Contesting Extremism: Strategic Communication Public Diplomacy New Media and the Case of NATO

THEOFANI LOLA
INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that there has been a lot of struggle and a lot of thought upon the subject of this Master thesis; and this is because I wanted to deal with something unique, something that is under the umbrella of my interests and a current issue in the news cycle.

The only thing I knew before starting researching was that I wanted to research a subject, in connection with communications and security. Having a background in politics and leaving in Greece, at the crossroad of 3 continents, Europe, Asia and Africa, I was constantly informed of numerous terrorist attacks that caused casualties and keep on happening on the surrounding areas, unexpectedly, especially in the last year, or even for the last couple of years.

So I started asking myself a lot of questions; why do terrorist attacks keep on happening? Who is responsible for them? Who is responsible for their prevention? How does the notion of extremism help on understanding these attacks? Could someone prevent the rise of extremism and in the end manage to prevent violent attacks? And by continuing my thoughts and questions; How does NATO as the most powerful security alliance in the world provides security to the citizens of its member states and worldwide? Ultimately, I decided to include NATO as a study case for this thesis and examine its role on dealing with and countering extremism.

And this is how the idea of reviewing the relatively new concept of Strategic Communication arose, followed by Public Diplomacy and the inescapable role of New Media. Strategic Communication is a concept that the world is increasingly hearing about followed by Public Diplomacy but still there is a lot of confusion upon the understanding of their use. I myself was familiar with these notions only by name.

As a result in the first part of the thesis, I analyzed theoretically, based on previous research, the notions of Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy and secondly by analyzing how these notions are applied NATO wise, based on NATO sources. Then I analyzed extremism, its expressions and its causes in order to better understand the why extremism may lead to violent actions.
In the second part resources and ways to address extremism are examined firstly in a general way; what parts of the society might help and how and continuously then, I focus on strategic communication in particular and ways to address extremism though its application

After analyzing all the notions theoretically, in the third part I refer to the methodology I used in researching for my thesis; what is the Strategic Communication of NATO on Countering Extremism. During the research, certain interviews were conducted, in order to establish via official channels, the function of NATO Strategic Communication. In this part it is explained how the sample was chosen and what questions were sent to a number of NATO officials, members that currently work on NATO and its agencies, dealing with either Public Diplomacy or Strategic Communication. The questions have to do with all the aforementioned notions and what I am trying to achieve, is have “a look on the inside” on how NATO deals with these everyday risks by using both online and traditional ways.

In the fourth part since for this thesis paper NATO is the study case, I research and present all aspects of NATO concerning Strategic Communication techniques and strategies that the alliance uses in general and more specifically, the techniques it uses to counter extremism. In accordance, as social media are serving a great deal Strategic Communication on dealing with extremism, NATO’s new and social media efforts are also analyzed thoroughly.

In the fifth and last part, I try to reach a conclusion upon everything that I researched and I found, concerning NATO’s efforts to counter extremism in every form, and compare the results with the answers of the questions.

Last but not least, I came to an understanding, while researching for all these notions, of the level of complexity they appear to have. As a result, the thorough theoretical analysis of Extremism, Public Diplomacy, and Strategic Communication became a necessary part of the analysis. Through the in depth presentation of the theory it is possible for the reader to fully comprehend the sequence that leads to the conclusion.
PART 1
CHAPTER 1: Public Diplomacy

"Is public diplomacy an expression of soft or smart power as Joseph Nye suggests? Is it primarily about winning hearts and minds and if so, how can we attain this aim? Is it not simply a modern form of propaganda or a political sibling of public relations? Or, as others suggest, is public diplomacy an outdated model that needs to be replaced by the sexier label of strategic communications?"¹

History of Public Diplomacy

According to Dr. Stefanie Babst (Babst, Public Diplomacy The art of Engaging and Influencing, 2009, σσ. 2-4), “Public Diplomacy is not new and while the term as used in the recent years might be new to some people, the activity of Public Diplomacy is old human history is offering some great examples of it. She mentions characteristically, that the Roman Republic invited the sons of neighboring kings to be educated in Rome; the great library in Alexandria, constructed by the Greeks, offered special training programs for scholars from across the ancient world; Napoleon, when he invaded Egypt, planned to order the entire French army to convert to Islam to help establish the French rule.²Public Diplomacy although it was established in Europe, America was the one to make it flourish since the 1960. Former US Ambassador to Korea Edmund Gullion reinvented Public Diplomacy during his time as Dean of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University (1964) and the effort continued through international fellowship and exchange programs and initiatives which were created and sponsored by the US Administrations.³ But since then, many historical changes occurred; among them was the Cold War after the end of which everything was different and needed to be redefined. Today we need a public diplomacy that fits our time – one that goes beyond

