It illustrates how, if you change one of these three factors, you influence the other. As such, if a government becomes more oppressive, people's anger will rise and this can result in them becoming more open to extremist messaging. Alternatively, if authorities can show they are cracking down on corruption and working for social development then people's responses to them can improve and they become less enthusiastic about supporting extremism.

### ***3.1.8. Educate people about ways of dealing with extremism***

If, in our interactions with people from our communities, we find that people are struggling with an increase in radicalisation and extremism we can play a role in helping people to explore different ways of managing this problem. One of the ways we can do this is by conducting our own research about the subject. By reading up on different ways in which people from other communities, both locally and internationally,

We do not try to impose ideas on communities, but we do broaden the range of possible solutions that are available to people.

have sought to address these problems we can gain insights into different strategies people have employed in attempt to prevent the rise of extremism. We can follow up with interviews with people from these locales and ask them to share their experiences and to talk about their successes and failures. In doing so we can give these people a chance to advise members of our own communities. In seeking this advice, we are not trying to impose other people's ideas on our communities, but rather to broaden range of options that might be available to them. We would, in particular, be wanting explore strategies that have not involved the use of force or violence, because these so often provoke anger and retaliation. We'd also be aware that every situation is different and that no idea imported from elsewhere can serve as a blueprint for solving problems specific to a different community. Nonetheless, ideas can be adapted and these lessons can provide the basis for new creative approaches to preventing extremism.

### ***3.1.9. Ensuring gender inclusivity***

We want to continually remain conscious of the fact that extremism is by no means an exclusively male domain and to ensure that our coverage reflects that. If we are to provide comprehensive coverage, then we need to make sure we recognise that women can be targets of extremist recruitment campaigns. In Part Two we noted how women often play supportive roles within extremist organisations, taking care of logistics, communication, catering and nursing the wounded. These are not the dramatic roles taken on by male combatants, but they remain critical to the workings of the extremist organisation and cannot be ignored.

There have been numerous cases of young women being recruited by terrorist organisations and stories that tell how they have run away from their families in search of adventure and something that would give their lives meaning. In some instances, these stories have involved teenage girls from middle-income families who gave no indication that they were planning to take off. Journalists need to keep on covering these kinds of stories so that other parents are can alerted to the fact that this might happen to their children.

Journalists must also be aware of the many important roles that women can play in helping to combat extremism and to ensure that women are recognised for the contributions they make. As mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, professionals and experts, women shape the

Regardless of what story we are working on we should be questioning whether we have ensured different genders are fairly represented.

values of communities and their roles need to be recognised by journalists. Regardless of what story we are working on we should be questioning whether we have ensured different genders are fairly represented or we run the risk of presenting one-sided articles.

We also want to monitor the different strategies that governments are employing when it comes to preventing extremism and to assess the extent to which women are fairly represented at all levels in structures that are established to implement these strategies.

### ***3.1.10. Avoid sensationalist language***

We do not need to be sensationalist or judgmental when describing extremist organisations or their actions. It is better to describe what we know and see in detail without deliberately seeking to portray an organisation in a particular way. Our audiences can make up their own minds about extremist organisations once we have given them the facts. We don't need to use sensational adjectives when describing acts of violence, it's enough to say what happened. We must be aware that gruesome descriptions and images can be too much for audiences to confront. People will often turn

the page, change the channel, or shut down a web-page if descriptions and images are too difficult to bear.

It is also important to respect the victims of violence and their families. We do not want to further traumatize people who are already suffering. To say someone was burned to death inside a building is already bad enough, we do not need to describe the charred remains of a body for people to understand what has happened.

It is also important to respect the victims of violence and their families. We do not want to further traumatize people who are already suffering.

### **3.1.11. Consider the impact of images**

We face very difficult decisions when it comes to the choice of images and video we use when reporting on extremist acts. Do we show our audiences graphic images of violence, suffering, and death? Will shocking images help to drive home the horror of armed conflict and encourage people to take steps to end violence, or will they provoke more anger and exacerbate violence? They may do both.

We cannot conceal what is happening, but at the same time we want to be aware of the impact of our work. The BBC's editorial guidelines on war, terror and emergencies state:

*We should respect human dignity without sanitizing the realities of war. There must be a clear editorial justification for the use of very graphic pictures of war and atrocity<sup>114</sup>.*

Central to this guidance is the importance of careful consideration when deciding on which images to use and how to use them. Drama and audience appeal are not adequate motivations for using pictures that could provoke violence in a highly-charged atmosphere. We need to consider what an

Drama and audience appeal are not adequate motivations for using pictures that could provoke violence in a highly-charged atmosphere.

image is saying about a conflict and what its impact might be. We also want to ask whether there are other images we could use that would help people to understand the conflict without the same negative effects.

In addition, how we caption or script around images is always very important. We need to ensure our audiences are clear about the context. For instance, does the subject matter represent the impact of a one-sided attack on civilians by a major power, or does it show the impact on civilians of an ongoing civil war between rival groups? Further, we also want to be conscious of the needs of our subjects, those people who are photographed and their families. In this regard, the BBC guidelines state that journalists need to:

...balance the public interest in full and accurate reporting against the need to be compassionate and to avoid any unjustified infringement on privacy. It is rarely justified to broadcast scenes in which people are dying. It is always important to respect the privacy and dignity of the dead. We should avoid the gratuitous use of close ups of faces and serious injuries or other violent material.<sup>84</sup>

Documentary filmmaker and photographer Pratap Rughani poses a range of questions that can help us think through what we are doing when we film and photograph violent conflicts. He suggests that journalists should ask themselves:

- Am I clear enough about my own intentions and motives and the motives of those who may seek to be featured?
- What do victims of atrocity want others to know?

114. <http://w.interactioncouncil.org/ethics-media-and-public-policy-honoring-fallen-soldiers-iraq-war>

- What impact might involvement with the project have on the subjects featured?
- Can the representation and framing of subjects help subjects recover their dignity?
- How aware am I of the sensitivities of subjects and audience?
- What are my instincts telling me? Is there a way to do more than trade in misery and inhumanity?
- Can images also show moments of renewal and empowerment?<sup>115</sup>

Within this checklist for individual journalists, it is possible to discern an underlying theme that photographs of conflict do not need to be limited to images of warriors and victims. We also want to show images of ordinary people taking action to improve their situations. We also need pictures that enable parties in conflict to recognize their common humanity.

### ***3.1.12. Avoid presenting an over romanticised picture of extremist groups***

While it's tempting to use the most dramatic photographs and footage available when reporting on extremist groups, journalists should be wary of playing into extremists' hands and promoting an overly romanticised image of these groups. Repeated pictures of masked men waving automatic rifles above their heads as they career across conquered territory in pickup trucks resplendent with extremist symbols and fluttering flags can appear very appealing. These are precisely the images that people recruiting for terrorist organisations want to have widely distributed, because they can help attract young men and women anxious for adventure. It's for this

While we want to provide our audiences with an accurate picture of what is happening, we do not want to serve the propaganda interests of extremist groups.

reason that many countries have banned depictions of symbols belonging to organisations that have been declared as terrorists. While we want to provide our audiences with an accurate picture of what is happening, we do not want to serve the propaganda interests of extremist groups.

### ***3.1.13. Radicalisation goes two ways***

It's important to remember that radicalisation can have two-way effect on communities. As one group becomes radicalised and moves in the direction of actively engaging in extremist behaviour, others groups become more resistant. As radicals turn to extreme tactics to achieve their objectives, those opposing them can respond by adopting more forceful techniques for combating extremist growth. The two can feed of each other leading to an increased level of violence in communities and an enhanced chance of people who are expected to uphold the law adopting sometimes questionable methods. As journalists we need to be alive to this possibility and continue to monitor whether security forces and law enforcement agencies are overstepping the line. While some opposed to extremist activity may seek to justify more extreme actions by security services, we cannot ignore these action. Overly zealous crackdowns on communities where extremists are believed to be operating will almost always leads to further tensions and promote the extremists cause. By exposing abuse by law enforcement officers we can help to discourage them from using excessive force and potentially contribute to relieving these tensions.

Overly zealous crackdowns on communities where extremists are believed to be operating will almost always leads to further tensions and promote the extremists cause.

<sup>115</sup> Rughani, P. 2010. Are you a vulture? Reflecting on ethics and aesthetics of atrocity coverage and its aftermath. In Keeble, R., Tolloch, J. and Zollmann. Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution. New York: Peter Lang.

### **3.2. Some strategies journalists can employ in contributing to the prevention of violent extremism and possible points of intervention**

While journalists seldom see themselves as having a direct responsibility for preventing and countering violent extremism, there are many ways in which they can make a constructive contribution without taking sides or actively promoting particular outcomes. It is seldom, if

It is safe to assume that good, comprehensive and inclusive journalism has the potential to make a difference and may help to limit the degree to which violent extremism develops and grows in communities

ever possible, to prove there are direct connections between what journalists do and the impact this has on communities. Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that good, comprehensive and inclusive journalism has the potential to make a difference and may help to limit the degree to which violent extremism develops and grows in communities. Violent extremist activity will always warrant coverage, because of the impact it has on people's lives and people will always need information they can trust so that they make decisions about how to respond. There are many ways in which journalists can make a difference through their coverage. These can range from dramatic investigations involving journalists infiltrating terrorist cells, through to seemingly simple stories that give people ideas about where to turn if they fear someone they care for is being recruited. Some stories that make a difference may not even be directly related to violent extremist actions. What follows is a collection of some relatively straightforward ways in which journalists can make a difference. There are many more.

#### ***3.2.1. Educate communities about steps they can take to counter violent extremism***

Community members may be aware of violent extremists operating in their neighbourhoods and recruiting members in their areas without knowing what to do about this. These people may fear being targeted by extremist group members if they report their suspicions to authorities. Journalists can help people in these difficult situations by making enquires about the avenues that are available to people for reporting their suspicions and publishing stories that educate people about their options. Many countries have set up hotlines where people can anonymously report on extremist activities. By finding out about these hotlines and writing stories about how they operate and how successful they have been, journalists can show people how they can make a difference. As part of this process journalists need to be able demonstrate whether it is safe for people to report concerns to these organisations. Some suggestions about organisations journalists can speak to in Central Asia are included in the Country Reports by Regional Experts Section.

#### ***3.2.2. Questioning the use of violence in combating extremism***

It is fair to assume that, when marginalised communities are targeted by the authorities and subjected to violence, people may become more sympathetic to extremist groups. Extremists are often all too aware of this fact and will often deliberately seek to provoke angry responses from authorities in order to win the sympathies of the population. Journalists should never accept that violence is the only option and should be willing to question the use of violent tactics to subdue opposition when other options may be available. Authorities may feel they have valid reasons for using force, but journalists can still contribute towards a debate about when this use of force is justified and how much force is appropriate. We should be questioning whether authorities are inadvertently encouraging people to support violent extremism through their own use of force.

Extremists will often deliberately seek to provoke angry responses from authorities in order to win the sympathies of the population.

### **3.2.3. Focusing attention on the work of people and groups working to counter violent extremism**

In many societies there are NGOs, civil society and religious groups that are working to promote development, create options for peace between warring groups and counter the narratives of violent extremists. Members of these groups often have very powerful stories to tell about how former enemies have made peace, how alienated youth have found constructive outlets for frustrations and how people have turned their backs on extremist organisations. These stories are worth telling, because they give people hope and demonstrate that there are alternatives to violence. Publicising these stories can also enable people in communities facing similar problems to identify ways in which they can contribute to positive change.

By telling stories about people successfully preventing extremist acts, journalists can give people hope and show that there are alternatives to violence.

It is, of course, important to be conscious that some organisations and people who are working specifically to undermine the efforts of violent extremists may not welcome publicity or want to be identified. Journalists need to respect these wishes. Nonetheless, it can still be possible to get leads from these people that result in compelling stories that shed light on the problems of extremism.

Some of the organisations involved in preventing and countering extremism in Central Asia are referenced in the Country Reports by Regional Experts Section.

### **3.2.4. Exploring the impact of violent extremism on families**

It's evident that when someone is recruited to join a violent extremist organisation this will have a significant impact on their families. Regardless of whether or not they approve of the person's decision, mother and fathers, sisters and brothers and wives and husbands will have to deal with the fact that a loved one may never return. On top of this fear they may also find themselves ostracised by their communities and harassed by authorities wanting information about the recruit and to determine whether other members of the family are sympathisers.<sup>116</sup> Journalists can raise awareness about the difficulties families must face by interviewing people and letting them talk about their concerns. By raising awareness about the difficulties families face, journalists may make it easier for communities to show understanding towards those families. They can also educate potential recruits about the harm they will be causing to the people they love if they join extremist groups and possibly discourage people who are on the edge from joining up.

By raising awareness about the difficulties families face, journalists may make it easier for communities to show more understanding towards those families.

### **3.2.5. Educating people about how to respond to extremist recruitment strategies**

Many of the stories told by people who are close to those who have been recruited by violent extremist groups have described how recruits have undergone dramatic personality and behavioural shifts before leaving to join VE groups active in other countries. Journalists can play a role in equipping people to intervene by identifying experts with knowledge of violent extremist tactics who can help audiences identify signs that someone they care for may be considering joining an extremist group. They can also provide advice about the different ways in which people can intervene without driving the person away and help people to make wise decisions about who they turn to for help. Not everyone will want to go to

Journalists can help people identify when someone is at risk of radicalisation by publishing stories that educate people about what to look out for.

116. It's common for more than one member of a family to join extremist groups.

the security services to report their fears and they may need advice about where else they can turn. Stories about people being recruited into violent extremist organisations must be handled with deep sensitivity because journalists do not want to alarm people unnecessarily.

A good way of raising the subject is for journalists to interview people whose loved ones have been recruited about the things they observed and how they responded. Journalists can then turn to experts to comment on these stories and to provide advice.

### ***3.2.6. Raising awareness about the conditions extremist recruits have faced when going to war***

Evidence suggests that people joining violent extremist groups often do so out of a sense of adventure and because they feel loyal to friends who have signed up to fight for extremist groups. These recruits are often attracted to join in combat by promises of excitement and glory propagated by extremist groups in online propaganda. These people often encounter a very different reality when they arrive on the ground and learn that the situation is much less glamorous. If journalists are able to interview returnees and to get an accurate picture of the dangers, difficulties and hazards they faced these stories may discourage others from joining VE groups. Returnees can also find themselves facing lengthy prisons terms and desperately regretting their decisions to take part in foreign campaigns. Telling these stories can have a powerful impact on communities and can potentially counter the promises of extremist groups.

By publishing stories about the hardships faced by extremists, journalists may be able to discourage some people from joining these organisations.

### ***3.2.7. Helping groups understand each other's values***

Violent extremist organisations often spend time systematically working to dehumanise and demonise people from rival groups, because this makes it easier for activists to commit often horrific acts against others. Journalists can help to reduce this potential for violence by creating opportunities for people to explain their beliefs and practices to each other and by encouraging them to recognise each other as people. The following are some questions journalists can ask that can encourage groups to explain who they are to others:

Journalists can counter extremists' efforts to dehumanise others by producing stories that show how much people have in common.

- What do you feel people from the other group need to know about you in order for them to understand you better?
- What do you think needs to happen to improve the potential for understanding and tolerance between your group and the others?
- What do you need to learn about the other group that would help you and your supporters understand them better?

By writing stories that explain these differences and similarities between members of antagonistic groups journalists can play an important role in breaking down harmful stereotypes that contribute to polarization in society.

### ***3.2.8. Explaining the complexity of conflict***

It's common in polarized situations for groups to lump everyone who appears to share similar beliefs and characteristics into the same group. This can, however, massively distort

By introducing people to different perspectives, journalists can help audiences understand the complexity of conflict.

people’s understandings of what is happening on the ground. People may share a common religion, but this does not mean they will all interpret their religious texts in the same way, or share a common understanding about how believers should act. For instance, some may feel their scriptures advocate the use of violence, while others may be radically opposed to any form of bloodshed. If journalists are going to help people understand what is happening, then we need to find out about these differences within broader groups and explain them to our audiences. When it comes to religious extremism this can mean seeking out religious experts whose ideas span the spectrum of a faith community – not just people who hold diametrically opposite positions - and giving these people opportunities to express their views on issues in contention. By doing this, journalists can help people who are being encouraged to join extremist groups for religious reasons to understand that there are a range of different options and for them to see that they have choices. We can also engage with people from different faith communities who hold similar views about both political and faith based issues and show that differences between groups are not as stark as some people would have us believe.

**3.2.9. Calming people’s stranger danger fears**

In our discussion about migrants we noted that, while extremists do occasionally slip across borders with refugees, the vast majority of migrants pose no danger to their host communities and have limited sympathy for extremists. Nonetheless, these people can face abuse from people living in host communities who fear that strangers from outside the country may bring danger to their communities. In extreme cases these fears can culminate in xenophobic attacks that leave people feeling angry, vulnerable and afraid. Precisely the conditions that are likely to render them vulnerable to extremist recruitment and radicalisation. Journalists can contribute towards breaking down these stereotypes by interviewing migrants and producing profiles of individuals that help people to understand why they left their homes and how they plan to contribute in their new homes. By giving a human face to the migrants and refugees journalists can help to dispel people’s fears and to reduce and to contribute towards a greater understanding which may lead to people being more tolerant.

Journalists can contribute to breaking down stereotypes, but introducing people to stories about real people.

