

NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE FOR RESEARCH  
IN VIOLENT ONLINE POLITICAL EXTREMISM

**VOX  
POL**

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**Online  
Radicalisation:  
Then and Now**

@galwaygrrl

 This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 312827


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**Structure of Presentation:**

1. 'Islamic State' Online: Then
2. 'Islamic State' Online: Now
3. Online Extreme Right: Now

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## 2. 'Islamic State' Online: Then & Now


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## IS 'Then': 2014 – 2015

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- Very significant social media presence, esp. on Twitter c. 46,000 – 70,000 accounts in Sept. – Dec. 2015 
- Very easy to locate using well known keywords, including in screen names, symbols in profile pictures, hashtags
- Lot of pop culture references, selfies, etc. familiar to youth
- + Large volume of official content

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# Crowd-sourced Jihad



- Content glamourising the Syria conflict, esp. suicide attacks
- Content exalting virtues of the Islamic State
- Direct exhortations to:
  - Travel to Syria ('Foreign Fighter')
  - Commit acts of terrorism in home/third countries
- Practical instructions on accomplishing above
- Interaction around the content, with other 'fans' and with 'fighters' ➡ Strong and supportive ideological community



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Conflict Context



Technology Context



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Immersive Experience



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## The Disruption Kicks-in: Mid-2015 – 2016



- Increase in account suspensions and take-downs
- Disruption of hashtags (#baqiyyafamily)
- Costs of participation therefore increase
- However, resistance aspects to this may have strengthened community cohesion
- Some dislocation to Telegram from Sept. 2015 (estbd. 'Channels')
- When was tipping point reached? c. Aug.-Sept. 2016



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## IS 'Now': 2018



- Tipping point has been reached – costs of engaging there now outweigh benefits
- Esp. IS's Twitter 'community' has been decimated
- Though some die-hards still active – pushing out official content
- Down-turn in content production also apparent
- IS (and others) still active on other online platforms however
- Esp. Telegram – but not so popular, accessible, social, searchable



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## IS 'Then' vs. 'Now'



IS's Twitter ideological-emotional 'community' and sub-communities are decimated

Avatar Images 'Then'	Avatar Images 'Now'



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## IS 'Then' vs. 'Now' (cont.)



Screen Names/Handles 'Then'	Screen Names/Handles 'Now'
AbuMuhAlAdnani	4iM7EjZphT3OXYG
KhilafahShami	5Asdf68
UmmChech	693mstafa159951
AbuJihad	6Asdf69
AdnanShami	7wvJGkzMZomrLrD
Dabiq19	9Ei0apPRUa5e0ej
UkhtialAlmani	t7dYqgYMaSB4Ecl
Mujahid89	VHktAZOM0qmOUjd



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## 3. Online Extreme Right in 2018


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## What's the Problem?

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- External / 'real world' events, esp. refugee crisis, Brexit, Trump → Empowerment
- Increasing online presence – subject to very little disruption
- Normalisation/mainstreaming of extreme right ideas and rhetoric
- Increased incidence of hate crimes
- Extreme right terrorism (Jo Cox MP, Québec City mosque attack, Finsbury Park attack, etc.)

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# Background



- Extreme right have very long online history
- Still quite wedded to websites (e.g. Daily Stormer) and forums (e.g. Stormfront)
- But large and growing social media presence also
- Also Reddit, 4Chan
- Have also established their own social media platforms (e.g. Gab, Hatreon)



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# Conclusion



- IS' and XR's success partially soc media-induced, but 'real world' context also very important
- If IS can radicalise youth via the Internet, then the extreme right can too
- XR content more easily available now than IS



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