¹ Public Diplomacy-The art of engaging and influencing Speech by Dr. Stefanie Babst, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Strategy at the NATO PfP Symposium , 2009
² Ibid
³ Ibid
improving a nation’s brand. Public diplomacy today can only be successful if it is designed to operate within a world of multiple actors. The challenge for public diplomacy is to be inclusive and collaborative, facilitating substantive dialogues with broader foreign societies and actors. (Melissen, 2011) The rise of global communications has changed the nature of power and government and it is affecting the way in which governments conduct their diplomacy and increase the importance of the public dimension in foreign policy. It provides new opportunities for citizen participation, as new competencies for global engagement are developed through the use of information and communication technology. (Frankonikolopoulos, 2012) In today’s world, establishing and maintaining public diplomacy requires building mutually beneficial relationships with internal and foreign publics. Engaging other actors, internal and external, and incorporating their views should be at the center and not the periphery of public diplomacy. This requires a shift from a hierarchical public diplomacy communication model to a network-oriented model. The network model seeks to build relationships around common interests in order to promote action in fields where governments seem unable to deliver. It incorporates new actors and their specialized knowledge more efficiently, abandoning the logic of transmitting carefully crafted messages to a large but static audience in order to achieve policy objectives. The changing global environment, which is characterized by cultural diversity, turbulence, the emergence of new actors and the rise of interactive media, makes this all the more necessary. (Iaydjiev, 2011)

Public Diplomacy Characteristics

Public diplomacy is about listening. According to Babst (Babst, Public Diplomacy The art of Engaging and Influencing, 2009, σσ. 4-8), listening is important for two reasons; first, the understanding and the analyzing of the opinions of the “target groups or segments of the public is a MUST” but this is not what actually happens most of the time. The governments

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4 Public Diplomacy-The art of engaging and influencing Speech by Dr. Stefanie Babst, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Strategy at the NATO PIP Symposium , 2009
do not spent time and money to really understand what the public wants but instead they “rely on snapshots offering little in-depth knowledge and shape their public diplomacy approach accordingly”. Secondly, listening should be a constant effort and must be genuine. Also, Public diplomacy must be connected to policy. “Public diplomacy cannot and should not attempt to portray a serious crisis or war in rosy colors. One can never communicate a problem away.”

Public diplomacy must be credible to be effective. One, no matter how tempting it might get, should not lie to the public about serious matters, because the public despite the overflow of information does not forget attempts of deception. Public Diplomacy is not always about you. Most of the time, decisions are made “under the media spotlight” and through official statements, but this is not always the case; many times third parties such as thinks tanks are involved. Facilitating and supporting discussions among political networks or groups of foreign policy professionals can be an excellent public diplomacy strategy.

Public Diplomacy needs to respond to the challenges of the 2.0 web world. The truth is that many governments and international organizations are falling behind, as far as the possibilities of the new technologies are concerned and they are only now beginning to use them. New media could be a really useful tool in communicating with the public the public diplomacy operations, especially in the recent years that active online activity has increased. However, in remote areas and the less developed countries, traditional media such as TV, radio and newspapers are still dominant.

Public diplomacy requires proper planning, training and resources. Public Diplomacy Campaigns need to be planned ahead and accordingly, provided by the governments with the necessary funds. Public Diplomacy should start to be taken more seriously in the political process as a core business and an investment in training public diplomats, should be considered. (Babst, Public Diplomacy The art of Engaging and Influencing, 2009, pp. 4-8)

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5 Public Diplomacy-The art of engaging and influencing Speech by Dr. Stefanie Babst, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Strategy at the NATO PfP Symposium, 2009

6 Ibid

7 Ibid
CHAPTER 2: NATO’s Public Diplomacy

On 18 May 1950, NAC (North Atlantic Council) issued a resolution in which it committed itself to: “Promote and coordinate public information in furtherance of the objectives of the Treaty while leaving responsibility for national programs to each country...” In August 1950, a modest NATO Information Service was set up and developed in autumn with the nomination of a director. The service – similarly to the rest of the civilian organization of the Alliance – did not receive a budget until July 1951 and it effectively developed into an information service in 1952, with the establishment of an International Staff headed by a Secretary General (March 1952). (Communications and Public Diplomacy) Throughout the years, NATO’s Public Diplomacy has evolved, starting with the Committee on Information and Cultural Relation (CICR) which in 2004 became the Committee on Public Diplomacy (CPD) and the Office of Information and Press which later on became the Public Diplomacy Division.