**3.2.10. Pay attention to youth projects**

In Part Two we observed that young people can often be attracted to join extremist groups because of they are bored with life in their own communities and joining an extremist group offers them the possibility of adventure and fulfilment. To combat this NGO’s and government agencies in many areas affected by extremism have established projects to empower youth to engage in activities that will both enable them to contribute to their communities whilst also earning a livelihood. Some of these projects concentrate on building attitudes that will instil in youth the values that support creativity, innovation, and a commitment to peace and human rights. Organisations that support such processes can provide journalists with a wide range of different stories that deal with the reasons why youth join extremist organisations through to stories about how, with support, young people have succeeded against the odds. By telling these kinds of stories journalists can help frustrated youth to learn about organisations that can help them. They can also inspire hope by showing that even in difficult situations people can succeed and that they have choices.

Organisations involved in youth empowerment can provide journalists with a rich seam of engaging stories.

### **3.2.11. Cultivate a diverse pool of expert and community-based commentators**

Many journalists have a tendency to turn to the same experts whenever they need comments and perspectives on a developing issue or an unfolding crisis. If, however, we rely on the same experts every time something happens, we can miss out on valuable opportunities to expose both ourselves and our audiences to a broader range of ideas. For instance, if we are reliant on security experts every time there is a story that relates to extremist activity, our story angles are likely to be dominated by security concerns. If we also cultivate contacts with people working in the field of conflict management and transformation, then we are also likely to produce stories that focus on how violent extremism can be prevented and how parties can build and sustain peace. It is also common for men and women to bring different perspectives to bear when focusing on conflict and we should ensure our pool of potential commentators includes both women and men. See the Country Reports by Regional Experts Section for some examples of people journalists can turn to in Central Asia.

By developing relationships with sources involved in peace work, journalists can find conflict stories that go beyond security issues.

### **3.3. Civic mapping as a journalistic approach to enhanced coverage of how radicalisation and extremism is affecting communities<sup>117</sup>**

Throughout Part Three we have noted the importance for journalists of spending time on the ground listening to people and finding out about the activities of extremist groups in communities and how these impact on people becoming radicalised. In this section we explore how the process of civic mapping can enable journalists to get a deeper understanding of what is happening in their communities and to take advantage of the wide variety of different sources that are available to them.

The goal of civic mapping is to help journalists provide more in-depth coverage of the things that are happening in the communities they are reporting on and the way in which these events are impacting on people. The process can take many forms, but it will always involve journalists spending time in the field away from their newsrooms finding out about people's hopes, their frustrations and the things that make them angry.

The goal of civic mapping is to help journalists provide more in-depth coverage of the things that are happening in the communities they are reporting on and the way in which these events are impacting on people.

The community mapping process also involves journalists spending time listening to what people have to say about social and political developments, including radicalisation and extremist operations, and learning from them about events the media has not heard about. Instead of waiting for news to come to them, civic mapping involves journalists moving through their communities to learn about their audiences and what is happening in their lives. The process enables reporters to find out about the things people care about and the stories they are interested in hearing. It also involves meeting people and identifying reliable sources they can turn to when they need information on different subjects affecting communities.

While the process is known as civic mapping, it does not always involve the production of an actual map. Although it can. In some cases, journalists do create maps of the communities they serve and fill in large amounts of additional information on these maps, in other instances they may simply capture

<sup>117</sup> These notes on Civic Mapping have been adapted from a radio journalism curriculum that was developed for the University of Juba facilitated by Internews South Sudan and funded by USAID. Some of these are adapted from the Pew Centre for Civic Journalism guide for civic mapping Tapping Civic Life. Available from <http://www.civicjournalism.org/doingcj/pubs/tcl/index.html>.

the information they have gathered by writing up their notes and storing them in a methodically organised filing system. Sometimes the data can simply take the form of a comprehensive source list that provides detailed information about each person on the list. The term mapping is used to show that the process must help journalists develop a detailed picture of how a community is shaped and how different parts of the community relate to one another.

The process of community mapping should normally be a fairly large scale project that sees members of a newsroom collaborating to develop as comprehensive a map as they can. However, in instances where management is not interested in driving such a process or where journalists don't necessarily want to cooperate, the process can also prove useful to individual reporters.

In this introduction we have briefly focused on what civic mapping is, in the next section we focus on why civic mapping is beneficial and then focus on how civic mapping can be conducted.

**3.3.1. Why do civic mapping?**

There are many ways in which the process of civic mapping can help journalists to provide audiences with a better service when it comes to giving them information.

**Civic mapping can help journalist to:**

- **Tell timely stories.** Journalists who are engaging with community members will often hear about developments and pick up on the concerns of people long before official sources decide they want to bring these issues to the media's attention. This will mean that journalists can inform people about these issues earlier and which can help ensure communities have their say about what they think should happen before officials make decisions that affect them.
- **Diversify sources.** If we are in contact with people on the ground who can give us interesting information about the stories we are covering this can increase the number of sources we are able to draw on. Too often we find that journalists return to the same people for comment. This can become boring for audiences, but it can also mean people with important things to say are never given a chance to make an input into public deliberations. Journalists who spend time building up contact books through civic mapping will have a range of useful sources to contact if something newsworthy happens. These sources will range from ordinary people living through an ordeal to experts with important insights and advice to offer.
- **Find fresh angles.** When journalists wait for stories to come to them they are often only given the information the source wants to share. This can make it difficult for us to find fresh and interesting angles. If, however, the stories we tell have been generated through our interactions with communities then this empowers us to choose from a range of different angles and to approach the story in a way that is most interesting and relevant to our listeners.
- **Ask better questions.** When we are in touch with our communities we will often be much better prepared to ask informed questions of political, business and other leaders. We will have a much better idea of the people's concerns and this makes it possible for us to ask questions that are informed by these views. We won't only be asking the questions we are interested in raising, but we can genuinely be asking the questions our communities are interested in getting answers to.
- **Write more impactful stories.** When the stories we write are based on an informed knowledge

When journalists have close contact with people they can find fresh angles for telling engaging stories.

of how a community feels about an issue then it's possible to write much harder-hitting stories. We are not just assuming community members are angry about a lack of delivery, we know they are angry because we have spent time with them and have heard about their anger. We won't just be speculating about the fact that people are suffering food shortages, we will have spent time in the markets and sometimes in people's homes looking at their empty shelves and refrigerators. We won't be assuming that extremists are operating in an area, we will have met up with people whose loved ones have left to join extremist groups.

- **Fact check stories.** When we are well connected with communities we can draw on community members to check on information that comes to us from other sources. Political leaders may make claims about the things that a community needs and cares about, but it is only by being in touch with a diverse range of people on the ground that we can assess whether these claims are true. Similarly, it is only through our contacts with people on the ground that we can assess whether extremism is growing in the communities we serve and if people are becoming more radicalized.
- **Improve news meetings.** When we have spent time talking to different people throughout a community we will be better equipped to generate story ideas during news meetings. If several journalists are picking up the same trends in different parts of a community, this can point to the possibility of an important story needing to be told. Similarly, if we can share their knowledge about how different people in different parts of a community are responding to an unfolding situation then our news teams can pick up on possible community conflicts before these escalate. In situations like these we can sometimes help to prevent conflicts from escalating by bringing people's concerns to authorities and leaders who have the power to intervene.
- **Make connections for audiences.** Journalists can help people to make connections between things affecting them in their day-to-day lives and the bigger processes and events happening in the political sphere. For example, when people are complaining about the lack of water provision in their communities, journalists can help them to see how this can relate to budgeting priorities at a local government level or the need for large scale infrastructure projects.
- **Challenge preconceived ideas.** Journalists, like everyone else, can make assumptions about how people in communities think about and understand issues. When we spend time on the ground talking to people from different groups or sub-groups, we can learn that our assumptions are wrong. For instance, it's common to assume that everyone from a particular ethnic group thinks the same way about an issue. However, when we interact with members of that group at a variety of different levels we can find these stereotypes are not accurate.
- **Build democracy.** By going out of our way to find out about the concerns of people in different sectors of our communities we can contribute to promoting democratic engagement. Civic mapping encourages journalists to find ways to ensure the voices of ordinary people are heard and that these people have a chance to contribute to deliberations that focus on solving community problems. Civic mapping also encourages us to find ways of holding political elites accountable for their decisions and their actions.

By going out of our way to find out about the concerns of people in different sectors of our communities we can contribute to promoting democratic engagement.

### 3.3.2. What are we looking for?

Writers on civic mapping suggest we should be aware that there are at least five distinct layers in civic life that exist within communities, although journalists tend to focus on the top and the bottom layers. Journalist tend to report on the decisions and actions taken by people in official positions (the top layer) and to show how these decisions and actions impact on people’s private lives (the bottom layer). This focus on the top and the bottom means we miss out on important discussions happening at other layers in communities. The five levels include:

- The official layer. This is the layer of official politics and institutions where conversations happen in formal meetings and through public hearings.
- The quasi-official. This layer is made of organisations and groups that interact with the specific purpose of influencing aspects of civic life.
- Third places. These are spaces in communities where people gather to do things together and where they will frequently discuss issues relating to civic life. They can include churches and mosques, community events, barber shops, schools, markets and well frequented bars. They could also include communal water sources.
- Incidental spaces. These are places where people bump into each other and have brief informal exchanges.
- Private spaces. These would generally be people’s homes and places of residence where they will speak openly about concerns.

The suggestion is that while we are trying to find out about the different levels we should also be trying to identify different types of leaders who have different forms of influence within communities. These leaders are important sources for journalists because they provide us with very different perspectives and will have different insight into how extremism is affecting communities. The Pew Centre for Civic Journalism describes these types of leaders as follows:

<b>TYPES OF COMMUNITY LEADERS</b>	
<b>Official Leaders</b>	People who hold elected positions, work for government agencies or are heads of large institutions. Examples include the mayor, state legislators, city council members, non-elected government officials, school board members, chief executives of major businesses, presidents of community foundations.
<b>Civic Leaders</b>	People who hold recognized civic positions within the community. Examples include leaders of religious institutions, heads of civic organizations, the chamber of commerce head, neighbourhood association leaders.
<b>Connectors</b>	People who move in between organizations and civic conversations. They tend to be people who interact with multiple organizations, institutions and people–carrying and spreading ideas, messages and social norms from place to place. Connectors often have no official capacity.
<b>Catalysts</b>	Leaders people look to in their everyday lives for community expertise, historical perspective and wisdom. They often are responsible for encouraging others to get involved in civic life. Catalysts are the respected neighbours, co-workers and lay church leaders in people’s lives.
<b>Experts</b>	People who act as leaders in the community because of their specialized knowledge–such as a planner, college or university professor, doctor or lawyer, criminologist. While such experts are crucial to reporting, The Harwood Institute finds in its work with journalists that experts can be the quick and easy interview. They don’t usually help journalists explore how people in the community feel or think about an issue.

### 3.3.3. How do we go about creating our civic maps?

Your first decision is to decide on the particular areas or issue that you are interested in finding out more about. This is something you will want to discuss with your editor and colleagues to ensure that you are not working on covering an area that someone else is working on. As mentioned earlier it is ideal if the civic mapping process can involve the entire organisation or at least the news room, but the process can still work for the individual reporter. The goal then is to develop real expertise into the affairs of a specific community or a particular subject area.

Civic mapping enables journalists to develop expert knowledge of a particular community.

If you choose to concentrate on a geographic area you will want to decide on a relatively contained space, perhaps everything that happens in a cluster of villages or a sector within a larger city. If the area you cover is too large it will be difficult to develop an in-depth understanding of the concerns of the community.

Once you have chosen the community you wish to focus on there are a number of steps you can follow as you begin developing your civic map.

Spend time in the area. Make the time to visit the area and travel through the space without actually looking for particular stories. Make notes of what you see. What facilities are available in the area: schools, clinics, businesses, industries, etc.? What kinds of houses are people living in? What does the condition of the roads say about the area? Do there seem to be popular markets and shopping facilities in the area? What about places of entertainment such as restaurants, tea shops and bars? Where do people seem to be gathering? Are people meeting in places to play sports? Remember that things will change at different times in the day. A quiet sidewalk café can become a bustling informal parliament in the evening as people gather after work to talk about social and political issues. Don't just stick to the main routes explore the side roads and avenues in the area you are interested in. If you're uncertain of where you are going or whether an area is safe then find someone from the community who can go with you and show you around. Be curious about everything and make notes about the things that strike you as interesting about the area?

Identify the third spaces. As we spend time in communities we should be keeping an eye and an ear out for those spaces where people gather and talk to each other about issues related to civic life. Visit those spaces and spend time listening to what people have to say. Introduce yourself, but don't charge in asking questions, save those for when you feel that people have accepted your presence and are willing to trust you. Understand that in some places some subjects may be completely off limits and be sensitive to people's concerns. Remember that you are not looking for a quick quote, you are trying to find out about people's hopes, fears, interests and the trends that are happening in communities. This can take time. When we do ask questions they should be open ended and allow people to speak for themselves about the issues they think are important. Use these conversations and opportunities to find out who people regard as leaders in the community and how you can contact these people. Be sure to capture the information you learn during your visits to third spaces. The Pew Centre for Civic Journalism makes the following suggestions for how reporters can manage civic conversations:

#### 1. Take nothing at face value

Notice what words and phrases people use. Ask people, «What do you mean?» when they use a certain word. Often, people's words, phrases and entire thoughts mean something quite different than what you might think.

## **2. Listen for where people get stuck**

Watch for when people seem to want more facts or if a perception blocks them from talking more about a concern. This insight can help a journalist learn where people need more information or need to hear more perspectives on a topic.

## **3. Ask people to share their contradictions**

Throughout a conversation, a journalist will hear people contradict themselves. Set up the contradiction for people, saying first: «You know you just said X; before you said Y.» Then ask, «I know this can be a really tough issue but what do you make of the two things you said?» or «How do you square those?» The goal is not to «catch» someone but to illuminate what they are struggling with so as to learn more.

## **4. Piece together what people are saying and test it with them**

Usually people don't make one all-inclusive statement about what they think or how they feel about a concern. Nuggets of insight emerge over time and a journalist will need to piece those nuggets together. Test with people what they are saying, «This is what I'm hearing: Do I have it right?» or «Is this what you are saying?»

## **5. Keep in mind the «unspoken» rules**

Different civic conversations and spaces will have their own set of «rules» by which they work. When engaging people in civic conversations, make sure to scope out the nature of conversation, the level of trust people have toward journalists and what these insights mean for how journalist should interact with people.

## **6. Watch out for preconceived views.**

Everyone has what might be called «biases.» Each journalist grows up with his or her own set of experiences, values, and notions - all serve as filters when thinking about a story, asking questions, framing the story and writing it. Beware of possible preconceived views when engaging in civic conversations. Otherwise, it may be hard to hear and learn what these conversations have to offer.

### ***3.3.4. Interviewing community leaders***

At this stage we want to begin learning more about our communities by speaking to leaders at the different levels we identified earlier, namely the officials, quasi-officials, connectors, catalysts and experts. In most instances we are already likely to have spoken to officials and possibly to the experts in the pursuit of particular stories, but this is not the purpose of these interviews. Here our interest is in generating a better understanding of the community, rather than reporting on a particular story.

The following are some ideas for interviewing people at a more informal level.

Officials. We should generally already know who the officials are that we want to speak to because they already hold prominent positions in our communities. Questions we might like to ask could include:

- How is this community changing? How does it compare to other areas?
- How do you find out about the needs of people in the community? Who do you turn to for advice on people's needs and concerns?
- What do you think are the key issues people are talking about at the moment? What are they worried about? Why are they concerned?
- Have you noticed an increase in extremist activity in your community? If so, what do you think as caused this? What do you understand to be their main issues?

- What kinds of issues do you think that we should be pursuing as journalists?

The value of these questions is that they help us to identify what authorities and officials think are the main issues and to assess the extent to which they are in touch with the issues being expressed by people on the ground. We can test these assumptions in our interviews with other members from the community.

**Quasi-officials.** These people should also be relatively easy to identify because they occupy established positions in communities and are often quite used to working with the media? The questions we would ask in these interviews could be similar to those we ask in our interviews with officials.

**Catalysts and connectors.** Catalysis will often be your most useful subjects because they are well connected and have deep insights into the issues affecting communities. They are likely to be able to point you to valuable sources for different kinds of stories and will often introduce you to people who have valuable stories to tell. The list of possible catalysts is long, but they could include: religious leaders, shop keepers, restaurateurs, teachers, nurses and doctors.

**Questions to ask catalysts can include:**

- Where do you go to find out about how people in the community are feeling about developments in the area?
- What are the kinds of things that people are talking about? What specifically are they concerned about and why are these things so important?
- What have you heard about developments in this area?
- Who would be useful people to speak to about these issues? Are there experts we can approach who can help us and our audiences to understand issues better?
- How would a journalist be able to get access to these people and to speak to them?

**Community members.** We should have started to gain a useful understanding of the concerns of community members through our engagement with ordinary people as we spend time in communities, but there are other

By spending time in communities we are able to gain a special insight into the lives of ordinary people.

strategies we can use to get more information. One strategy is to hold a community conversation with a small group of people representing different sectors of the community. By bringing a diverse group together we can get a real sense of the issues people think are important and which groups share, or do not share, particular concerns. They can help us learn about what people know about extremist activities in their communities and who is concerned about these actions. These conversations should be facilitated by the journalist and should follow a set of guidelines. These could include:

**Guidelines for community conversations**

- We should give everyone must have a chance to talk.
- We should recognise that everyone is an expert in their own lives. All contributions are valuable.
- We must keep an open mind when others are talking and try to understand where people are coming from.
- We must try to stick to the questions that are being asked.

