Winning the Battle but Losing the War? Narrative and Counter-Narratives Strategy
Christian Leuprecht, Todd Hataley, Sophia Moskalenko, Clark McCauley

Abstract

Since 9/11, intelligence and security services have become particularly concerned about radical ideologies and have looked for ways on how to counter them. One of the strategies has been to develop a counter-narrative. Some authors, including those of this article, are concerned that, in the marketplace of ideas, the West is losing market-share.[1] Communication failures with the Muslim world were cited in a report by a U.S. Department of Defence Advisory Committee as early as 2004.[2] The puzzle this article explores is why, having recognized the problem early on, the data suggest that further ground has since been lost. We posit the problem as having to shift the discourse from one focusing on a single counter-narrative to one of tailoring communications to target specific audiences. The article traces methodological and empirical shortcomings that are at the root of the problem and builds on these findings to develop a model to strategize about counter-narratives.

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Narrative and Counter-Narratives Strategy, by Christian Leuprecht, Todd Hataley, Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley. Abstract. Since 9/11, intelligence and security services have become particularly concerned about radical ideologies and have looked for ways on how to counter them. One of the strategies has been to develop a counter-narrative. In the United States, the ‘battle of ideas’ opened on several fronts after 9/11. President Bush framed the enemy as those who “hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other”. [3] Advertising executive Charlotte Beers created the “Shared Values Initiative” campaign for the U.S. State Department. This narrative entirely misses the point of divestment. Divestors might have lost an important battle, but they’re winning the much more important war. If you speak to those involved in divestment campaigns at Harvard or abroad, you quickly begin to understand that their strategy for combating climate change is much more complex than simply moving a few billion dollars in investment away from fossil fuel companies. The most honest admit even Harvard divesting would not change the amount of CO2 emitted. Divestment, you learn, is actually far more about the expressive value of Harvard’s investm I suspect that the neo-Nazis hoped to be attacked by the counter-demonstrators, creating a narrative that they were attacked and, as valiant underdogs, fought for their rights and ideas. The prospect of such fighting might be a draw for others to join the core protesters. The counter-strategy seem to have been to have their event be so contained as to have it be ho-hum—less interesting than a kitten stuck in a tree. The Chicago neo-Nazis managed to get publicity in 1977 with a proposed march in Skokie Illinois that was blocked. Suggest that everyone read about the Civil War on Wikipedia. It is a lengthy piece but sets the stage for recent events. The groups are focusing on certain elements of that war and ignoring other aspects of the war.