The Committee on Information and Cultural Relation (CICR)

The Working Group on Information Policy and the Working Group on Social and Cultural Cooperation were merged in 1953 to form the Committee on Information and Cultural Relations (CICR) which role was to address the challenges of communicating the Alliance’s policies to the public. (Committee on Public Diplomacy) According to NATO, The Report of the Three Wise Men (1956) stressed the overall importance of non-military cooperation and the need to develop unity within the Alliance. “The people of the member countries must know about NATO if they are to support it.”, through “The promotion of information about, and public understanding of NATO and the Atlantic Community” which “should, in fact, be a
joint endeavor by the Organization and its members”.\textsuperscript{11} (Communications and Public Diplomacy)

Public Diplomacy Division

NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division is “responsible for informing the wider public about NATO’s activities and policies through contacts with the media, the NATO Web site and print publications, seminars and conferences, as well as NATO’s Science Program.”\textsuperscript{12} (Public Diplomacy NATO) “Public Diplomacy Division activities are intended to have long-term effects. They are designed to: build both relationships and networks with opinion-formers and journalists; facilitate dialogue among security experts, policy-makers and NGO representatives; generate interest in transatlantic issues among larger segments of the population, in particular the successor generation.” (Pagovski, 2015)

Committee on Public Diplomacy (CPD)

The CICR changed its name to the Committee on Public Diplomacy in 2004 when the Office of Information and Press became the Public Diplomacy Division, therefore better reflecting its aims and objectives. The CPD continues the functions of the CICR, giving advice on the methods and means used to communicate NATO policies and activities to a broad range of audiences with the goal of increasing the level of understanding and awareness of the Alliance.\textsuperscript{13} (Committee on Public Diplomacy ) Representatives from each of the NATO member countries constitute the CPD, while the Chairman is the Assistant Secretary General of the Public Diplomacy Division and the Director of the International Military Staff is represented by the Public Information Advisor. Regular meetings are being held which are constituted only of representatives of member countries of NATO- and additional meetings

\textsuperscript{11} Retrieved 20/12/2016 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69275.htm

\textsuperscript{12} Retrieved 1/12/2016 http://publicdiplomacy.wikia.com/wiki/NATO

\textsuperscript{13} Retrieved 20/12/2016 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69272.htm
are organized in cases unexpected events occur. During committee meetings, the CPD examines and approves an annual Public Diplomacy Action Plan or equivalent, which is used to implement the Public Diplomacy Strategy. The CPD also maintains a collaborative dialogue with non-governmental organizations such as the Atlantic Treaty Association while acting as an advisory body to the NAC on communication, media and public engagement issues.  

Role of communications and public diplomacy

The major communication challenges for NATO, according to S. Babst (Babst, Explaining NATO's public diplomacy, 2006) are “The first one is clearly about NATO being in transition. It's an organization that has changed dramatically, and in many ways fundamentally over the past 10 and 15 years. And these changes are not easy to communicate.” She added that the second one, has to do with the engagement of today’s generation with NATO because they did not live in the 20th century in order to experience its evolution “Clearly those who have experienced the Cold War, those who have been part of the strategic communities in the seventies and the eighties and the nineties, they don't need to be convinced. They know NATO well.” Last but not least, she concluded that there is misperception and stereotypical thinking as to what NATO is in today’s demanding and challenging world. “There are others who foresee that NATO has all ambitions in order to replace the United Nations, only because the group of our partner countries is really becoming larger and larger. There are questions related to NATO's enlargement policies” (Babst, Explaining NATO's public diplomacy, 2006) The overall aim of NATO’s communications activities is to promote dialogue and understanding, while contributing to the public’s knowledge of security issues and promoting public involvement in a continuous

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process of debate on security.\textsuperscript{16} (Communications and Public Diplomacy) The communications services provided by NATO itself have been reformed and restructured on numerous occasions to adapt to the different needs of the constantly evolving information environment, as well as to the needs of the security environment.\textsuperscript{17} (Communications and Public Diplomacy) The NAC and Secretary General are in charge of the overall direction of communications and public diplomacy programs for both the civilian and military sides of the Alliance while the NATO Deputies Committee guides overall strategic communications on behalf of the NAC and issue-specific NATO committees provide more detailed guidance, commenting on issues ranging from NATO maritime strategy to operations.\textsuperscript{18} (Communications and Public Diplomacy) According to Pagowski, NATO aims to implement its public diplomacy in a formal, written, and documented manner and as a result, the organization issues an annual Public Diplomacy Strategy. For the first time in the Alliance’s history, public diplomacy was officially mentioned in the Declaration of the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008. (Pagovski, 2015, p. 14) Effective engagement is an important public diplomacy approach in bringing relevant actors and general public into the debates and the affairs of the organization and it represents a “two-way channel” of communicating with external targets. (Pagovski, 2015) NATO, through its Public Diplomacy strategy, communicates and develops programs to help raise awareness and understanding of the Alliance and Alliance-related issues and, ultimately, to foster support for, and trust in, the Organization.\textsuperscript{19} (Communications and Public Diplomacy) Public Diplomacy Division offers co-sponsorship for conferences, seminars, workshops, and other public diplomacy activities on topics relevant to NATO’s agenda. NATO aims to engage the new generation in its activities and thus, it develops and funds many fellowship programs, summer schools,
seminars, workshops, and essay competitions for students and young professionals while various events and conferences are organized in order to engage experts, decision-makers, and other types of specific audiences. (Pagovski, 2015)