- We must be constructive – avoid blaming and focus on solutions.

While we may put some effort into organising meeting of these kinds, they can also be organised informally. If you are speaking to one person at a market and others seem to be listening to the conversation, you can encourage these listeners to form a group and you can organise an impromptu focus group discussion. Similarly, you can start a conversation with several people at a pub and get everyone to share their ideas. These small group discussions can be very valuable because you will often find that a point made by one person will cause someone else to remember something else they want to share. Of course it's important to remember that people who frequent the same third space may share similar ideas, although this may not necessarily be true. If it is, then you will want to visit other spaces to see if people hold different opinions.

### **3.3.5. Next steps**

The community mapping process should be continuous. As you generate information you need to capture it in a way that helps you to understand the concerns of different people in a community and how different sectors of a community understand these issues.

You will then want to identify key trends from the conversations you have had and follow up on these discussions by arranging meetings with the sources you have identified in your conversations such as civic officials, quasi-officials, catalysts, connectors and community members.

**At this stage you should be looking at how you can turn the information you have gained into stories. In doing so you want to ask the following questions:**

- What are the key issues that people in this community are concerned about?
- How do different people in the community feel about these issues?
- Could these issues result in conflict in the community? If so why? What could spark that conflict?
- Which sources can I turn to gain more information about these problems?
- What information do people need in order to understand the problem better? Are there experts I can turn to for help in explaining these issues to people?
- What solutions have been proposed by the community for addressing these problems?
- Who is responsible for addressing these problem?
- You should also share what you have learned with your editor and others at the station, because, while some of the things you have learned may not make good news stories, they can provide valuable subjects for discussion programmes.

Stay connected. Now that you have begun to develop a useful range of sources in your community you want to stay connected to these people. Make contact with these sources on a regular basis to check on whether they know of any new developments in the community or if they have heard anything else of interest that might be useful to know about. It does not matter if you do not get a new story every time you make contact, but if you stay in touch people will often remember to contact you when something happens that may be newsworthy. They will also be able to update you about things they have heard and seen in their own movements through the community.

Civic mapping is an ongoing process. Once we have made contact with people we want to continue checking in with those contacts.

Remember, it is very easy to stay in touch with people who share similar views to your own, but you also need to continue to build relationships with people whose ideologies and beliefs you may completely disagree with. In this way you stand a better chance of accurately representing the views of everyone living in the community you are serving.

### ***3.3.6. Updating your most important tool***

The most important tool that any journalist has is an updated contact list. This is a carefully developed list of sources you can turn to for information on any subject that you may have to cover.

The contact list can be kept electronically on a computer or in a contact book that you can take into the field with you. It's best to do both. Never just rely on the address book in your mobile phone. It can take years to build up a good contact list, but phones can break or get stolen and you can be left with nothing.

When entering information into your contact book you should try to get the following information.

- Full names of contacts. Make sure that you spell these correctly.
- The title that you use to address them, e.g. Mr, Ms, Dr or Professor or full rank if they are in the military or the police
- The full name of the ministry, organisation or department they work for
- Job title
- Telephone numbers. Try to get alternative numbers and numbers where you can reach the person after hours. Check which number they are most likely to answer when and make a note of this in your source list.
- Where possible get email addresses and Skype contacts. People often have more than one address, so find out which one you should use most frequently.
- Make a note of where the person lives.
- Make a few brief notes about what you know about the person and about the subjects they can speak to you on with some authority

Keep on adding to this list. Whenever you interview someone new about a substantive issue you will want to capture their details in your contact list. It does not matter if the person is an important official or an employee of a small NGO, you will never know when it might be useful to speak to them again. For instance, you may not be able to get to an area that is being affected by violent conflict or a bomb blast, but if you have a source who lives in that area you might be able to get a first-hand account of what is happening.

Keep your contact list up-to-date. Make sure that when you speak to people you ask them if there have been any changes in their professional lives. Have they taken jobs with new organisations? Have they been promoted and do they not have new job titles? Have any of their contact details changed?

### **3.4. In-depth reporting on violent extremism - A hypothesis-based approach to in-depth reporting**

In the previous section we explored how, by spending time in communities and by mapping what they learn, journalists can enhance their ability to find out about whether extremists are operating in a community and what they might be doing. In this section we focus on how a hypothesis-based<sup>118</sup> approach to in-depth reporting can enable us to tell compelling stories as we follow-up on leads we come across while engaging with communities.

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<sup>118</sup>A detailed overview of this approach is provided in a Unesco sponsored handbook edited by Mark Lee Hunter entitled *Story-based enquiry: A manual for investigative reporters* and the notes contained in this section are based on this handbook.

The advantage of this approach for journalists is that it helps us to focus our stories from the start. We are not simply gathering information in that hopes that we will eventually be able to piece together a story, we actively looking for evidence that will prove whether our story stands up or not. A hypothesis can be defined as a proposed explanation of a particular situation that is based on a limited amount of information. It is the starting point of an investigation in which the researcher, in our case the journalist, sets out to determine if the assumptions he or she made about a particular state of affairs is correct. It ultimately represents and an informed hunch. The hypothesis is presented as a statement of fact which we must then set out to prove or disprove. Having formulated this statement, the journalist must determine the range of questions that need to be answered in order to show that the hypothesis is correct. The process is briefly illustrated in the following fictional example.

A hypothesis-based approach to reporting helps us to focus our stories from the very beginning and to know what we are looking for.

A journalist might hear repeated references to an increase in the number of hate crimes being committed in a community by members of a particular ethnic group. These attacks have led to rise in ethnic tension in the community and raised the likelihood of violent conflict breaking out between people of different ethnicities.

Based on this information a journalist might formulate the following hypothesis: “Radical members of a particular ethnic group are working to promote ethnic divisions by carrying out hate crimes against people from other communities.”

**To determine if the hypothesis is correct the journalist will need to answer a number of questions, namely:**

1. Has there been an increase in the number of hate crimes in the community?
2. Have these been perpetrated by member of one particular group?
3. Have the attacks always targeted people from another specific group?
4. Is there evidence of a rise in inter-ethnic tensions in the community?
5. Do we know who has been behind the attacks?
6. How many people have been involved in the attacks? Have they generally been the same people?
7. Do these people have the support the majority of people on whose behalf they claim to be acting?

In this example a journalist could play important role in reducing conflict if he or she could show that the attacks were being conducted by a small group of ethnic extremists who did not have the support of the majority of people belonging to their ethnic group.

### ***3.4.1. Developing a hypothesis***

The hypothesis should be as short and specific as you can make it and should be stated as a story. We are not simply looking to build a collection of facts we are trying to structure a compelling narrative that helps our audiences understand what is happening in the world. We should be able to capture the hypothesis in no more than three sentences. More than that and the story is likely to be too complex for us to be able to prove or to tell.

The hypothesis should be as short and specific as we can make it.

**Hunter et al.<sup>119</sup> suggest in their most basic form stories can generally be described with variants of the following sentences:**

- We are facing a situation that is causing suffering (or that deserves to be more widely known as a good example).
- This is how we arrived at this point.
- This is what will happen if nothing changes and here is how we could change things for the better.
- These sentences tend to follow the same chronological sequence which describes the following:
  - The news of the problem that is in the present.
  - The cause of the problem that is in the past.
  - What must change for the problem to end in the future.

In the fictional example we describe earlier, the current problem would be the fact that hate crimes are happening in the community, the cause of the problem (the past) would explain how this happened and the future state would address how the situation must be resolved and what will happen if it is not. An investigation of this story would follow this sequence. We would begin by developing our hypothesis based on the information that we have received from members in the community. We would then seek to expand our enquiry to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to support the claims made by the people we have been speaking to. If we can confirm this is the case, then we will want to know how the situation came about. Have new people come into the community to promote a nationalist ideology? Have there been any changes in the political structures in the community? Are members of certain groups feeling marginalised and neglected? All of these questions might help us determine why there has been a change in the community. They will also point us to a further question about why people are behaving in a particular way. The final question to address will relate to the future. What needs to happen for this problem to be addressed?

With this in mind the elements of the hypothesis could include: (1.) a statement of the current situation, (2.) a statement of the factors that led to this situation coming about, and (3.) a statement about what needs to happen to improve on this situation.

Note: We tend to think about in-depth investigative stories as having to do with negative events taking place in society such as corruption or the rise in the number of extremist groups operating in a community. We should also be aware that we can tell in-depth stories about positive developments. This could involve explaining why there has been a reduction in the number of people who have been recruited into extremist organisations in an area that has previously provided a steady stream of recruits. We might also want to show how a particular organisation has succeeded in reintegrating extremist fighters into society. In doing so we are providing people with examples of strategies they may want to emulate.

**Hunter et al.<sup>120</sup> suggest that there are four keys to making a hypothesis effective:**

- Be imaginative. Instead of just being reactive to situations that are taking place in the news we can ask questions about things that reveal something about things that are not currently known about. This means being proactive and asking ourselves what our audiences need to

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119. Hunter, M.L. & Hanson, N. 2011. 2011. What is investigative journalism. In Hunter, M. (ed.) *Story-based inquiry: A manual for investigative journalists*. Paris: Unesco. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000193078> [Accessed 5 May 2019]  
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120. Hunter and Hanson, 2011, p. 19.

know about and finding ways of responding to these needs.

- Be very precise. The more precise we can be about presumed facts in our hypothesis, the easier it is to verify whether we have established our point.
- Draw on your experience. If our gut intuition tells us that there may be a story in something we have heard, we need to listen to ourselves and examine the issue further.
- Be objective. This means: (1.) accepting the reality of the facts we can prove, whether we like them or not. If our hypothesis is wrong, we change the hypothesis we do not ignore the facts; (2.) we do the work we do with the understanding that we might be wrong and that we are open to what people have to say that might contradict our hypothesis; (3.) we recognise that while we may hope our work will help improve the world, we understand that this will not happen if we manipulate reality.

It's important to remember that the hypothesis is our tool for investigating the story it is not the story itself. It is not a disaster if we find that the hypothesis is wrong. That is part of the point. If we find that the facts are not fitting with our hypothesis, then there is nothing to prevent us from revising the hypothesis based on our improved understanding of the situation. There may be times when we find the facts speak against the hypothesis and we wind up having to drop the story entirely. We should be aware, however, that sometimes the fact that the hypothesis cannot be proved is a story in its own right. We may find, for instance, that there is a strong belief within the community that an ethnic nationalist group is trying to provoke conflict. If we investigate this story and discover there is no evidence to support this belief, this is still something that people need to know about. By countering these beliefs and rumours we can actually be contributing to reducing tensions in the community.

It's not a disaster if we find out hypothesis is wrong. Normally that means we have uncovered a different story.

## Part Four: Reporting on terrorism

In Part Three we explored a number of strategies journalists can employ as they seek to provide in-depth coverage of how extremist organisations are working in and impacting on their communities. In Part Four we focus specifically on roles that journalists can play in the event of an actual terrorist actions. These actions can include, among others, various types of bombings, armed attacks on public, religious and official spaces, kidnapping and hijackings and hostage taking. They can be part of ongoing campaigns or isolated incidents, be limited to the destruction of property or involve the deaths of hundreds of innocent people. The purpose behind these attacks, as we noted in Part Two of this handbook, will always extend beyond the immediate impact of the terrorist action. The goal is to provoke fear and panic in communities by demonstrating that terrorists can and are prepared to commit acts of extreme brutality in the pursuit of their objectives. They will often seek to demonstrate the extent of their ruthlessness by using women and children in attacks and targeting areas where they can inflict the maximum amount of harm on defenceless populations.

In expanding their impact beyond the immediate effects of attacks, terrorists will seek to generate as much publicity as they can. They will aim to ensure that local, national and international media cover their attacks and hope that these media will help to spread the fear, anger and hatred that they sought to provoke with their attacks. This poses a particular challenge for journalists. We do not want to be used or manipulated by terrorists, nor do we want to contribute towards promoting anxiety and divisiveness in our communities. At the same time, we cannot ignore these attacks or downplay them because they do have real effects on the lives of real people. Part Four of this handbook makes some proposals about how we can report on these issues constructively and contribute towards peace rather than panic. Part Four draws extensively on a very useful handbook for reporting on terrorism written by journalists and professor of international journalism Jean-Paul Marthoz published by UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector<sup>121</sup>.

Terrorists need the media to help them spread fear, anger and hatred.

Journalists should note what they can do and who they can report on is frequently proscribed by national legislation and should familiarise themselves with the laws addressed in the Country Reports by Regional Experts and the chapter dealing with extremism and the law.

We begin part four with a brief focus on some ethical challenges confronting journalists when reporting on terrorism and then progress to a set of ground rules that we want to consider when reporting on these issues.

### 4.1 Some ethical considerations when reporting on terrorism

The extreme violence committed by terrorists can often catch journalists off guard and leave them struggling to deal with their own feelings and emotions. As human beings we are likely be as angered and repulsed as everyone else who is affected violence. In fact, the situation is often worse for journalists because we will visit the scenes of the violence and witness first-hand the horror and suffering caused by these attacks. It is in these situations that we need to embrace the knowledge that good journalism makes a difference and hold on to our professional values without which we cannot make a positive contribution.

Embracing the knowledge that good journalism makes a difference can help us to uphold professional values in the face of the horror committed by terrorists.

121. Marthoz, J. 2017. Terrorism and the Media: A handbook for journalists. UNESCO. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247074> [Accessed 15 May 2019].

We will be challenged on many level and need to strive to uphold our ethical commitments to the pursuit of truth, independence, responsibility to others and transparency. In his handbook Marthoz<sup>122</sup> suggests that all of these are likely to be tested in ways that are briefly described below.

- The pursuit of truth. It is critical that journalists seek to establish the truth amid the confusion and speculation that tends to reign when terrorist attacks occur. Facts must be checked and imprecise journalism must be avoided. It's also important for journalists to explain why events happen and this can see journalists being accused of giving terrorists a voice. We can't afford to simply dismiss terror as mindless violence. There is always a reason and this needs interrogation. In seeking explanations, we are not denying that crimes against humanity have taken place or that these should be condemned.
- Independence. During times of crises, and where people's lives are threatened and national security is compromised, there is an expectation that everyone will stand together. "The call for patriotism, which tends to be as compelling as the attack was brutal, threatens at all times to merge with a call for censorship."<sup>123</sup> Under these circumstances media often identify with their communities and suspend their critical relationship to power. Under these circumstances journalists must be very careful not to lose their independence. We may be repulsed by terrorist acts, but we still need to maintain the fundamental values of telling the truth. Our job is always to serve the people and not those in authority. This means refusing to publish information we know is not true and also refusing to remain silent if State institutions commit human rights violations.
- Responsibility to others. When reporting on terrorist attacks we need to be conscious of the impact of our work. We need to balance our right and duty to inform the public against the potential negative harm that our reporting might have. This means being conscious of the effects our reporting might have on the families of victims of terrorist attacks and how such reporting might impact on people who are being held hostage by terrorists. Providing too much information about individual hostages could potentially place them in greater danger and we need to be aware of this. We also need to consider whether our reporting on ongoing security operations might assist terrorists to escape or place the lives of security agents in danger. At same time we need to recognise that the public has a right to information about events that could potentially impact on them and we should not censor ourselves excessively.
- Transparency. It's clear that during times of crises, such as terrorist attacks, we need to constantly be weighing up our editorial choices and making difficult decisions. Should we publish information obtained from terrorists (discussed later)? Do we show images of extreme violence such as beheadings? In these situations, our decision should not be driven by the desire for better ratings, more sales or increased hits. They should be made by weighing up the harm against the public's need to know. Having taken these difficult decisions, we need to be open and transparent with our audiences, explaining why we took certain decisions, acknowledging the fact there are no perfect answers.

With these ethical principles in mind we'll now focus on some of professional issues we want to consider when reporting on terrorist acts.

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122. Marthoz, 2003, pp. 27 – 30.

123. Ibid.

## 4.2 Reporting on terrorist acts – some key considerations

In Part Three we explored how principles of conflict sensitive reporting can be applied when reporting on the activities of radicals and extremists in our communities. In this section we'll take these ideas further to see how they can be applied in situations where terrorist attacks are underway or have just been committed. What follows is a collection of some of the things we can do:

### 4.2.1. *Avoid making assumptions and unconfirmed allegations*

One of the first things that everyone will want to know when a terrorist attack takes place is who is responsible for the act. It's common for people to leap to conclusions based on prior experiences, but this can be dangerous. The fact that members of a particular religious sub-group have been responsible for a number recent attacks, does not mean that they should automatically get the blame when another attack takes place. There have been cases where terrorist attacks have been blamed on Islamic organisations because the attackers came from a middle-eastern country, when the actual attackers were pursuing an ultra-right wing agenda. When journalist make assumptions and leap to conclusions in the wake terrorist attacks they can actively contribute to enhancing people's feeling of persecution and marginalisation.

When journalist make assumptions and leap to conclusions in the wake terrorist attacks they can actively contribute to enhancing people's feeling of persecution and marginalisation.

We also need to be circumspect about claims made by authorities and other stakeholders in relation to attacks. Before accepting that authorities know who is responsible for an attack we need to know where their information came from and what proof they have that a specific group was involved. It is import for us to question whether officials have sufficient evidence on which to base their claims. Similarly, it is important for us to treat the claims made by terrorist organisations with caution. Just because a group claims responsibility for having committed an action, this does not make it true. Sometimes completely independent groups can carry out attacks in sympathy with a terrorist organisation, but this does means the terrorist organisation can claim full responsibility. It's possible in some areas for acts with purely criminal motives, to be mistakenly identified as terror attacks.

The key in these situation is exercise caution. While we may want to be identify the culprits as quickly as possible, it is better to get the story right. Having to retract claims at a later point can impact our credibility. It is ultimately never up to us to make a formal pronouncement about who is responsible for an attack, but rather to relay the claims that are made by others including the authorities and the terrorist organisations themselves.

### 4.2.2. *Avoid provoking panic and/or anger*

Whether they involve suicide bombings or large scale coordinated attacks against civilians, all terrorist attacks are intended to provoke, confusion, anger, panic and hatred. These attacks are naturally highly emotive events, which can cause chaos in communities as fear and fury threaten to take hold. It is in these conditions that journalists – particularly those who must go live on air – can play a key role by providing communities with a point of stability in a time of uncertainty. In the whirlwind of rumours and speculation made more forceful by the presence of social media, news organisation can stand out as the sources people can turn to for trustworthy information.

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information. To be effective in this role journalists need to project a sense of calm, while at the same time showing they care about the community and can empathize with those who are suffering. Through their tone and choice of words and images, journalists can help to reduce panic, while at the same time contributing towards preventing people from targeting individuals or groups who the public believe might sympathise with the terrorists. In these situations, journalists need to be continually updating communities about what is known about the attacks, how severe the attacks have been and whether there is a continued threat.

It's important for journalists to recognise that it can sometimes take hours before we really know what is happening. In one instance a lone gunman moved through a city indiscriminately shooting at people and causing mayhem in different suburbs. The attacks were followed by wild rumours and terrified speculation. The attacks seemed to be happening in so many places that some feared a civil war might have started. In situations like this, journalists must be exceptionally careful not to speculate about what is happening. We must let people know what we know for certain (there have been multiple attacks in different parts of the city) and what we don't know (at this stage it's unclear what is happening). We then need to provide regular updates as we learn more.

**4.2.3. Provide people with information they can use to stay safe**

One of the most important things people will need to know about during an attack is what they need to do to keep themselves and their families safe. By coordinating with emergency services and our own colleagues on the ground we can help non-combatants find places of refuge and to avoid entering areas where fighting is ongoing. In doing so, we need to be aware of how fluid situations can be and how quickly fighting can move from one area to another. This means continually updating the information we have and passing this information on to our audiences. If we don't know if an area is safe then we need to make this clear to our audiences.

By coordinating with emergency services and our own colleagues on the ground we can help non-combatants find places of refuge and to avoid entering areas where fighting is ongoing.

The same thing applies in the aftermath of an attack. Emergency and security services will want to have unrestricted access to the sites of bombings and attacks and we want to encourage people stay away from affected areas. The message must be clear, "If you have no business being at the scene, then stay away". Curious people who come to see what has happened can get in the way of ambulances and fire fighters. They can also place themselves in danger, because terrorists will frequently mount a second attack or bombing targeting those who have come to the scene to help.

Media also provide a vital channel of communications between authorities and the families and loved ones of people who may have been killed or injured in attacks. These people are likely to be desperate and it is critical that we provide them with information about what has happened, who has been affected and where they can turn for information. Are their social agencies people should be turning to for help or hotlines that people can call? If we have an online presence, then we want to make this information available in a prominent place. Broadcaster will want to repeat this information frequently.

The Country Reports by Regional Experts section includes the names of many government and non-governmental organisations that can provide assistance to people during attacks.

#### **4.2.4. Be as inclusive as possible**

In reporting on terrorist attacks we need to remain conscious of the need to be inclusive. Just because a bombing took place in a gay bar, a catholic church or a mosque, this does not mean these were the only people affected or targeted. Terrorist attacks are generally intended to disrupt the entire society and to impact negatively on the bonds uniting people of different religions, ethnicities and political orientations. Being inclusive means focusing our attention on members of the group that seems to have been directly targeted, but it also means talking to members of other groups that were not directly targeted. By being inclusive and giving people from different sectors of a community the opportunity to speak out against attacks we, as journalists, are showing that all lives should be valued. We can also contribute towards creating a sense of unity in communities where people see themselves as standing together against violence and show that terrorism poses a threat to the entire society. This can mean speaking to the leaders who represent different groups, but it can also mean going into the streets and letting ordinary people express their feelings.

By being inclusive and giving people from different sectors of a community the opportunity to speak out against attacks journalists can show that all lives should be valued.

#### **4.2.5. Avoid inadvertently glorifying terrorist acts**

Terrorist acts will almost always be dramatic. That is part of the objective. However, we want to avoid playing into the terrorists' hands by over dramatizing what they have done. We certainly need to provide an accurate picture that describes the attack and informs people about the outcomes, but we want to be careful about how we frame these events. Describing an attack as a "daring raid" or a "clinically coordinated strike" can come across as unconsciously suggesting admiration for the way in which the attack was executed. There is also little sense in using terms like "brutal," "barbaric" or "savage" to describe attacks. Terrorists are all too aware of the violence they are unleashing and such terms just serve to elevate the horror of their actions. Rather just describe the events using factual language and let your audiences decide how they feel about these events themselves.

We want to avoid glamorizing terrorist acts by unconsciously expressing admiration about scale and efficiency of an attack.

When it comes to actual descriptions of events we want to provide enough information to enable people to develop a detailed understanding of what happened, but we do not want to wallow in the gore. Overly detailed descriptions of charred bodies and dismembered corpses can serve to unnecessarily amplify the terrorist's actions and lead to enhanced anxiety amongst members of the target community and inflict additional pain on victims' families. Images can be even more dramatic.

#### **4.2.6. Avoid framing stories in divisive ways**

The way in which we frame stories about terrorist attacks can shape the way in which people understand the issues and how they respond to them. If we, for instance, emphasise remarks made by a political leader who suggests that a terrorist attack is a natural consequence of historic tensions between rival ethnic or religious groups, we are creating a frame that suggests such acts are unstoppable. Similarly frames such as the "war against terror" paint a picture that suggests that the only valid response to terrorist attacks is one that involves violence. Framing a story about a terrorist attack as being a horrific act

We must always be honest in the way in which we frame stories, but we must also be cognisant of the effect these frames can have on the way people respond to situations.

that has brought people from diverse communities together, offers an entirely different perspective. One that suggests there might be room for hope. We must always be honest in the way in which we frame stories, but we must also be cognisant of the effect these frames can have on the way people respond to situations.

Marthoz<sup>124</sup> suggests that framing “involves selecting particular aspects and angles of reality and privileging them in the description, the definition, the interpretation and the moral evaluation of the subject being covered.” He argues further that “the frame is expressed through the selection or rejection of subjects, their hierarchy, their placement, the choice of speakers and images”<sup>125</sup>. What this suggests is that we need focus on being inclusive in our coverage. We don’t just want to emphasise the views of radicals and militants, but also want to include the perspectives of those who would prefer to solve problems peacefully. We also want to be careful of framing conflicts in terms of the good guys and the bad guys. Such a framing can see stories emerging that are highly critical of one side, but which can sometimes ignore the way in which the good guys sometimes overstep the mark when it comes to human rights abuses.

We cannot avoid using frames. There is never enough space or time to include every single angle and view point in a story. We must, however, be conscious of the signals we send through our choice of frames and what this might mean for people from different sides who are effected by the attack.

### **4.3. Some suggestions for covering terrorist attacks**

The following suggestions for journalists reporting on terrorist attacks has drawn on Marthoz’s<sup>126</sup> handbook and offers a range of suggestions about things journalists can and should do when covering these attacks. Some additional suggestions are made in Part Six of this handbook that deals with personal security issues.

#### **4.3.1. Treat all information with extreme caution**

Information can be very fluid and hard to come by during and in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. Officials often fail to prioritise media and we can find ourselves in the frustrating situation of knowing something has happened, but not having enough to tell our audiences. Under these circumstances it can be tempting to work with whatever information we can get, including calls from anonymous people and posts on social media. If this is all we have then we sometimes need to go with this information, but it is critical that we find ways of crosschecking what we have been told and that we take steps to verify information we have been given. We also need to recognise that in crises situations people from different groups will want to manipulate the information that is going to the public and they will try to use us to work for them. People can be extremely quick to blame others even in the absence of concrete information. This means that we cannot afford to accept people’s claims and without finding out how they justify their claims. Do they have evidence to support what they are saying? It is also important for us to be careful in explaining stories to our audiences, making it clear when information has not been officially corroborated. If we do not know what has happened, then it is important to let audiences know we are aware there has been an incident and that we are following up. We want audiences keep checking in with us, so that we can provide them with a reliable source of information. We need to be especially careful when we are busy with live broadcasts or when we are live blogging or microblogging (e.g. Tweeting) about events. If we do make mistakes, then we need to be prepared

it is critical that we find ways of crosschecking information we have been given during a terrorist attack.

124. Marthoz, 2017, p.34

125. Ibid.

126. Marthoz, 2017.

to correct them quickly and honestly making it clear to audiences what went wrong. But it is not good enough to think we can correct mistakes later, we need to prevent them from happening in the first place.

### **Case Study: Keeping it real**

*“Never wrong for long” is not an appropriate maxim when millions of people are seeking reliable information in a fog of claim alongside counter claim.<sup>127</sup>*

*This was the position taken by the former reader’s editor of The Guardian (UK), Chris Elliott, in a review of the paper’s online and reportage of the coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris in November of 2015. These attacks, which included bombing, suicide bombs the shooting of civilians, left 130 dead and more than 450 wounded.*

*In the review Elliott describes a frenetic situation in which journalists had to sift through masses of information as they kept a “live blog” running, continually updating it with information that fused together aggregated news and original reporting.*

*Staff clearly recognised that for people living Paris and for those who cared about what was happening in the city, they could not afford to get the story wrong. At the same time they wanted to ensure information was as up-to-date as possible.*

*The solution, he argued, was to make a “clear delineation between what was actually known and what was being reported but was unverified”.*

*For media organisations reporting on an ongoing story, this is an important strategy. If must use information we have not verified ourselves then we need to make it clear that we are not sure of the facts and to provide an explanation of where the story came from. In this way we advise our audiences to be careful and to make up their own minds about whether or not they feel the source is reliable.*

*That said, we need to recognise that many people attack trust us to make wise decisions and they are likely to feel that if we have chosen to publishing a report, there is a high likelihood that it will be true. For us this means we take the burden of care very seriously.*

*Elliott also noted that The Guardian did not enable comments sections on many of the stories published in the immediate after the attacks. He explained that this was because the newspaper did not have the capacity to moderate all of these remarks and many of the comments contained Islamophobic content which the paper clearly did not want to publish.*

*Others who wanted to make other comments may have been frustrated, but few would argue that this was not a wise decision.*

### **4.3.2. Don’t rush to name perpetrators**

Marthoz suggests that the media’s natural reflex will be to try to name perpetrators as quickly as possible. We cannot afford to make any assumptions and to present speculation as facts. The fact that a particular religious group has claimed responsibility for three recent suicide bombings does not mean we can automatically assume they are responsible for a fourth. There’s no reason to want to be hasty with this information, it is far more important for people to know what is happening on the ground and how they should be responding. Knowing who committed the attack is not likely to make an immediate difference in their lives. This is something that can be clarified over time. Falsely suggesting that an attack was

Falsely reporting that attacks were carried out by people from particular groups can see people from this group being subjected to revenge attacks and discrimination.

127. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/23/what-we-got-right-and-wrong-in-coverage-of-the-paris-attacks>

carried out by people of particular nationalities or ethnic groups can be very dangerous for people coming from these communities if there is a backlash by other citizens.

There is also an argument that says we should not name people involved in terrorist attacks. The suggestion is that in doing so we are giving these people recognition, and it is feared that the desire for fame may encourage others to carry out copycat killings.

### **Case Study: Journalists help to promote justice in terrorism case**

#### **Regional Advisor on Conflict Prevention of the Internews Mirsayitov I.E.**

*Journalists working for the Kloop kg. media house made an important contribution in promoting justice when they contributed towards a Kyrgyzstani national being acquitted on terrorism charges in Sweden.*

*The 39-year-old Kyrgyz migrant worker, Atabek Abdullaev, was arrested in Stockholm in 2018 along with two Uzbekistani nationals. All were charged with plotting a terrorist attack and providing financial support to the Islamic State. The arrests came just over a year after an Uzbek asylum seeker killed five people after driving a truck into a crowded pedestrian area in Stockholm.*

*The Kloop journalists independently examined more than 22000 pages of evidence on which the case was based, including police reports, transcripts of interrogations, and witness statements. In analyzing the work of the Swedish State Security Service the journalists identified at least ten serious problems in the pre-trial police investigation. These raised doubts about the police's case.*

*Working with their own experts the journalists concluded that there was no direct evidence against Abdullaev. It was clear from their investigation that the police and prosecutors had come to incorrect conclusions about the man's support for ISIS based on a lack of understanding of Kyrgyz language, customs and Islamic religious practices. The journalists were able to shed light on these problems by interviewing independent experts on security and theology who provided vital perspectives.<sup>128</sup> Their findings were captured in an extensive report which was published online.*

*The District Court of Sweden acquitted Abdullaev on March 8, 2019, dismissing both the charges of preparing a terrorist act and the financing of terrorism.<sup>129</sup> One of his co-accused was convicted of planning an attack while the other was found to have sent money to ISIS.*

*The material prepared by Kloop played an important role in countering violent extremism by showing how important it is for people to break down religious phobias and stereotypes. Not everyone who wears a beard, and a finger shows up are terrorists. Not all Muslims who work in labor migration outside their homeland are a potential threat to the security of a country of migration. The Kloop materials have shown that journalists and media communities can have an indirect influence on the positive outcome of legal proceedings and positively influence the fate of a person.*

#### **4.3.3. Be careful when working with experts**

It's common for journalists to turn to experts when terrorist attacks occur to enhance our understanding of what has happened, who is likely to be involved and why they have resorted to terrorism. These experts can play a significant role in helping audiences to better understand situations. However, we need to be aware that experts can be wrong and that the way in which they understand situations will be influenced by their own social and political beliefs and that theories.

Remember that all experts have their own agendas, some are benign, but others want to use your channel to exert influence.

128. <https://kloop.kg/blog/2019/02/26/veryu-v-allaha-i-shvedskij-sud-kriminalnaya-drama-kyrgyzstantsa-v-stokgolme-ego-obvinyayut-v-terrorizme/>

129. <https://kloop.kg/blog/2019/03/11/teper-mir-znaet-cto-ya-nevinoven-shvedskij-sud-priznal-kyrgyzstantsa-abdullaeva-nevinovnym-v-podgotovke-terakta/>

They may also be interested in promoting their own social or political agendas or those of organisations or individuals they support. In checking on experts we want to be sure they have the necessary qualifications and to conduct some research about their backgrounds and past histories. It's also important that we don't treat expert opinion as fact. Claims must be challenged and experts must be asked to substantiate the different statements they may make. It's often wise not to restrict ourselves to a single expert and to invite a range of different people to share their perspectives.

#### ***4.3.4. We want to monitor the media around us***

By keeping tabs on what other media organisations are reporting we are able to pick up on information that we are missing out on and to come up with leads that we should be following.

If we report on what other media have said, it's important to be clear that we have not verified these claims.

We should, however, never assume that journalists from other media have got the story right. Any information we publish must be checked and verified. We might, in extreme situations report that a particular media organisation has made certain claims, but we need to make it clear that we have not verified this information. We may sometimes pick up on the fact that other media are providing audiences with misleading information and we can publish our own reports to help the community understand what is really happening.

#### ***4.3.5. Respect the rights and dignity of victims***

It is clear that for people caught up in terrorist attacks and the families of people who are harmed and killed these are terribly traumatic experiences. We do not want to make them worse and to cause unnecessary pain by publishing descriptions or pictures that are excessively graphic or intruding into people's private spaces when they are grieving. Showing pictures of the maimed bodies of loved ones will always add to the pain grieving people must experience and we need to be empathetic. Asking the simple question: "How would I feel if this was someone I loved?" can help to provide us to make caring decisions.

Our reporting should not cause further harm to family members who have suffered as a result of terrorist attacks.

We do not want to make them worse and to cause unnecessary pain by publishing descriptions or pictures that are excessively graphic or intruding into people's private spaces when they are grieving. Showing pictures of the maimed bodies of loved ones will always add to the pain grieving people must experience and we need to be empathetic. Asking the simple question: "How would I feel if this was someone I loved?" can help to provide us to make caring decisions.

#### ***4.3.6. Interviewing people affected by trauma***

We don't want to bully people into talking to us, but we must remember that talking to journalists who genuinely care can often be therapeutic for people. Many family members of victims appreciate the fact that their losses are being publically recognised and acknowledged. Sometimes the difference is all in the approach.

A key factor is to ensure that we have informed consent to publish what people have said to us in interviews. They must be conscious of how interview material can be used and able to consider the possible consequences of such use. We must remember that people who are suffering from shock may not be thinking rationally and may not be in a position to give informed consent.

It's important that people give informed consent when speaking to the media. They must know how what they say will be used and be conscious of the impact this might have on them.

The following suggestions about interviewing people affected by conflict we made by a seasoned group of African journalists who have covered many violent situations.