CHAPTER 3: Strategic Communication

Strategic Communication is a comparatively new term and it is described as “A systematic series of sustained and coherent activities, conducted across strategic, operational and tactical levels, that enables the understanding of target audiences, identifies effective conduits, and develops and promotes ideas and opinions through those conduits to promote and sustain particular types of behavior”. (Steve Tatham, 2009, p. 17) Also, Strategic Communication can be defined as “understanding and analyzing the target audience for attaining long term strategic objectives; sharing specified messages (words and deeds package) with the relevant public in a sustained and transparent course at the most appropriate time, location and conditions via the most appropriate conduit so as to create the strongest influence on the specified target audiences by ensuring the orchestration of the process through the integration of all resources, fields and capabilities.” (Güler, 2012, pp. 5-6)

Strategic Communication is not simply media interaction. Neither is it simply a new term for Information Operations. (Steve Tatham, 2009) Steve Tatham’s opinion is that such thinking actually limits the power of Strategic Communication to support military operations by oversimplifying its range and activities. (Steve Tatham, 2009) Strategic communication is neither advertising nor marketing. Whilst there is some correlation between the art of commercial persuasion and Strategic Communication, the latter has to be far more sophisticated and it has to presume that audiences process and interpret messages whereas advertisers can and do assume a passive audience. (Steve Tatham, 2009) Neither are the consequences of failed commercial advertising as serious as failed Strategic Communication.
This is simply because the consequences of a failed strategic communication plan have a much more negative impact in its targeted audience than a financially wrong decision. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

Steve Tatham (Steve Tatham, 2009) proposes that a helpful way to consider Strategic Communication is as being analogous to an orchestra. The orchestra’s conductor is the government; the musical score is the Strategic Communication plan, the orchestra itself the various communities of practice and/or lines of operation and the music is the narrative. Depending on the effect you seek to achieve, different sections of the orchestra will be used at different times or with different emphasis and the tempo of the music will also vary, depending on what effect the conductor desires. (Steve Tatham, 2009) Of course the audience plays a crucial role; the influence of the concert over the audience is expressed by positive or negative reactions such as applause, sleep or leaving the concert and these reactions perceived as feedback to help the conductor and musicians correct their faults while in case of positive reactions, they continue the concert with zest. (Güler, 2012)

It is well understood in today’s international arena that it is impossible to ensure interests only by national, economic and military power as in the classic realist paradigm; the need to use a combination of most appropriate one or ones from the diplomatic, political, legal and cultural instruments, as well as military and economic power in both domestic and foreign policy, has become prominent. Strategic Communication is an umbrella discipline and a common mechanism to provide this combination, as well as disciplines such as perception management and public diplomacy, are considered to play a crucial role in achieving national interests as a force multiplier rather than as just an approach. (Güler, 2012)

Narratives

The Global Language Monitor\(^2\) listed “Narratives”, as the top political buzzword of the last U.S. presidential campaign. Yet, for all of this interest in narrative, there is little consensus about what it is and how it is used. (Corman, 2011)

A story is a sequence of events, involving actors and actions, grounded in desire and leading to an actual or projected resolution of that desire. Although some stories are new it is more common to base them on already existing story lines in which characters and actions are more predictable. Stories also employ standard characters that are often expected to show certain types of behavior. (Corman, 2011) A narrative, then, is a system of stories that share themes, forms, and archetypes. All the stories within a narrative do not necessarily have to be based on the same story lines, but they must be combined in some way so that together they are greater than the individual parts. Some narratives, whose stories are well known and retold within a culture, reach the level of, master narratives. Master narratives are so firmly rooted that they can be reminded simply by using words and phrases without actually telling the stories within them. Going into greater detail, master narratives can be used to create local narratives, about events in particular times and places. Additionally, everyone has his or her own life’s stories, or personal narratives, through which they can relate themselves as characters in local narratives. (Corman, 2011) Narratives may be defined as: A thematic and sequenced account that conveys meaning from authors to participants about specific events. (Steve Tatham, 2009, p. 25) Since 9/11, narratives are not seen just as word but as a more comprehensive idea which not only incorporates the information surrounding an event together with all the relevant imagery and symbolism. Narratives are the foundation of all strategy, they create guidelines for formulation policy and arguments surround an event. Narratives should provide structure and relevance to the meaning of a particular situation and must be designed with flexibility in mind so that their essence is not destroyed as messages respond to contemporaneous events. (Steve Tatham, 2009) They must be suitable for use not only with the domestic participants, where different emphasis may be placed in the form of meta-narratives, but also with foreign participants where counter-narratives need to be created. Because of this it is difficult to create a narrative. Also the use of the word “participant” should be preferred over the more traditional word “audience”. Narratives couple Strategic Communication and physical operations together; neither should be
entertained without consideration of the other. (Steve Tatham, 2009) Narratives are important because they present an alternate form of rationality. We come to think of rationality as something that is based on facts a logical analysis of them, but rationality in narratives has to do with sentiment, the corresponding with the individual’s values and the perception of a positive outcome by the participants. (Fisher, 1987) Because narrative rationality is a different way of seeing the word, logical reasoning may be pushed aside in favor of personal desires and emotions that the participant uses to make sense of everyday life. (Campbell, 1991) In interpersonal and media environment, narratives are not just “messages” they are also constructions of society through personal and online interactions: A narrative is an individual’s understanding of the world and one’s role in it. A narrative is created by a network of personal interactions facilitated by technology; the individual can get incorporated at any time. It depends upon how compatible the narrative of a group is compared to the individual’s that will determine if he or she will join an extremist group. (Archetti, 4,5 June 2014)

Western liberal democracies and extremist organizations are competing for support from strategic audiences. Although the competition in uneven because Western liberal Democracies have inconsistent and event-based narratives. (Elkjer, 4-5 June 2014) An “Institutional Narrative” can be defined as a story created and transmitted by a Nation or an Organization about its self. Thus, states create narratives about themselves that target domestic and foreign participants, the narratives include their opinion about terrorism. “It is a persistent story of who the organization is, what its guiding principles are, and what it aspires to achieve”. On the other hand, the narratives of extremist-organizations are based on the history, the culture and contemporary policies of Western liberal democracies and their inherent claim that “the West is at war with Islam”. So, what the terror organizations are trying to achieve -by linking the western values on the one hand and their behavior in support of it on the other hand- is firstly to support their own claims and secondly to prove that the actions of the West are hypocritical. Thereby they are exploiting existing “truths” deeply
rooted with the strategic audiences. (Elkjer, 4-5 June 2014) Additionally, in today’s world terror-organizations are more and more using the internet, especially social media to influence based on-line activities. The activities include information collection, target selection, propaganda, recruitment and fundraising all in support of the physical activities. Also interlinked optical and written stories are disseminated to support their narrative (Elkjer, 4-5 June 2014)

**Influence**

The main objective of Strategic communication is to relay information that will appeal and influence opinions in specific groups. Over the last few years the term influence has increasingly been used in combination with military audiences. *Influence does not mean the exclusion of hard power, nor is influence focused solely at an enemy.* Influence is defined as: the application of the correct balance of kinetic and non-kinetic effect to influence the will and ultimately positively affect the behavior of a target group. (Steve Tatham, 2009, p. 31)

Changing the behavior of a group is extremely difficult, let alone determining a group’s attitude and resulting actions depends on the group’s interpretation of history, culture and religion based on their values. Military forces will face even more ideologically motivated opponents whose value-systems do not comply with Western views of life and human rights. If influence activities are to succeed then the target audience needs to be involved in the command and needs to be seen not as subsidiaries but as an important part of military operations. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

**Measurements**

Throughout the Strategic Communication process measurements of effectiveness (MOE) must be taken and they have a number of definitions; however, it is important to understand that MOE is a scientific process and thus best defined in scientific terms. MOE can be defined as: the difference, or conceptual difference, from a given system state to a desired end state. (Steve Tatham, 2009) MOE is an important part of the Strategic Communication process and
should be examined on a regular basis because the circumstances could change quickly and so might the behavior of the targeted audience. MOE can be extremely complex and requires not just an understanding of the desired end state but a clear familiarity with the societal norms for the environment in which operations are being conducted. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

Polling: Polling is perceived as being the easiest technique for accessing audience information (Steve Tatham, 2009) and thus, it was adopted and supported by an entire industry, in order to measure attitudes and opinions. However, it shouldn’t be considered as the perfect technique and it shouldn’t be used long-term because the opinions of the public can change very quickly over time. Let alone the fact that in certain societies where they don’t have such liberal regimes like in the western ones, the expression of one’s opinion, for example, of women in Afghanistan, is dangerous. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

Strategic Communication Planning and Process

Strategic Communication varies taking into account the dimension (diplomatic, economic, politic, security etc.) at which Strategic Communication is to be utilized, the desired final object, situation, communication and operating environment, available opportunities/resources and time restrictions. (Strategic Communication in Counter Terrorism: Target Audience Analysis, Measures of Effect, and Counter Narrative, 04-05 June 2014) A Strategic Communication Campaign is divided into several stages until its successful completion.