### **Tips for interviewing people suffering from trauma<sup>130</sup>**

- Do not assume to understand what someone who has experienced an atrocity is going through.
- Take the interview slowly and let the person tell his or her own story.
- There is no harm in showing that you care, but this does not mean you should show sympathy for a particular group.
- Let people open up slowly and respect the fact that people may have experienced and seen things you may not be able to imagine.
- Begin the interview gently and do what you can to make the person feel comfortable before you start asking the more difficult questions.
- Let the person know they are in control of the interview. They can decide how much or how little they want to tell you.
- Asking probing questions may yield important information, but be sensitive to the interviewee's emotional needs.
- Do not feel the need to fill the silences. Sometimes it can help to be quiet and give people the chance to think and to collect themselves if they are feeling emotional.
- Asking open-ended questions encourages people to tell their stories in their own words. Closed-ended questions leading to "Yes" and "No" answers tend to foreground the journalist's thinking instead of the interviewee's explanations.
- It is often better to conduct one-on-one interviews with people who have experienced trauma, but there may be times when a source will feel more comfortable if they have others there to support them. We need to make allowances for these requests to make interviewees comfortable.
- Be aware that when conducting group interviews, the unexpected might happen. Interviews conducted in group situations can become challenging if people disagree with each other and begin to argue among themselves.
- Be sure that people understand how what they have said is likely to be used and whether or not he or she will be identified in the story.
- Be sure you understand what the source is saying. It is often useful to end the interview by highlighting the points that you think you will use in your story, and checking with the source whether your understanding is accurate. Are you missing anything important?
- Be emotionally prepared. We tend to get hardened over time, but there will be cases where something about an interview or an interviewee touches us deeply. We need to be alert to that possibility and to think about how we will respond when this happens.
- Never make promises you cannot keep. The best we can generally do is to promise to try to tell the person's story accurately and with respect so that others can understand what they have been through. We cannot promise that our stories will bring about change. Most of us cannot even guarantee our media houses will use the stories.

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130. Du Toit, P. 2014. Reporting Atrocities: A toolbox for journalists covering violent conflicts and atrocities. Internews. Available at: <https://internews.org/resource/reporting-atrocities-toolbox-journalists-covering-violent-conflict-and-atrocities> [Accessed 15 May 2019]

#### **4.3.7. Give life to the victims**

It's important to show the real human cost of terrorist attacks and get beyond body counts and lists of names. To really show the impact of attacks we need show that every person who lost their lives in an attack is an individual who others would have cared for and loved. That victims are mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, wives and lovers and they will be missed. By finding out more about the victims from friends, family and colleagues we can give audiences some idea of what these people were like and what their deaths really mean.

It's important to show the real cost of terrorist attacks and to get beyond the body counts.

We also need to remember that there is almost always another group of victims of terrorist attacks who are seldom acknowledged. These are families and the loved ones of the perpetrators who died in attacks. Many of these people will be devastated by both the loss of their loved ones and by the knowledge of their dreadful actions. In some occasions they will have had no knowledge that loved ones were involved in terrorist groups. Telling these people's stories can also be important and showing the extent of their suffering may help to dissuade other extremists from going through with terror attacks.

#### **4.3.8. Be aware of our place in the story**

In instances where a terrorist attack is ongoing, we must always assume the terrorists have access to the media and are monitoring our reports. This means that in some respects we are part of the story whether we like it or not. Information that we put out can be used by both the public and by terrorists as they make decisions about what to do next. For example: In an attack on a hotel or shopping complex we could find ourselves talking to a member of the public who is with other people hiding somewhere in the building. Letting that person talk about where they are can give away their positions to terrorists and which could ultimately result in their deaths. Similarly, descriptions of security forces actions or live footage of their movements may alert terrorists to an intervention. This could either allow them to escape, enable them to put up better resistance or possibly cause them to kill hostages. We must be exceptionally careful about what we reveal and how our coverage can impact on unfolding events. There is value in liaising with authorities about what they are doing and finding out from them how we can avoid getting in the way.

Terrorists will monitor media coverage. We must make sure we don't make things worse.

#### **4.3.9. Covering hostage situations**

Journalists will sometimes find themselves having to cover an ongoing story in which terrorists are holding individuals or groups of people hostage. These situations can be incredibly tense for everyone involved. Terrorists are likely to be highly agitated and one false move by authorities or journalists could result in their taking the lives of their hostages. Drawing on the work of Bob Steele from the Poynter Institute in the USA, Marthoz<sup>131</sup> proposes the following set of guidelines for reporting on hostage situations.

- Always assume the hostage taker has access to your reports. Avoid giving information that could reveal the tactics of intervention teams.
- Avoid giving details on the hostages that could endanger them further. Mentioning someone's religion, or the fact that they belong to a political party could place them in great jeopardy.

131. Marthoz, 2017, pp. 75-76

- Do not theorise about the terrorist(s)'s psychological traits or political convictions. Misrepresenting people could anger them and tip the balance into violence.
- Do not speculate about the terrorists' plans, the authorities' response or the hostages' experience.
- Clearly explain to the public that there is information you cannot share with them due to the security situation.
- Do not attempt to interview terrorist groups. We do not want to give terrorists a podium on our media. We are also not trained to engage in these kinds of interactions which could result in people losing their lives.
- Do not interview hostages. We don't want to publish or broadcast statements made under duress.
- Be aware of how technical equipment can cause a disruption. Media helicopters or drones can be mistaken for the start of an assault.
- Don't try and negotiate special media privileges with terrorists.
- Do not try and act as a mediator. We are not trained to fulfil this role.
- Let authorities know if the terrorists make contact with you or your office.

#### **4.3.10. Interacting with terrorist groups**

A key challenge confronting journalists is how we should manage potential relationships with terrorist groups that may want to engage with us. Getting involved in relationships is naturally a dangerous business and place us at risk of being harmed by the terrorist group and of being mistakenly identified as a sympathiser and collaborator by governments. Marthoz<sup>132</sup> makes some useful suggestions about things we must consider before interacting with terrorists. These are summarised below.

- Visiting terrorist areas. Journalists have on occasion been invited to spend time in areas occupied by terrorist groups. While such opportunities make it possible to tell stories we would never otherwise be able to tell, there is the danger of journalists being manipulated and only ever being allowed to see the things the terrorist group wants us to see. In these situations, we really need to question whether the story is worth it and whether the information we will get will really help people to understand what is happening. If we do accept such an invitation, we also need to be absolutely transparent in explaining how and in what ways our coverage might have been restricted. We also need to consider how terrorists may base claims of legitimacy and openness based on the fact that they allowed journalists to visit territory under their control.
- Publishing terrorists press releases. As a starting point we need to be aware of any legal restrictions that govern the publication or broadcast of materials provided by terrorist organisation. Many governments have very strict laws in place about relaying messages from terrorist organisations. Furthermore, we need to consider the news value of publishing such materials and to decide if the information provided will really help our audiences to understand situations better. While people might find videos and press releases from terrorist organisations fascinating, we should never simply serve as a communication channel for

Journalists need to avoid being manipulated by terrorist organisations.

132. Marthoz, 2017, pp. 81-89.

terrorists by unquestioningly publishing their information. We can limit the propaganda effect of these media releases by selecting genuinely news worthy content, cutting out the rhetoric and propaganda and asking the opinion of the relevant authorities about what is said in these releases.<sup>133</sup>

- Interviewing terrorists. Many people are concerned that granting interviews to terrorists gives them a legitimacy they do not deserve and “elevates the person virtually to the level of a legitimate politician”.<sup>134</sup> Others see interviewing terrorists as fundamental part of the media’s work and as an essential means to understanding terrorist acts. The challenge journalist face is how to use interviews to gain important information without promoting the terrorist’s agenda. Marthoz argued that interviewing terrorists during terrorist operations can be extremely risky and can potentially serve the terrorists tactics. The advice is against conducting live interviews with terrorists in favour of interviews that can be edited. Experts also caution about the dangers journalists face in meeting with terrorists. Marthoz<sup>135</sup> suggests four guidelines for journalists interviewing terrorists. These are:
  1. Remain completely in control of the journalistic mission, and refuse any limits on questioning that the terrorist group would like to set.
  2. Favour a documentary format over a conventional question-and-answer interview. The documentary approach allows for the introduction of context, complexity and correction of statements made by the interviewees.
  3. Clearly and transparently explain to the public the reasons for which the interview was requested and the conditions under which it was conducted.
  4. Correct the false or fallacious statements that may have been uttered by the interviewees and give a voice to the other players involved such as authorities and victims.

Reporting on ongoing investigations. We need to avoid publishing information that could compromise law enforcement agencies investigations into terrorist activities. It is wise to check with law enforcement agencies before publishing any new information relating to investigations.

Reporting on terrorism trials. Trials are can be seen as key moments in the establishment of justice in the democratic process and are important opportunities for learning about terrorist acts and the motivation behind them. When reporting on these trials we need to be cautious about providing a megaphone for terrorists. There is always the possibility of these trials becoming spectacles with people on different sides using them as opportunities to promote their own rhetoric and denounce others. Journalists need to avoid becoming actors in the story. Marthoz<sup>136</sup> suggests that journalists should play a role by:

...establishing and clarifying the facts, checking that the procedure is lawful and that fundamental rights are respected, revealing the manipulations of the terrorists, the lawyers or the State, etc.

He also warns that “the media must ensure they do not compromise justice, at the risk of seeing defence lawyers claim that their clients have already been judged in the press and that they will thus be deprived of a fair trial”.

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133. Marthoz, 2017, p. 84.

134. Ibid.

135. Marthoz, 2017, p. 86.

136. Marthoz, 2017, pp. 88-89

#### **4.3.11. Carry out post-mortems after terrorist attacks**

It should be evident from the above that covering terrorist actions is complicated and fraught with risks. We will do our best to ensure that public gets the information they need and to avoid aggravating the situation, but we will

After every major terrorist incident, journalist should come together and assess how well they did in reporting on the event.

no doubt make mistakes. We need to look at each terrorist action as a learning experience and, when the dust has settled, to take the time to review our performances and to see how we can improve. Such post-mortems should ideally involve everyone who was involved in the coverage from editors through to the most junior reporters. Such a review could be guided by the following questions:

- How would we assess our readiness if a similar event happened in the future?
- Could we mobilise enough people to enable us to cover the event comprehensively?
- How well did our communication channels work? How could we improve on these?
- We were able to provide the public with all of the information they needed? Could we improve on this? How effective was our online strategy (for print, radio and TV)? How effective was our use of social media?
- What have we learned from our audience about the way we covered this crisis? Have people called in, written in or commented about our work on social media?
- Were we able to draw on a diverse range of sources? Do we need to identify and establish relationships with other experts so that we can diversify the range opinion we can bring to the table?
- Were we able to develop an understanding of the cause being championed by the terrorists?
- Did our reporting on the victims and their families treat people with respect and dignity?
- Did our staff take unnecessary risks?
- How likely is it that there will be further attacks?

At the end of a post-mortem of this nature we need to ensure that different people are tasked with ensuring the weaknesses that are identified during this discussion are addressed and that we continue to build on our strengths.

## Part Five: Violent extremism online

### By Jem Thomas, Director of Training, Albany Associates

The face of terrorism has inevitably adapted to the new digital age. Yet, the means in which terrorists or violent extremism (VE) groups now use the Internet to spread ideology, recruit, and incite violence and hatred is far from a new phenomenon: the mechanisms are well known to modern sophisticated corporates selling wares from Pepsi or Coca-Cola to iPads and BMWs. These rely on advertising and marketing techniques aligned to contemporary trends, styles, and culture. In other words, 'capturing the zeitgeist'.

The recent and successful use of such techniques by modern terrorists, however, marks a significant departure from the efforts of their predecessors. Products of the online generation, today's Islamic Jihadi terrorists, many who are members of popular social networks, are digital natives. As such, they are fully aware of the trends, styles, and mechanisms used to spread messages online, and thus can successfully use such platforms to reach a greater audience, challenge opponents, and spread their ideologies.

However, in the last few years, governments and Internet companies have increasingly challenged the online presence of violent extremists, through taking down much VE material on digital platforms and presenting alternative content to those seeking or just curious about extremist ideologies. Much content remains, either promoting these ideologies or for recruitment purposes. Yet it is the public and notably journalists that sometimes help amplify and spread such content. For journalists, it is not their role to ignore such content, or actual terrorist events – to do so would be a breach of their duty and against the public interest. But it is incumbent upon journalists to refrain from spreading extremist propaganda on the internet and enflaming tensions through responding to online VE content or other online communication.

It is incumbent upon journalists to refrain from spreading extremist propaganda on the internet and enflaming tensions through responding to online VE content or other online communication.

As such, it is necessary for journalists to understand VE online and how to deal with it responsibly.

#### 5.1. How VE groups are using the Internet to advance their goals

Research on the general impact of social media on VE is still largely inconclusive. Although social media enables the propagation of VE and also direct and personal online relationships between recruiter and recruits, research does suggest that those who consume VE content are highly unlikely to be radicalized and become active. Even at great distances.<sup>137</sup> Social media also enables effective promotion of extremist ideology, even if the critical phases of recruitment do not occur in the digital space. Islamic State's online recruitment campaign employed videos, with high production values, to glamourize its activities and encourage potential recruits to engage with their recruiters.<sup>138</sup>

In this, it appears that social media plays more of a supportive or amplifying role in the recruitment process but actual recruitment still takes place through a direct face-to-face relationship between recruiter and recruit.

137. See Conway, M. 2016. Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing Research <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157408?src=recsys>

138. See Awan, I. 2017. Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12115-017-0114-0>

Continual take-down of VE social media accounts has had an effect on social media activity and although much is made of open platforms like Facebook, delivery of increasingly extremist content by recruiters is increasingly done through messaging apps (Viber, WhatsApp, Telegram), providing a degree of security.<sup>139</sup>

This indicates a degree of adaptability of VE online and has resulted in very few webpages openly and directly supporting violent extremism in Central Asia (CITATION - Civil Initiative on Internet Policy and SecDev report). That said, there are significant number of individual Facebook profiles, with followers exceeding 3000, clearly associated with VE groups. These profiles are noticeable through the display of the language, banners or symbols consistent with VE groups, and by the similar nature of display exhibited by their followers, indicating the presence of a community of sympathizers.

The adaptability of VE groups is also apparent via the redundancy they build into their online networks, across various channels. By creating dormant accounts that can be rapidly activated to replace blocked ones, with new links disseminated to subscribers via unblocked accounts on other platforms, VE groups can maintain contact with potential recruits or active operatives.

Although much VE social media activity is now via encrypted platforms, many of the larger VE groups do maintain online 'News Channels' providing, essentially, propaganda in support of their causes in a manner conducive to and easily useable by mainstream media. Often produced in several languages, the journalistic values of, and veracity of the 'news' material produced by, these outlets are highly questionable. Examples of these outlets are Ibaa Information Agency, Voice of Sham Information Agency, the Sham Center and Muhammad Jazira media projects, all associated with Hayyat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly Jabhat al-Nusra. Material released by such outlets may be seductive as an information source for journalists but require a high degree of verification and source checking.

For specifics on how VE groups operating in or relevant to Central Asia use social media, see:

'VE in Central Asian cyberspace and real space: A survey of violent extremism in Central Asia, August 2018 – January 2019' by the Civil Initiative on Internet Policy and SecDev. (is this yet online?)

### **5.1. Countering VE online – what journalists and media producers can do**

Journalists must maintain their objective focus even with a vast amount of information available via social media. But caution has to be observed. The flood of information, especially around a VE attack, is largely user-generated content, uncorroborated and often opinion rather than fact. As such, social media should be seen as only one mechanism of information gathering and should never be a sole determinant of a news story. Reporting solely from behind a desk, scrolling through social media feeds, is not necessarily a basis of good journalism. As Fernando Mas, deputy director of Madrid's El Independiente stated after the Barcelona terrorist attack of August 2017: "I regret to say that social media networks do not determine and will never determine what we do".<sup>140</sup>

The flood of information, especially around a VE attack, is largely user-generated content, uncorroborated and often opinion rather than fact. As such, social media should be seen as only one mechanism of information gathering and should never be a sole determinant of a news story.

139. See Elshimi, M., Pantucci, R., Lain, S. & Salman, N. 2018. Understanding the Factors Contributing to Radicalisation Among Central Asian Labour Migrants in Russia (2018) <https://rusi.org/publication/occasional-papers/understanding-factors-contributing-radicalisation-among-central-asian>

140. See Mas, F. 2017. Con perdón, tengo dudas <https://www.elindependiente.com/opinion/2017/08/19/con-perdon-tengo-dudas/>

In a digital world, journalists, editors and newsrooms generally have to adopt new practices and methodologies:

- News media and digital platforms need to develop better technical and editorial systems for verification and accuracy, especially when covering VE acts. Fact-checking needs to be core to any journalists output and must come before the need to report rapidly. Editors must make sure the need for speed does not override the need for veracity.
- News organizations must develop detailed guidelines on all aspects regarding coverage of VE, looking at context, speed, language, significance, sourcing and verification. As speed becomes a major feature of covering acts of VE, this needs to be backed up by an ethos that encourages journalists to reflect on their reporting. Alongside this, coordinated internal management systems should be adopted to ensure best practices are maintained during fast-moving social-media driven stories.
- Journalists must be as transparent as possible about their sources and also the limits of their knowledge. Transparency is vital for audience trust. Information gathered from social media may be a valid and critical source, but it must be put into context and verified.
- Digital technology allows for a much more creative approach to explaining complex phenomena, such as VE, allowing for much more clarity and context. Data visualisation and interactivity are two such examples which can be used to provide much clearer understanding.<sup>141</sup>

#### **5.1.1. Verification**

Social media can inundate the journalist with information, but this by no means reduces the need for verification and fact checking of material. In fact, due to most of the available information on platforms coming from user-generated content (UGC) the need is even greater than previously. In the increasingly tight timelines of modern newsrooms and especially during ongoing VE related events, the need for speed has to be subservient to the need to verify information. The usual journalistic standards apply but the techniques required are specifically applicable to social media content.