Stage 1: Strategic Campaign Planning (SCP) This is the process where “the project objectives, the initial research and analysis of the population, its constituent groups, and their relationship to the problem (for instance, violence or extremism)” need to be clarified. (Steve Tatham, 2009) Additionally, at this point, identification is made of which behavior needs to change in which group of people to yield results that measurably contribute to achieving the strategic objectives, while one begins to identify specific measures and behaviors to comprise the measurement of effectiveness. (Steve Tatham, 2009) Every component and resource
should be harmonized and synchronized for the better result to be achieved ultimately. Furthermore, during the preparation, it should be checked whether or not the plan functions properly, and other measurements should be ready in case something goes not according to plan. Having as a base the questions “Who-What-Where-When-Why-How,” also known as the ‘5 W’s & 1H,’ will assist in the synchronization of Strategic Communication between all the components/units. (Güler, 2012)

Stage 2: Target Audience Identification. The strategic Communication Campaign will be directed towards a specific audience throughout its implementation. This is the process which determines the specific group of people among many different groups in the population that will be selected. This group is the most relatable, the most accessible and the most likely to be influenced. An example may be a particular individual – a religious leader, a tribal elder, or a group with particular influence – mothers, police officers. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

Stage 3: Target Audience Analysis. This is the deep analysis of the identified target audience – those that can affect change – using quantitative and qualitative measures – to develop an intimate understanding of the audience’s various characteristics. (Strategic Communication in Counter Terrorism: Target Audience Analysis, Measures of Effect, and Counter Narrative, 04-05 June 2014)

1. The individuals and groups of the target audience need to have a particular effect on attaining the final outcome

2. These may be key influencers (leaders, opinion leaders, etc.), referable/vulnerable communities and a vast audience in both the foreign and domestic public

3. Its characteristics should be well described and understood (Güler, 2012, p. 13)

Also, it is crucial to be able to measure the accessibility to this target audience, describing the best accession process and describing and utilizing triggers that can cause impressive, significant and tangible changes in the behavior of the target audience. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

‘Strategic Listening’ is important. It can be achieved by understanding and analyzing the target audience through taking its pulse; determining their expectations, attitudes and behavior, as well as analyzing characteristics, culture and relations while the language,
culture, symbolic values of the words, body language, beliefs and expectations of the target audience are well understood. (Güler, 2012)

Priority should be given to obtaining information which will increase “Situation Awareness”. (Güler, 2012) Such information might be gathered from various blogs, social network sites as well as comments in news portals. The capability to be able to understand the meaning of the ongoing incidents and what this may result in the future is an asset. One can ask certain questions for a better understanding of the target audience and the campaign itself; “who is in control of communication? Which group thinks what? Which group is open to communication? Which group is on good terms with the other? How does the communication strategy to be applied to a group affect another? What are the best communication channels for the group?” (Güler, 2012)

Stage 4: Campaign Design. In this stage, the message is being constructed and the size of the campaign is being specified. The strategy depends upon the channel, the source and most importantly, the message. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

Stage 5: Campaign Execution. The campaign execution stage benefits from the previous stages of analysis, development and design, and involves executing the campaign through the appropriate channel, with the appropriate source, using the correct message. (Steve Tatham, 2009)

Stage 6: Audit and evaluation. After the campaign execution, the evaluation of the campaign follows. In this stage, the effectiveness of the campaign is being measured in order to be decided whether or not the communication plan has succeeded in achieving its goals. This evaluation is made through examining the target audience and the behavioral changes it shows after the completion of the campaign. (Güler, 2012)
CHAPTER 4: Extremism

Definition

Extremism could be simply defined as belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable\textsuperscript{21}, the holding of views which are as far from being moderate as possible, and a tendency to go extremes or an instance of going to extremes.\textsuperscript{22} It can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary. (Coleman & Bartoli, Adressing Extremism) Although, labeling a person, a group, or an activity as extremist, is subjective and is connected closely with someone’s view of the world and the society’s “values, politics, moral scope, and of course the nature of their relationship with the actor”. (Coleman & Bartoli, Adressing Extremism) Some would view an extremist act as moral and just and others the opposite. These views of course, might be open to change as conditions change. Thus, the current and historical context of extremist acts shapes our view of them. (Coleman & Bartoli, Adressing Extremism, 2003) Extremist groups will differ in their preference for violent vs. non-violent tactics, in the level of violence they employ, and in the preferred targets of their violence (from infrastructure to military personnel to civilians to children). (Coleman & Bartoli, Adressing Extremism, 2003) Low power groups are more likely to employ direct, episodic forms of violence (such as suicide bombings), whereas dominant groups tend to be associated with more structural or institutionalized forms (like the covert use of torture or the informal sanctioning of police brutality). (Coleman & Bartoli, Adressing Extremism, 2003) Although extremist individuals and groups are often viewed as cohesive and evil, it is important to recognize that they may be conflicted or ambivalent psychologically as individuals, and/or contain a great deal of difference and conflict within their groups. (Coleman & Bartoli, Adressing Extremism, 2003) 