The following questions should always be addressed when working with material gleaned from social media:

- Provenance: Is this the original piece of content?
- Source: Who uploaded the content?
- Date: When was the content created?
- Location: Where was the content created?
- Cross-check: Does the above corroborate the story or message?
- Trust check: Does the source have a high credibility score?

#### **Verifying Identity:**

The following are online mechanisms for checking identities -

BotOrNot: checks the activity of a Twitter account and assesses whether it is bot (auto-generated account, i.e. not human) or not.

Email Checker: checks whether an email address actually exists.

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141. See Beckett, C. 2016. Fanning the Flames: Reporting Terror in a Networked World [http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/documents/Reporting-on-Terror-in-a-Networked-World-\(Beckett\).pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/documents/Reporting-on-Terror-in-a-Networked-World-(Beckett).pdf)

Facebook Graph Search: locates individuals based on criteria such as location, occupation and age

GeoSocial Footprint: checks a social media user's location through multiple sources, such as social media activity.

Pipl.com: searches for an individual's Internet footprint to identify them through multiple social media accounts, public records and contact details.

Storyful MultiSearch Extension: searches accounts associated with a specific handle from one social platform to another.

WebMii: searches for weblinks that match an individual's name or can identify unspecified individuals by keyword.

Who.is: finds the registered users of a domain name, the date of registration, location and contact details of that user.

### **Verifying Places:**

The following are online mechanisms for confirming locations -

Flickr: used to confirm the location of an image by contrasting with other geolocated photos.

Google Maps: used to confirm the location of an image by viewing either satellite imagery or, in many cases, a street view.

Google Translate App: assists in geolocation by translating textual geographical information, such as road signs, into other languages.

NASA Earth Observatory: corroborates image location by providing satellite imagery, maps, images and datasets.

Panoramio: presents geolocated images uploaded to a Google Maps layer.

### **Verifying images (still or moving):**

The following are online mechanisms for checking images -

Foto Forensics: indicates sections of an image that may have been altered, showing differences in quality levels in the image and indicating where alterations are suspected

Google Search by Image: checks whether an image has been used elsewhere by searching its metadata across the web.

JPEGSnoop: detects if an image, in many different formats, has been edited and can retrieve an image's metadata.

RevEye: enables search of Google's image database and also the databases of TinEye, Yandex, Baidu and Bing.

TinEye: detects where an image originated, how it is used, whether modified versions exist and if there are higher resolution copies.

YouTube Data Viewer: shows a video's exact upload date and time.

### **Other Useful Tools:**

Ban.jo: aggregates all social media into one platform allowing images and events to be cross-checked against each other.

Feedly: organises and automates the search and monitoring of news, blogs and Youtube channels.

Geofeedia: searches and monitors social media contents by location, using crowdsourcing.

Gramfeed: provides a search engine specifically for Instagram.

Newspapermap: finds and translates online newspapers.

SearchSystems.net: provides an international directory of free public records.

Snopes.com: debunks Internet hoaxes, which can be used to cross-check UGC.

Yomapic: finds images on Instagram by location.

For more details see 'The Verification Handbook: A definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage'<sup>142</sup>

### **5.1.2. Preventing the propagation of VE propaganda**

Journalists are naturally highly active in the information space online, but also, in today's climate of commercial pressures, prompted to promote their visibility and profile in that space, either promoting their stories or their professional reputation. As such, the number of followers and scale of engagement over social

When it comes to social media journalists must adhere to the principle of "do no harm" without a degree of reflection a quick tweet can have negative consequence.

media is often seen as a sign of success. However, this engagement requires careful thought when reporting on VE, without which journalists can inadvertently spread VE propaganda and recruitment materials on social media. The 'do no harm' principle especially applies here – without a degree of reflection, the quick retweet can have consequences. Prior to posting, liking, retweeting or commenting on an item on social media, the following should be asked?

- Does it, indirectly or otherwise, promote VE?
- Does it confirm accusations made by VE groups?
- Does it endanger others?
- Does it identify users who may require anonymity?
- Has it been verified (see above)?
- Does it reflect the values of your news outlet?

### **5.2. Education in Media and Information Literacy (MIL)**

Good governance relies on an informed citizenry, a citizenry that is increasingly part of the digitally-driven news cycle, often providing material of use to journalists. In this, the journalist's role in the media education of the public, specifically Media and Information Literacy (MIL), is increasingly important in an era of 'fake news', a phenomenon intricately connected with VE, as well as more generally in a political sense. News organisations should be involved in educating their audiences in, for example, how to ensure news sources are reliable.

Media education is already part of the school curriculum in many countries and many journalists work with schools to develop students' understanding of the news process, including demonstrating how content is created, how it can be vulnerable to manipulation, how it can be checked and how to make sense of it.

This applies especially to those in a demographic which may be vulnerable to VE propaganda. Given their own abilities and as a social responsibility incumbent on news outlets championing the

<sup>142</sup>. For more details see 'The Verification Handbook: A definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage'

'public interest', journalists are in a unique position to enhance their audience's ability to access, create, communicate and analyse media content. Thus, journalists can, and should, play a role in educating those in education in how to understand news about VE, and also how they can fact check content which comes through social media from non-news sources.

There are several cases where journalists have contributed to the media education of school and college pupils and wider. In Ukraine, over 400 trainers garnered from the Academy of Ukrainian Press and Stopfake, gave workshops to more than 15,000 citizens from across Ukrainian society, including high school teachers and students, professional union members, police officers, medical workers, and librarians, with impressive results<sup>143</sup>. In Finland, a project called Faktana, kiitos! (Facts, please!) brought together journalists and schools to share their expertise on the media industry, journalistic practices and social responsibility. These were seen as topics that most issues parents and teachers did not necessarily have experience of. In the UK, the Times has trialled a scheme providing media literacy training for school students specifically aimed at helping them analyse news and identify 'fake news'. This 'fake news' issue is particularly prevalent around issues of VE, especially when it is used by VE groups to incite violence.

There are several tools for helping journalists to teach media literacy<sup>144</sup> but often owners or editors, driven by financial concerns, are not convinced of its benefits. However, it should be noted that in doing this sort of work, in fact, media outlets are not only providing a service to the public but also promoting their outlets and encouraging potential new consumers to engage with their news output. Even the most cynical senior staff and owners may be persuaded by that fact.

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143. For a useful curricula in Media Literacy see <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/citizen-media-literacy-project-trainer-manual.pdf>

144. The International Journalists' Network identify several tools <https://ijnet.org/en/story/tools-teaching-media-literacy>

## Part Six: Looking after yourself

Throughout this handbook we have focused on different ways in which journalists can make a positive contribution through our reporting, but we have not addressed the impact that our reporting can have on us. In this final part of the handbook we recognise that reporting on conflict, whether low level community disputes, high intensity wars or bloody terrorist attacks also impacts on us as journalists. We can be frequently exposed to life-threatening situations and carry with us the effects of what we have observed and the stories we have heard. For some journalists, who make it their life's work to track conflagrations across the globe, this can be all in a day's work. Surviving in conflict zones can become second nature and they can learn to manage their responses to human suffering. Other journalists – frequently reporters working for smaller community media houses – have no intention of ever venturing into hazardous situations, but they can find the war has come to them. The final part of this handbook is meant for the latter group of journalists – the seasoned conflict-zone reporters will already have learned most of what follows from experience. This cannot be a comprehensive guide covering all aspects of surviving in different conflict contexts, but it should serve as a starting point for people who find themselves having to venture onto the frontline, wherever that might be.

### 6.1. Putting safety first

The first decision journalists must take when it comes to reporting on armed conflict and atrocities is whether they are willing and able to go into areas where their lives may be in danger. This must be an individual decision. Principle II of the Reporters without Borders' Charter for the Safety of Journalists Working in War Zones or Dangerous Areas states that:

The first decision journalists must take when it comes to reporting on armed conflict and atrocities is whether they are willing and able to go into areas where their lives may be in danger. This must be an individual decision.

*Covering wars involves an acceptance by media workers of the risks attached and also a personal commitment which means they go on a strictly voluntary basis. Because of the risks, they should have the right to refuse such assignments without explanation and without there being any finding of unprofessional conduct. In the field, the assignment can be terminated at the request of the reporter or the editors after each side has consulted the other and taken into account their mutual responsibilities. Editors should beware of exerting any kind of pressure on special correspondents to take additional risks<sup>145</sup>.*

The same principles should apply to journalists who are called on to report on the activities of violent extremists and on terrorist attacks. The reality is that journalists who feel unable to cope with the danger and brutality of working in combat situations are unlikely to be able to perform at their best and may find themselves incapacitated by fear or horror. For editors, it is essential to recognize that the best person to evaluate the situation and his or her ability to cope is the journalist.<sup>146</sup>

What follows is a set of general tips for journalists working in conflict situations and in contexts where combat may be taking place. They are intended to apply to many different conflict situations, but many will be relevant to contexts where terrorist attacks have taken place.<sup>147</sup>

- If you are in or going into a volatile situation, let your news desk know where you are going and when you plan to be back. Keep the desk updated if you change your plans. Arrange to

145. Reporters without Borders. March, 2002. Charter for the Safety of Journalists Working in War Zones or Dangerous Areas. Available: <http://www.rsf.org/IMG/doc-1288.pdf>

146. Smyth, F. Journalist Security Guide: Covering the News in a Dangerous and Changing World. Committee to Protect Journalists. Available: <https://www.cpj.org/reports/2012/04/journalist-security-guide.php>

147. Adapted from Du Toit, P. 2014. Reporting Atrocities: A Toolbox for Journalists Covering Violent Conflict and Atrocities. Internews.

make contact at specific times so that they will know you are safe. Colleagues may be able to organize help for you if you fail to check in at these times. This task can become impossible if they don't know where you are.

- Things can move very fast when violence breaks out and you can find that you have moved a long way in a short time. A calm situation can change rapidly into a more volatile one and when this happens it is advisable to immediately let people know what is happening and where you are.
- Be conscious of how people are responding to the news media. In some instances, journalists are welcomed – often because people feel authorities may be more restrained if their actions are being monitored. In other situations, people may be very antagonistic. Be very careful if there is an overwhelming sense of negativity toward the media. Carry accreditation with you, but use your judgement about whether to display it or not. Sometimes a “Press” sign on your car may offer some protection, at other times it may make you a target.
- Find out the names of leaders of parties involved in a situation. Being able to drop the names of respected leaders can help to ensure that you get out of trouble. If you are threatened by members of one of the conflicting groups, knowing how to contact a respected leader in that group could get you out of a potentially dangerous situation. It helps to have these people's contacts saved on your mobile. Even the fact that you have their names in your phone directory may enhance your position with junior recruits. It may also be useful to have the contact numbers for police and military officers from units operating in the area where you are working in case you run into trouble with government agencies.
- Familiarize yourself with the terrain and plan how, if a situation becomes too volatile, you will make your escape. Try to establish at least one backup escape route in case your first option is blocked. Update your escape options as you move.
- Be conscious of how the situation and the mood of people around you may be changing.
- Consider staying with other journalists. Many reporters have recounted how they ran into trouble when they went off on their own. You may not want to stick with the pack, but there is some safety in numbers.
- Be ready to hit the ground if shooting starts. Remember cars and the thin walls of shacks, and wooden or airbrick houses offer little or no protection against the guns normally used by combatants. Lying flat in a trench or drainage ditch can be the safest place to be when shooting breaks out. Keeping low will also help protect you from shrapnel.
- Wear protective clothing, bullet-proof vests, and helmets.<sup>148</sup>
- Dress appropriately. Avoid colours that might be associated with the different parties, politically-themed t-shirts, and clothes that could be mistaken for police and military uniforms. All of these outfits could set you up as a target.
- Wear shoes you can run in – running shoes, cross trainers, or light hiking boots are best. Clothes made from natural fibres are both cooler and warmer and less likely to catch fire.
- Prepare a card with the following information on it:
  - o Your full name and the organization you work for;

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148. Smyth, F. *Journalist Security Guide: Covering the News in a Dangerous and Changing World*. Committee to Protect Journalists. Available: <https://www.cpj.org/reports/2012/04/journalist-security-guide.php>

- o Contact numbers people should use if something happens to you;
- o Your blood group;
- o Information about any medicines and drugs you may be allergic to.

(This should ideally be laminated and kept where people are likely to find it.)

- Carry basic supplies. The following are some useful emergency items we should consider carrying with us:
  - o Water, water filters, or purification tablets, as well as energy bars;
  - o Medication that you might need on a regular basis;
  - o A torch, compass, first aid kit, and space blanket;
  - o A back-up cell phone, SIM cards from different network providers, and spare batteries.

A clear head is your most important survival tool. Withdraw too early rather than too late.

Control your temper at all times and never react violently to verbal or physical provocation.

The one certainty about our profession is the fact that it can be unpredictable. We can never know when we will find ourselves in the middle of volatile situations and it is best to use quieter times to prepare ourselves. The following are some suggestions for things we can do to prepare ourselves in advance for dangerous assignments.

- Take time to read the different guides provided by journalism support agencies for working in dangerous situations. There is no substitute for experience, but these handbooks and guides draw on the collective experiences of seasoned journalists and are packed with useful pointers and resources.
- Get and stay physically fit. We never know when we might need to run several kilometres to keep up with a demonstration or to trek long distances to reach a point where terrorist attack has taken place. Keeping fit also enhances our chances of getting out of danger if a situation becomes dangerous and – as will be suggested later – can provide a valuable outlet for stress.
- Take a course in first aid. Being caught with a wounded colleague we cannot help because we lack basic knowledge of first aid can be devastating. We may also be able to draw on our knowledge to treat ourselves in an emergency or to guide a colleague who is helping us. Put together a first aid kit you can carry with you in the field.
- Read other journalists' books about covering conflicts, combat, and atrocities. We can glean useful tips and suggestions from these books and their stories can help prepare us for the experiences we are likely to have to confront. They may also provide insights about the conflict dynamics we may face.
- Talk to other journalists who have been in dangerous situations and find out from them what they did to stay safe. Talk to soldiers and law enforcement officers about their experience and get advice from them.
- If you can, take a course in surviving in hostile environments. These can be very helpful, but they can also be very expensive.

- Take time to think about why it is we do what we do. It can be very empowering to reflect on why we have chosen this life and who we are trying to serve. During the dark moments that inevitably come when we report on violence and terrorist actions, these ideas can provide us with the strength we need to persevere.

## **6.2. Surviving hostage situations**

One of the biggest dangers journalists can face when working on stories relating to extremist activity or when going into conflict zones is the possibility of being kidnapped by terrorists or fighters. The following tips for how to respond if you are kidnapped form part of a list of tips provided in a comprehensive Safety Guide for Journalists jointly published by UNESCO and Reporters without Borders<sup>149</sup>.

- Don't panic and try to appear calm. The kidnappers are likely nervous enough themselves.
- Don't resist or try to escape unless you're sure you can.
- Be patient. Do not provoke your captors and don't be servile or beg for things.
- Try to remember as many useful details as possible: voices, smells, noises, language spoken, routes taken...
- Accept reasonable orders and requests by the kidnappers.
- Accept food, water and anything that can improve your health.
- Get the kidnappers to call you by your name. This will get them to see you as a person. Try to establish a dialogue and a relationship with them to create a more relaxed atmosphere.
- If you are kidnapped at the same time as one or more of your colleagues, try to persuade your captors to keep you together. This will be less work for them and you will be able to offer each other mutual support.
- Try not to believe threats and promises made by your captors.
- Don't lose hope and don't be discouraged if negotiations drag out
- Retain your instincts as a journalist and observer to try to take a step back from what you are undergoing and how you will tell this story later.
- If the kidnappers ask, agree to make a voice recording or write a neutral note. This can help show you're alive and lead to your release.
- As your release nears, don't be impatient and obey the kidnappers right up to the last moment.
- After you've been freed, you'll be medically examined and "interrogated." This is vital. Also try to find someone to confide in about what happened. Don't keep the experience to yourself
- Follow the advice you'll get before making any statement to the media.
- When you resume your normal life, take safety precautions against possible reactions by angry kidnappers.

## **6.2. Caring for ourselves**

Journalists confront trauma on a daily basis. We observe first-hand the horror of natural disasters and man-made catastrophes such as apartment fires, the collapse of badly-built factories, and train wrecks. We witness the agony of deliberate violence committed in domestic abuse, crime, terrorism, atrocities, and combat.

149. RSF. 2017. Safety guide for journalists: a handbook for reporters in high-risk environments. RSF and UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243986>

Some of us risk our lives in combat zones and many of us are targets of assaults, kidnappings, assassination attempts, and sexual abuse. Just as often our experience of trauma is second-hand. We spend time listening patiently to people who directly experienced trauma and to those – like the families of victims – who are deeply and devastatingly affected. Moreover, civil conflict may inherently be more disturbing to the health of journalists than external conflicts, as the localized nature of the conflicts may mean that we personally know combatants, victims, and others, and identify with the parties by community, ethnicity, race, or religion. Reporting on other peoples' trauma is an important part of what we do, but how often do we consider how our own exposure to trauma touches us, both as journalists and as individuals? Today there is a growing awareness of the impact of exposure to trauma on journalists and recognition that journalists can often suffer the same mental health problems as soldiers, policemen, and paramedics whose work places them in danger and regularly exposes them to traumatic situations<sup>150</sup>.