\textsuperscript{21} Retrieved 3/9/2016 \url{http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/extremism}

\textsuperscript{22} Retrieved 3/9/2016 \url{http://www.thefreedictionary.com/extremism}
‘Violent extremism’ is rarely defined: neither the United Nations nor the European Union has an official definition. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) defines it as “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives” (Glazzard & Zeuthen, 2016). This definition, however, creates so many questions, with its controversial nature; Is violent extremism, by definition, something carried out by non-state actors? In conflict situations, how can we differentiate violent extremists from other, more legitimate conflict actors? Does violent extremism always have to be ideological – can it, for example, be criminal, or even purposeless? Is ‘violent extremism’ merely a synonym for ‘terrorism’? More fundamentally, are terms like ‘extremism’ relative – in which case does ‘violent extremism’ mean different things to different people? (Glazzard & Zeuthen, 2016). According to Glazzard and Zeuthen throughout research, violent extremism is usually considered to be a more inclusive term than ‘terrorism’, although they are broadly synonymous in use. Moreover, USAID’s definition is wide, while violent extremism is usually used in a narrower context, without taking into account other forms of violence, which could be justified in a way, or ideologically motivated. Let alone the fact that most of the work that has been done, focuses on western countries and how they have suffered because of extremist acts and little of the work was dedicated to the countries that have suffered a great deal-countries in Africa and Asia. Much remains speculative, unknown or uncertain while key terms are poorly defined and most work in the field has focused on why and how people become drawn into terrorism – ‘radicalization’ – and how violent extremist groups and networks are organized. (Glazzard & Zeuthen, 2016)

Religious Extremism

At first glance, the link between religious extremism and terrorism seems obvious. Religious extremists are willing to murder for their religion and they have no sympathy for their victims, because they view those victims as enemies of God. (Berman & Iannaccone,
September 2005) And they are more than willing to sacrifice themselves in the name of god and their religion because of the rewards they are expecting to enjoy in the afterlife. Is that really the case though? For a skeptical mind, many more questions arise and they should be answered in order to better understand the roots of extremism in every form it takes; 

If theology is so important, why are most terrorist organizations not religious? And if afterlife rewards are keys, why has a nonreligious group – the LTTE “Tamil Tigers” – been responsible for more suicide attacks than another other organization? Why is suicide bombing associated with all sorts of theologies but just one style of religious organization (best described as “sectarian”)? And why do most militant sects devote much of their energy to noble activities, such as running schools, health clinics, and social services agencies? (Berman & Iannaccone, September 2005) Since 2001 religious extremism has overtaken national separatism to become the main driver of terrorist attacks around the world, according to the Global Terrorism Index. In 2013, 18,000 deaths were recorded a number that climbs 60% higher than 2012. Four groups were responsible for the majority of these deaths (66%): (Isis) in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Qaida. According to the report, terrorist group organizations of national separatists like IRA where the ones responsible for the most attacks before the new millennium arise. But in the recent years, religious extremism has grown unexpectedly, leaving behind national extremism, the number of incidents of which has remained stable. (The guardian, 2014)

Causes

After 9/11, discussion of the causes of terrorism was limited. That was mainly because of the fear that any in-depth explanations of terrorism and its root causes would undermine the moral context in which the incidents were perceived by the general public. The main idea was that everyone condemned these actions and that could would be different in case of further explanation and examination. Instead, the causes of terrorism were usually not analyzed.
systematically but understood through slogans that referred to the “evil mindset” of the perpetrators or an “evil ideology” of terrorism. (Kundnani, January 2015) Although, by 2005, Counter-terrorism policy makers were in the process of finding new models to explain the attacks on 9/11 but also attacks that occurred around that period in European soil, like the terrorist attack in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005. Kundani emphasizes that it was right at this point, that the concept of radicalization became central to the emerging analysis of the causes of terrorism in national security circles. The main concern was to understand why ordinary people— even European citizens in European societies— were willing to turn against their fellow citizens and be part of violent extremism acts. An explanation of this phenomenon became imminent. (Kundnani, January 2015) Initially, policy-makers focused on community settings, such as mosques, as the locations where extremist ideology had to be blocked; later, they turned to prisons and universities; more recently, the focus has been on the circulation of extremist ideology through social media. (Kundnani, January 2015) The use of the term “radicalization” and its associated conceptual framework are products of the post-9/11 period. Before that period, the term was not used as a root cause of terrorism. In 1981, Martha Crenshaw24 wrote the most influential pre-9/11 academic study of the causes of terrorism, “The causes of terrorism”, in which she set it apart in three levels.

1. Individual motivation and belief systems
2. Decision-making and strategy within a terrorist movement
3. The wider political and social context with which terrorist movements interact.