Reporting on other peoples' trauma is an important part of what we do, but how often do we consider how our own exposure to trauma touches us, both as journalists and as individuals?

This awareness has led to a shift in newsrooms away from the myth of the journalist as an unaffected observer and the recognition that, like the people we report on, we are also at risk of psychological harm<sup>151</sup>. It is not uncommon for journalists who have experienced or witnessed traumatic events to experience a range of often deeply unsettling reactions. These can include:

- flashbacks and bad dreams;
- feeling inexplicably jittery and irritable;
- being unable to concentrate;
- a sense of numbness and being cut off from the world and loved ones;
- a craving for solitude;
- avoiding reminders of traumatic experience;
- drinking and smoking more than usual.<sup>152</sup>

These feelings are a natural response to trauma and will normally begin to ease over a period of days or sometimes, in more extreme cases, over weeks.

Many factors determine how severely trauma impacts us. These include the severity of the events, the extent to which our lives have been endangered, and the amount of exposure we have had to traumatic situations. They can also relate to how we take care of our emotional selves. Many journalists who have talked about stress following trauma describe how they have been caught off guard by their own responses. They describe how, after years of witnessing horrific events without difficulty, they have found themselves suddenly and inexplicably devastated while covering a story that might not normally have affected them so badly. It is also possible that the psychological impact of trauma may only start to affect us some time after the actual event – often triggered by a sound, smell, or image that reminds us of something horrific we may have suppressed. Trauma-induced stress can be debilitating. At work it can mean missing deadlines, filing weak reports, or making bad judgment calls in the field.

150. See Castle, P. 1999. Journalism and trauma: Proposals for change. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 7 (13): 143 – 150.

151. Many of the world's leading news providers have in-house programs to support journalists who are suffering from trauma-induced stress.

152. See Rees, G. 2013. The Trauma Factor. In Fowler-Watt, K., & Allan, S. (eds.) *Journalism: New Challenges*. Centre for Journalism and Communication Research, Bournemouth University.

At home, it can result in relationship breakdowns, outbursts of anger, and a sense of being cut off from partners and children. For a journalist struggling with professional or relationship difficulties, it can be worth questioning whether these may relate to trauma-induced stress.

If, after several weeks, you continue to experience the same unsettling reactions and find these are impacting on your ability to function as usual, it is possible you may be dealing with Post-Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD). Helpguide.org – a website devoted to assisting people coping with stress and emotional problems – says that a normal response to trauma becomes PTSD when you become mentally stuck in the trauma situation. Only a qualified clinician will be able to formally diagnose whether you have PTSD, but if you recognize the symptoms then it is advisable to seek professional help as soon as possible. Director of the Dart Foundation for Journalism and Trauma, Gavin Rees, writes that:

*...PTSD is a condition that responds very well to appropriate treatment, a fact that is perhaps not as widely known as it should be...the longer one ignores PTSD, the more likely it is that other complications such as failed work assignments, relationship breakdowns, and alcoholism will start to bite<sup>153</sup>.*

We can expect that people who have chosen careers as combat reporters will have learned to cope with stress and will have developed a resilience that makes it possible for them to continue doing the work they are doing.<sup>154</sup> We can have no such expectation of local journalists who unexpectedly find themselves reporting on terrorist attacks in their own countries and communities. For these journalists, the impact of trauma can be extremely harmful.

The reality is that nothing but experience can prepare us for the things we might witness when reporting on atrocities, yet even that cumulative experience of covering trauma can add to our levels of stress. We need to monitor both ourselves and our colleagues for signs that stress is getting us down and we should not be in anyway ashamed to look for help when we need it.

We also need to be aware that even the process of listening to sources recount their stories of the horrors they may have experienced can result in what is known as 'secondary PTSD', which can also be debilitating. Research, Marthoz<sup>155</sup> observes, has shown that some journalists do not need to go anywhere near the actual field to risk traumatising. There is evidence to show that journalists who sit behind their computer screens viewing images of violence and beheadings or reading or listening to the testimonies of victims can also suffer from PTSD. The same thing can happen to journalists who must spend hours sitting in courts and tribunals listening to evidence of horrific violence.

We also need to be aware that even the process of listening to sources recount their stories of the horrors they may have also become debilitating.

The following are some simple strategies we can adopt that can help us cope with the stress of reporting on trauma which have been adapted from advice provided by the Dart Foundation for Journalism and Trauma<sup>156</sup>:

- Know your limits. If you feel you cannot perform an assignment, discuss this with your editor and explain your reasons.

153. Reese, 2013

154. Even so, research has shown that combat reporters fairly frequently suffer from PTSD, with one study estimating that the prevalence of PTSD among these journalists could be over 28 per cent (Rees, 213: 416).

155. Marthoz, 2017: 96

156. Hight, J. & Smyth, F. 2013. Tragedies & Journalists: A Guide for More Effective Coverage. [http://dartcenter.org/files/en\\_tnj\\_0.pdf](http://dartcenter.org/files/en_tnj_0.pdf).

- Take breaks. Giving yourself a few hours away from a traumatic situation can help to relieve stress.
- Talk to someone. Find someone you can trust and who understands what you are going through. Ideally this should be someone whom you know will listen without judging or interrupting.
- Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress. Deep breathing techniques<sup>157</sup> and meditation can help.
- Find ways to blow off steam. Punching a bag, running hard, singing loudly to music or even going to a secluded place and screaming can help.
- Start and maintain an exercise routine. Walking, running, and cycling are great ways to work off stress. Keeping physically fit helps you cope with stress and will help you in your reporting work. If you are caught in a conflict zone and unable to move freely, basic floor exercises such as sit-ups and push-ups are useful substitutes. Find something you can do that distracts you from thinking about stressful events. Play an instrument, learn to juggle, play Sudoku – anything that can hold your attention can help.
- Monitor your alcohol and tobacco consumption and avoid narcotics. These will may seem to help reduce your stress, but the longer terms effects can be even more damaging.
- Try to get enough sleep. You should be aiming for between seven and nine hours per night.
- Eat healthy foods. Limit your consumption of processed and fried foods, sugar and refined carbohydrates because these can exacerbate mood swings.
- Share what you are going through with loved ones. You do not need to recount all of the horror stories, but talk to them about your feelings.
- Find moments in the day when you can sit quietly by yourself and reflect. Perhaps listen to music, keep a diary, or write poetry

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157. For a guide to reducing stress through breathing, visit this site from Harvard University. Available at: <http://health.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474977016086>

## **Part Seven: Legal Aspects when Covering Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalism in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan**

### **By Azamat Talantbek uulu**

## **Part Seven: Legal Aspects when Covering Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalism in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan**

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#### **7.1. Introduction.**

While good journalism has the potential to contribute towards reducing the harmful effects of extremism and terrorism, poor journalism and irresponsible reporting can promote panic and exacerbate the harmful impact of these actions on society. This is one reason why, as principled media professionals, we seek to follow a set of ethical standards that help to ensure we “do no harm” in our reporting. It is also the reason governments give for passing laws limiting our freedom to report on extremist and terrorist themes and why they argue that public safety and national security concerns can sometimes trump questions of media freedom and journalists’ rights. We may not always agree with the how these laws are implemented, but we certainly need to be aware of them and to be able to avoid unwittingly running into trouble with the law.

While this handbook has focused broadly on how journalists can make a difference, this chapter recognises that laws governing journalists coverage of extremism and radicalism in the region. This chapter examines the rights and responsibilities of journalists in Central Asia, media law and the coverage of extremism and terrorism, specific legislation. It concludes by examining the specific laws journalists working in these countries must be conscious of when reporting on extremism and terror. This section contains the subsections

#### **7.2. Rights and obligations of journalists in Central Asia**

The laws and regulations on rights and obligations of journalists and media in Central Asian countries are similar and share common fundamental principles. The principles are captured in media law and in professional journalism codes, as well as criminal codes, administrative codes, civil codes, and laws against extremism and terrorism.

**The laws governing the media and protecting journalists’ professional activities grant journalists the right to:**

- Collect and disseminate information.

Journalists have the right to collect and disseminate information that relates to criminal cases and cases involving terrorism and extremism, but the criminal procedural codes of Central Asian countries stipulate that before reporting on such cases journalist must obtain the written permission of investigating officer if the report contains information that is confidential to the investigation. This means that a journalist can publish a general information regarding the place where and event took occurred, a general description of who was involved (suspects cannot be named), but particular details that are under criminal investigation can’t be made public without the investigating officer’s

consent<sup>158</sup>. These limitations are not intended to place restrictions on the journalist's right to collect and disseminate information, but to safeguard the investigation process. Journalists do have the right to publish general info about the criminal cases on terror and extremism as long as they abide by this rule.

- To approach officials to obtain information for their reports.

Journalists have the right to approach officials for information on stories relating to extremism and terrorism, but officials have the right to withhold information both during and after a terrorist action if this is necessary to protect the investigation or to maintain security. While officials may withhold some information in order to protect the investigation, they are still obliged to provide journalists with information that does not have to be kept secret. If journalists are uncertain about what information should be classified they can meet with officials and ask for specific explanations of what is regarded as secret or not. Journalists can also submit written requests for clarification to the officials. Officials may not refuse to meet with journalists or to deny them information that has not officially regarded as secret. For instance they must provide information on the time and place when events occurred, an approximation of how many suspects were involved and how many victims there were.

- Make recordings with the consent of the people being recorded.

In instances where individuals do not want videos or recordings of interviews to be published broadcast, journalists may still make recordings as long as these are not released. These recordings and videos can be used in the drafting of articles and as a way of keeping an accurate record of what was said, but only if the subject is made aware of the fact that he or she is being recorded. These recordings can also be presented in court if there is a dispute over the way in which a source's comments were covered in a story.

- Be present in areas of natural disasters, at rallies and demonstrations upon presentation of the journalist pass (press card).

This right can be curtailed during counter-terror operations when journalists can be refused access to areas or regions where such actions are ongoing. The safety zone shall be indicated by senior officer in charge of counter-terror action and journalists who intentionally enter these zones can be charged with disobeying the lawful demands of a law enforcement officer and penalized.

- Conduct investigative journalism.

All reports on extremist and terrorist activities must be supported with solid evidence, which may include, among other things: documents, files, videos, photographs and the testimony of witnesses. Journalists can be required to provide government investigators with information they may uncover and publish during their own investigations into matters relating to extremism and terrorist acts. They can also be required to reveal who the sources of their information are to the investigators. The law does not just restrict journalists, other laws make it possible for journalists to obtain information from government agencies on socially relevant subjects that relate to journalists' enquiries. This information is normally provided after journalists submit a written request to relevant agency detailing the nature of their inquiry.

### **7.3. Obligations.**

Across Central laws governing the media, laws on countering terrorism and extremist activities, together with criminal procedure codes and codes developed to protect journalists, place special obligations on journalists when it comes to reporting on violent extremism and terrorism. These laws

158. names and identity of suspects, victims, the particular info is determined by the officer.

and codes stipulate that when journalists report on stories relating to extremism and terrorism they shall:

- take into account that people's right to life and security is primary in relation to the right to freedom of access to information and its dissemination<sup>159</sup>.

Journalists need to take special care in any circumstances where their reporting on extremist or terrorist activities might pose a threat to the safety of civilians and members of counter-terrorism teams. For instance, journalists may not report on the activities of counter-terrorism teams, special task forces and the police in ways that alert extremists and terrorists to their security forces tactics and operations. Where such information is published it can be deleted by the security forces without a court decision and journalists and the media houses they belong to can be penalized with official warnings and fines and other penalties that fall within the jurisdiction of the affected government agency.

- immediately inform the state authorities involved in countering terrorism when they receive information about a planned terrorist attack.

The law on countering terrorism requires journalists to inform the state authorities as soon as they receive information about planned terrorist activities. The law doesn't stipulated how this should be done as long as the information is communicated. The state body on countering terrorism has right to require journalists to hand over all materials they have concerning the potential attack and to disclose where the information came from.

- in the presence of information or documentary materials that may serve as material evidence at the trial of crimes of a terrorist nature or may be used in the interests of preventing, identifying and suppressing terrorist activities, transfer them to state authorities involved in countering terrorism;

These laws are of particular relevance to investigative reporters, but are applicable to any journalist who is in possession of materials that could be used as evidence in a trial. Journalists who refuse to provide the relevant authorities with material and information that could be used in a trial or in identifying terrorist threats may be fined for "insubordination to the awful demands of law enforcement officers". The amount of fine varies from country to country.

- check the accuracy of their messages;

Media leaders are obliged to take measures to ensure that the materials published on their platforms do not call for or provoke terrorist activity or contain propaganda intended to provoke religious, ethnic, racial or international hostility.

#### **7.4. Restrictions**

Central Asian media laws, as well as laws on countering terrorism and extremist activities, criminal procedure codes and journalist's professional codes stipulate that journalists shall not:

- publish or broadcast appeals by third parties that promote the use of violence in overthrowing of the state, changing the constitutional order, or violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.
- publish or broadcast content that promotes war, violence and cruelty, national and religious exclusivity and intolerance towards other peoples.

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159. Comment: this means that the dissemination of information in such cases may be limited by law enforcement agencies and journalists may be denied the right to access socially relevant information. However, journalists may require clarification from law enforcement agencies as to whether there is a real threat to people's lives and how this is related to restricting news distribution.

- insult the religious feelings of believers and clergymen. Journalists may not publish materials that can offend people's religious beliefs, such as caricatures that ridicule particular religions or beliefs. Nothing prohibits journalists from publishing materials critical of the actions of clerics as long as they are not insulting to the person's actual faith. Religious leaders who feel they have been maligned have the same recourse to the civil courts as other citizens.
- distribute extremist materials through the media. Extremist materials are regarded as material that has been declared extremist by a court, which will make such determinations on the advice of experts. Once material has been declared extreme it may no longer be distributed.
- publicise Nazi symbols and propaganda<sup>160</sup> and/or symbols that are confusingly similar to Nazi symbols and attributes.
- propagate the symbols and attributes of organisations that have been declared to be extremists by the courts. Journalists need to check on the websites of the high courts and other regulatory agencies in their countries to determine which organisations and symbols have been restricted.
- disseminate information disclosing special techniques and tactics of antiterrorist operatives. The dissemination of such information is prohibited under Article 22 of the modal law for CIS countries "On countering terrorism". The prohibition seems to apply broadly at all times and does not relate specifically to periods when counter-terrorism units are active. The law states that: "It is prohibited to disseminate information disclosing special techniques and tactics of the antiterrorist operation." Journalists may not publish information relating to these tactics and special operations without the permission of the agency concerned.
- disseminate information that could impede antiterrorist operations and pose a threat to the life and health of people both inside and outside specified zone of antiterrorist operation. Such information could include: the time when operation is going to start, the location of the special forces, live broadcasting of how special force teams are preparing for operations, the places where people are gathering in mass beyond police lines.
- disseminate information serving to propagate or justify terrorism. The laws on countering terrorism make it a crime to distribute propaganda that promotes terrorist activities and which justifies the need for such activities. Reporters may report on topics relating to terrorism, but they cannot call on people to get involved in such activities or seek to justify the need for such acts. Journalists who intentionally disseminate terrorist propaganda can face a criminal prosecution and the possibility of up to five years imprisonment.
- disseminate information about employees of special units, members of the operational headquarters that manage antiterrorist operations, and persons assisting in carrying out the operation.

If extremist materials are disseminated by a mass media organization or if it is suspected that the organization may be supportive of extremist activities then the owner and/or editorial board (editor-in-chief) of the organization will be warned to desist from such activities. This written warning may come from the authorized state body that registered this media organization, the executive body in the sphere of press, broadcasting and mass media, the Prosecutor General or subordinate prosecutor. This warning will indicate the specific grounds for issuing a warning, including the violations committed. If it is possible to take measures to eliminate the violations committed, the warning also

<sup>160</sup>. Propaganda means in accordance to the law "On Countering Terrorism" - "propaganda of the ideology of terrorism, dissemination of materials or information calling for terrorist activities either substantiating or justifying the need to carry out such activities; Laws that agreed to adopt in CIS countries as a result of Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS Member States.

sets a deadline for the elimination of these violations, which is at least ten days from the date of the warning.<sup>161</sup> If media houses fail to take steps to eliminate the violations that served as grounds for the warning their activities can be terminated in accordance with the procedure established by the law on countering terrorism. The same consequence can follow if, within 12 months of receiving a warning, new evidence emerges that suggests a media house have been supporting or engaging in extremist activities.

Media houses and journalists are also prohibited from disclosing evidence that has been obtained during pre-trial criminal hearing. The authorized official of the inquiry body, the investigator shall warn the witness, victim/s, lawyers, experts, specialists, interpreters and other persons present during the investigative actions about the illegality of disclosing the data of the pre-trial proceedings. The investigator has the right to demand that people associated with the investigation sign a written undertaking not to disclose information and to acknowledge a warning that doing so may expose them to about administrative liability.

The legislation of Central Asian countries details two types of liability for media organisations and journalists who violate of the law in the field of dissemination of information on extremism and terrorism.

The first type of liability is administrative, which includes such measures as the suspension of media activities, mandatory physical work for public benefit, deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities, correctional work<sup>162</sup> and fines. The exercise of administrative law can be seen in the following two examples. Example One: The editor-in-chief who approves the publication of an article propagating extremist or terroristic actions could be prevented by a judge from holding this position of responsibility for a given number of years. The judge may also suspend a media organisation's operations for a certain time period or even terminate the media organisation's operations entirely for violating media law and law on countering extremism and terrorism. The judge may also ban a journalist who wrote the story from holding the position of chief editor position for several years into the future. Example Two: If a journalist frequently publishes articles or other material that humiliate ethnic minorities he or she can be ordered to carry out correctional work for a certain time period. Correctional work is a physical work for public benefit (cleaning and repairing public places, etc.). Such an order would generally come after several warnings after the journalist had been forced to pay a number of fines.

The second type of liability is criminal, it provides for imprisonment or restraint for a certain period under certain articles of the criminal code.

Most often, journalists, bloggers, media companies have a risk of being held liable for inciting racial, ethnic, national, religious or interregional hostility (discord), humiliation of national dignity, propagating exclusivity by suggesting that some citizens are superior or inferior to others based on their attitude to religion, national or racial identity. These acts can be committed publically or through the media, including on the internet. To avoid falling on wrong side of these laws, journalists should be familiar with the relevant articles in the criminal codes of their countries. Several of these laws are indicated in the next section of this chapter.

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161. rticle 8. A warning about the inadmissibility of the distribution of extremist materials through the media and their implementation of extremist activities, the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Countering Extremist Activities"

162. Correctional labor is a type of criminal punishment that consists in forcing a convicted person to work for public benefit, with a deduction of a certain part from his earnings to state or local budget.

## 7.6. Specific legislation related to journalists and media on extremism and terrorism

This section includes articles from the criminal codes of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Why precisely the criminal code? Because, in the legal system of these states, the most serious type of punishment is criminal prosecution. Why are these articles included in this section? And why should a journalist know them?

First, it is a collection of articles from different criminal codes of countries that directly or indirectly apply to journalists, since it is journalist who most often collects, processes and disseminates information on such sensitive topics as radicalism, extremism, terrorism, violence. Journalists can sometimes make a mistake and spread extremist information through ignorance. Also, when covering some kind of military or conflict event, in his/her materials journalist may succumb to emotions and distribute material, with the content of propaganda of views and ideas against a particular country. A journalist may deliberately or unintentionally publish information that excites national, tribal, racial, class or religious discord. In all these and other cases, liability is provided for according to the articles listed below. It is important to read these articles before preparing conflict-sensitive materials.

Secondly, it is important for a journalist to understand the line beyond which a violation of the law begins. In other words, which of his statements are, for example, propaganda of war, ideas and views of banned organizations, and which of his statements, personal opinion, hypothetical questions, judgments and comments are protected by the Constitution provision that “everyone has the right to their own opinion”. Having read and understood these articles a journalist can avoid some risks of criminal punishment. The journalist will know for the publication of what content a criminal case will be initiated.

These articles of the criminal code apply to all citizens, regardless of their profession, as well as legal entities, which include the media. The question arises, if the material violating the law is published through the media, then what is the responsibility for the same thing if the material is published on social networks?

- In Kazakhstan, Internet resources are included in the concept of the media, respectively, the publication of prohibited materials on Facebook, Instagram, or any other social network will be equated to publication in ordinary media.
- In Kyrgyzstan, Internet resources are not the media, this is indicated by the article 1 of the Law on Media and the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic. However, both normal citizens and the media will nonetheless be held accountable for publishing prohibited material on social networks.
- In Uzbekistan, websites in public telecommunications networks are equated with the media, according to Article 4 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the Mass Media”. Accordingly, for the publication of prohibited material in the social network arises the same responsibility as for publication in the media.
- In Tajikistan, Article 1 of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On the Press and Other Mass Media” does not indicate whether the websites are media or not. However, for the publication of a prohibited content responsibility is provided for under the Criminal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan. The law does not distinguish between journalists or ordinary citizens when it comes to the publication of prohibited materials. Both are faced the same criminal responsibility under Tajikistani legislation.
- In Turkmenistan, the Law “On Mass Media” says - “Internet media - a website on the Internet registered as a mass media.” To become internet media it is a special registering procedure

stipulated by legislation. That is social networks are not equated with the media. But a citizen or the editors of the media published on the social network material violating the Criminal Code will be brought to liability despite the fact that their account is not registered as media on the Internet.

Thus, in some countries like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Internet sites are equated with the media, and in some countries like Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan websites are not counted as media. In both ways of publishing (Internet and ordinary media) prohibited content a citizen (journalist, editorial staff, head of media who allowed the release) will be criminally liable for the publication of prohibited materials on the social network in accordance with the criminal codes of these countries. It is therefore necessary for people to understand that people who unintentionally publish prohibited materials on social networking platforms can run into difficulties with the law.

**Below are articles from criminal codes of the Central Asian countries:**

**Kyrgyzstan**

**Article 315. Production, distribution of extremist materials**

1. Production, distribution, transportation or transfer of extremist materials or their acquisition or storage for the purpose of distribution, use of symbols or attributes of extremist organizations, as well as through the Internet, is punishable by category<sup>163</sup> II (2,6-5 years) imprisonment with or without deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of up to two years.

**2. The same acts committed:**

- 1) by group of persons or group of persons in collusion;
- 2) with the use of financial or other material assistance received from foreign public associations, religious or other organizations or foreign citizens are punishable by category III imprisonment with or without the deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for up to three years.

**Article 385. Propaganda of war**

1. Propaganda of war, that is, dissemination in any form of views, ideas or appeals with the aim of causing aggression of one country against another or unleashing a military conflict is punishable by category II imprisonment.

2. Propaganda of war committed by an official holding a position of responsibility is punishable by category III imprisonment with the deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for up to three years.

**Article 162. Disclosure of information about security measures in relation to participants in criminal proceedings**

Disclosure of information about security measures applied to a judge or other person participating in the administration of justice, a bailiff, a victim, a witness, other participants in criminal proceedings, as well as a spouse, close relatives of any of them, committed by a person to whom this information

<sup>163</sup> 3. Imprisonment in terms of sentences is divided into six categories:

- 1) Category I: for underage- up to one year six months, for other individuals - up to two years six months;
- 2) Category II: for underage- from one year six months to two years six months, for other individuals - from two years six months to five years;
- 3) Category III: for underage- from two years six months to four years, for other individuals - from five years to seven years six months;
- 4) IV category: for underage- from four to six years, for other individuals - from seven years, six months to ten years;
- 5) V category: for underage- from six to eight years, for other individuals - from ten years to twelve years of six months;
- 6) Category VI: for underage- from eight to ten years, for other individuals - from twelve years of six months to fifteen years.

was entrusted or became known in connection with his/her official activities is punishable by a fine of category I with correctional labor of category I.

**Article 165. Disclosure of pre-trial investigation data**

1. Disclose, without the consent of the prosecutor or the investigator, of the pre-trial investigation data by a person warned in accordance with the procedure established by law about the inadmissibility of their disclosure is punishable by a fine of category I.

**Article 169. Disclosure of information about security measures applied to an official of a law enforcement or supervisory authority**

Disclosure of information about security measures applied to a law enforcement or supervisory authority official or his/her spouse, close relatives, committed in order to impede his/her official activity is punishable by a fine of category I with restraint of category I.

**Article 186. Violation of privacy**

Illegal collection, storage, use and dissemination of confidential information about a person's private life without his/her consent, except in cases established by law is punishable by community service of category IV or correctional labor of category III, or a fine of category IV.

2. Illegal use or distribution of personal or family secrets in the expressive work, when speaking in the media or other public speaking is punishable by correctional labor of category IV or a fine of category V, or category I imprisonment with or without deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for up to two years.

**Kazakhstan**

**Article 174. Incitement of social, national, tribal, racial, class or religious discord**

1. Intentional actions aimed at inciting social, national, tribal, racial, class or religious discord, insulting the national honor and dignity or religious feelings of citizens, as well as promoting exclusiveness, superiority or inferiority of citizens on the basis of their attitude to religion, class, national, clan or racial affiliation, if these acts are committed publicly or using mass media or telecommunications networks, as well as by producing or distributing literature or other media that promote social, national, tribal, racial, class or religious discord is punishable by restraint for two to seven years, or imprisonment for the same period.

**Article 256. Propaganda of terrorism or public calls for an act of terrorism**

1. Propaganda of terrorism or public calls to commit an act of terrorism, as well as production, storage for distribution or distribution of materials of the specified content is punishable by imprisonment for five to nine years with confiscation of property.

2. The same acts committed by a person using his/her official position, either by the leader of a public association, or through the use of mass media or telecommunications networks, or by a group of persons or a group of persons in collusion, including through the use of funds received from foreign sources, are punishable by imprisonment for seven to twelve years with confiscation of property.

**Article 183. Giving permission to publish extremist materials in mass media**

Giving permission to publish in the press and other mass media information and materials aimed at inciting national, clan, racial, social and religious hatred that promote class exclusiveness, war, calling for the forcible seizure of power, forcible retention of power, undermining the security of the state or violent change of the constitutional order, as well as violation of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Kazakhstan is punishable by a fine of up to two hundred monthly calculation indices

or correctional labor at the same rate, or community service for a period of up to two hundred hours, or imprisonment for up to fifty days, with or without deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of up to two years.

**Article 147. Violation of privacy and the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan on personal data and their protection**

2. Illegal collection of information about the private life of a person, constituting his/her personal or family secret, without his/her consent or causing substantial harm to the rights and legitimate interests of a person as a result of illegal collection and (or) processing of other personal data is punishable by a fine of up to five thousand monthly calculated indices, or correctional labor at the same rate, or community service for up to eight hundred hours, or restraint for up to three years, or imprisonment for the same period.

4. Dissemination of information about the private life of a person, constituting his/her personal or family secret, without his/her consent or causing substantial harm to the rights and legitimate interests of a person as a result of illegal collection and (or) processing of other personal data is punishable by imprisonment for up to five years.

5. Dissemination of the information specified in part four of this article, in a public speech, publicly demonstrated in the expressive work, in the media or using telecommunications networks is punishable by imprisonment for up to seven years.

**Article 148. Illegal violation of the privacy of correspondence, telephone conversations, postal, telegraph or other communications**

1. Illegal violation of the privacy of correspondence, telephone conversations, postal, telegraph or other communications of individuals is punishable by a fine of up to two thousand monthly calculation indices or correctional work at the same rate, or community service for up to six hundred hours, or restraint for up to two years, or imprisonment for the same period.

2. The same act committed by a person using his/her official position or special technical means intended for secretly obtaining information, or by illegal access to electronic information resources, information system or illegal interception of information transmitted over telecommunications networks is punishable by imprisonment for five years with the deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of two to five years.

**Article 158. Impeding legal professional activities of a journalist**

1. Impeding legal professional activities of a journalist by forcing him/her to spread or refuse to disseminate information, as well as by creating conditions that prevent a journalist from fulfilling legal professional activities or completely depriving him/her of this opportunity is punishable by a fine of up to one hundred monthly calculation indices or correctional labor at the same rate, or community service for up to one hundred and twenty hours, or arrest for up to forty-five days.

2. The same act committed by a person using his/her official position, as well as using violence or threatening to use it against a journalist or his/her relatives or with damage or destruction of their property is punishable by a fine of up to two thousand monthly calculation indices, or correctional labor at the same rate, or restraint for a term of up to two years, or imprisonment for the same term with or without deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for up to three years.

### **Article 159. Illegal restriction of the right to access information resources**

Unlawful restriction of the right to access information resources is punishable by a fine of up to eighty monthly calculated indices, or correctional labor at the same rate, or community service for up to eighty hours

#### **Uzbekistan**

### **Article 150. Propaganda of war**

Propaganda of war, that is, dissemination in any form of views, ideas or appeals to cause aggression of one country against another is punishable by imprisonment for five to ten years.

### **Article 155. Failure to report information and facts about planned or committed terrorist acts**

Failure to report conclusive knowledge of a planned or committed terrorist crime proved by the materials of the preliminary investigation and trial is punishable by a fine of one hundred to three hundred times the minimum wage, or correctional labor for up to three years, or restraint for three to five years, or imprisonment for three to five years.

The same act in respect of crimes of a terrorist nature that entailed:

a) death of a person;

b) other serious consequences, - is punishable by a fine of three hundred to six hundred times the minimum wage, or imprisonment for five to seven years.

### **Article 156. Incitement of national, racial, ethnic or religious hatred**

Production, storage for the purpose of distribution or distribution of materials propagandizing national, racial, ethnic or religious hatred committed after applying administrative penalties for the same acts is punishable by a fine of up to six hundred times the minimum wage, or correctional labor for up to three years, or restraint for one to three years, or imprisonment for up to three years.

Intentional actions that degrade national honor and dignity, offend the feelings of citizens in connection with their religious or atheistic beliefs, committed to incite hatred, intolerance or discord to groups of people on national, racial, ethnic or religious grounds, as well as direct or indirect restriction of rights or establishment of direct or indirect advantages depending on their nationality, race, ethnicity or attitude to religion is punishable by restraint for two to five years, or imprisonment for up to five years.

### **Article 159. Infringement of the constitutional order of the Republic of Uzbekistan**

Public calls for unconstitutional change of the existing state system, seizure of power or removal from power of lawfully elected or appointed representatives of the government or unconstitutional violation of the unity of the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as production, storage for the purpose of distribution or distribution of materials of the same content are punishable by a fine of up to six hundred times the minimum wage, or restraint for two to five years, or imprisonment for up to five years.

#### Tajikistan

### **Article 179(3). Public calls to commit crimes of a terrorist nature and (or) public justification of terrorist activities**

Public calls for the commission of crimes of a terrorist nature and (or) public justification of terrorist activities is punishable by imprisonment for five to ten years.

The same acts committed with the use of the media or the Internet are punishable by imprisonment for ten to fifteen years.

Note: the term public justification of terrorist activities means public promotion of recognition of the ideology and practice of terrorism, the proposal to imitate and support it.

#### **Article 180. Knowingly false report of an act of terrorism**

Knowingly false report of an imminent explosion, arson or other actions that create the danger of death, causing significant property damage or other socially dangerous consequences, or endangering the safety of the aircraft and safe navigation of the watercraft is punishable by correctional labor for up to two years or imprisonment for the same term.

The acts envisaged by the first part of this article entailed by negligence causing harm to human health or entailing other grave consequences is punishable by imprisonment for three to seven years.

#### **Article 189. Incitement of national racial, parochial or religious hatred**

Actions aimed at inciting national, racial, parochial or religious hatred or enmity, humiliation of national dignity, as well as propaganda of exclusivity of citizens on the basis of their attitude to religion, national, racial or parochial identity, if these actions are committed publicly or using the media is punishable by restraint for up to five years or imprisonment for the same term.

#### **Article 307 (1). Public calls for extremist activities and public justification of extremism**

1) Public calls for extremist activity and (or) public justification of extremism are punishable by imprisonment for three to five years.

2) The same acts committed using the media or the Internet are punishable by imprisonment for five to ten years.

3) The acts provided for by parts 1 or 2 of this article, if they are committed:

a) repeatedly;

b) in case of dangerous or especially dangerous relapse – are punishable by imprisonment for eight to twelve years with deprivation of the right to hold certain posts or engage in certain activities for up to five years.

Note: The concept of public justification of extremism means public propaganda on the recognition of the ideology and practice of extremism, the proposal to imitate and support it.

### **Turkmenistan**

#### **Article 167. Propaganda of war**

Propaganda of war, that is, dissemination of calls for aggressive war using media or other means, is punishable by correctional labor for up to two years or imprisonment for up to five years.

#### **Article 177. Incitement of social, national or religious discord**

(1) Deliberate actions aimed at inciting social, national, ethnic, racial or religious hatred or discord, humiliation of national dignity, as well as propaganda of exclusivity or inferiority of citizens on the basis of their attitude to religion, social, national, ethnic or racial affiliation, are punishable by a fine of twenty to forty average monthly wages or imprisonment for up to three years.

(2) The same acts committed with the use of mass media are punishable by a fine of twenty five to fifty average monthly wages or imprisonment for two to four years.

(3) The acts provided for by the first or second part of this article, committed with the use of

physical violence or the threat of its use, as well as committed by an organized group, are punishable by imprisonment for three to eight years.

#### **Article 11. Duties of representatives of the media to assist in countering terrorism**

1. When covering the events related to acts of terrorism and anti-terrorism activities, representatives of the media must take into account that people's right to life and security are primary in relation to the right to freedom of access to information and the freedom to disseminate it.

2. When a representative of the mass media receives information about an impending act of terrorism or if he/she has information or documentary materials that can serve as physical evidence in cases of crimes of a terrorist nature, he/she is obliged to transfer them to state bodies engaged in countering terrorism.

3. It is not allowed to distribute information:

a) disclosing special techniques, tactics and methods of conducting a counter-terrorist operation;  
b) making it difficult to carry out a counter-terrorist operation and posing a threat to the life and health of individuals;

c) promoting propaganda or justification of terrorism;

d) about objects and substances that may directly be used to commit acts of technological terrorism;

e) about the employees of the units during the counter-terrorist operation, as well as about the persons assisting in its implementation;

f) disclosing information constituting state secrets and insulting the honor and dignity of the hostage.

4. In the area of the counter-terrorist operation, the availability of television, broadcast mobile stations and/or media representatives is limited.

5. Representatives of the media who do not fulfill their obligations in the provision of assistance in countering terrorism are liable in accordance with the legislation of Turkmenistan.

#### **Article 22. Implementation of relations with the media**

1. When conducting a counter-terrorist operation, the public is informed about a terrorist act in the manner and scope as determined by the head of the operational headquarters or his representative responsible for maintaining public relations.

2. When informing the public, the compliance with the provisions of the legislation of Turkmenistan on the protection of state secrets, as well as the appropriate protection of secret sources of information shall be ensured.

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