Today’s radicalization models in effect neglect the second and third of these levels and focus all their attention on the individual level. (Kundnani, January 2015) For some radicalization analysts, the role of extremist religious ideology in this process is akin to a “conveyor belt” that mechanically pushes an individual into terrorism. (Kundnani, January 2015) This means, that from the moment someone embraces and adopts extremism, he will eventually become a

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24 Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism”, Comparative Politics (July 1981)
terrorist while others support that in order for that result to be reached more factors are involved especially psychological ones like the experience of a traumatic effect in life. Whatever nuances are added to the picture, the underlying assumption in radicalization models is usually the same: that some form of religious ideology is a key element in turning a person into a terrorist. (Kundnani, January 2015) There are multiple ways to examine the root causes of violent extremism. There is no single cause or pathway into radicalization and violent extremism; on the contrary, there is a wide array of factors on the macro-, meso-, and micro levels of analysis. Terrorism research has indicated that neither poverty nor socio-economic deprivation is direct root causes of terrorism. According to Magnus Ranstorp, violent extremism can be best conceptualized as a “kaleidoscope of factors”, creating infinite individual combinations. (Ranstorp, January 4 2016) These factors are:

1. **Individual socio-psychological factors**, which include emotions such as: alienation and exclusion; anger and frustration; grievance and a strong sense of injustice; feelings of humiliation; rigid binary thinking; a tendency to misinterpret situations; conspiracy theories; a sense of victimhood; personal vulnerabilities

2. **Social factors**, which include social exclusion; marginalization and discrimination (real or perceived); limited social mobility; limited education or employment; an element of displacement; criminality; lack of social cohesion and self-exclusion.

3. **Political factors**, which include grievances framed around victimhood against Western foreign policy and military intervention. The central core of this narrative is that the ‘West is at war with Islam’, which creates a narrative of ‘them and us’. There is a strong sense of alienation and injustice which is reinforced by Islamophobia, xenophobia and discrimination.

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25 Magnus Ranstorp and Peder Hyllengren, Förebyggande av våldsbejakande extremism I tredjeland (Swedish Defence University 2013)
4. **Ideological/religious factors** include a sacred historical mission and belief in apocalyptic prophesy; a salafi-jihadi interpretation of Islam; a violent jihadi mission; a sense that Islam is under siege and a desire to protect ummah under assault.

5. **Culture and identity crisis** relates to cultural marginalization, which produces alienation and a lack of belonging to either home or the parents’ society.

6. **Trauma and other trigger mechanisms** that involve traumatic experiences of the past, in the domestic environment, caused by parental figures and resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other complex psychological problems.

7. **Group dynamics** involve charismatic leadership; pre-existing friendship; socialization; groupthink.

8. ** Radicalizers/groomers** are individuals who utilize hate speech and manipulation, pressure and various persuading techniques and target vulnerable and angry people in order to make them follow violent extremism.

**Social media** connect users with the same views and mindsets in a visual world where they can express their views and find supporters. The internet “reaches otherwise unreachable individuals”; it accelerates the process of radicalization; and increases opportunities for self-radicalization. (Ranstorp, January 4 2016)

Roy advances various points for understanding why extremism comes about:  

1. Radicals present resentment and frustration against society but do not seem to have any particular psychiatric patterns

2. The majority of radicals come from second generation Muslims born in Europe, the others are converts; Farhad Khosrokhavar argues these second generation immigrants are often “stigmatized, rejected and treated as second-class citizens”

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26 The following factors have been derived from speech by Oliver Roy, “What is the driving force behind jihadist terrorism? – A scientific perspective on the causes/circumstances of joining the scene”, International Terrorism: How can prevention and repression keep pace? BKA Autumn Conference, 18-19 November 2015.
3. Extremism seems to be a result of peer pressure

4. Very few have a history of militancy, either political or religious

5. The unusual proportion of converts

6. The main motivation of young men for joining jihad seems to be fascination with the narrative: “the small brotherhood of super-heroes who avenge the Muslim Ummah”

7. Adoption of the Salafi version of Islam; Salafism. It is simple to understand (don’ts and dos) providing a personal psychological structuring effect; moreover, Salafism deny the existence of cultural Islam, which is the Islam of their parents

8. Radicals have a loose or lack of connection with Muslim communities in Europe (Roy, 18-19 November 2015, pp. 5-14)

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PART 2
CHAPTER 5: The Process on Addressing Extremism

Before starting countering extremism, one should ask certain questions, which will lead to the right track for the completion and the implementation of a successful counter extremism campaign. To begin with, the questions should focus on the campaign itself. The main problem that caused the campaign should be analyzed; the language the campaign uses to communicate its message should be examined as well. Then the narrative the campaign uses should be examined along with all the stories that are used for the completion of its success. The target audience plays a major role on the campaign and the message is specifically designed for them taking into account the societal norms and the culture. The next step would be to understand how the enemy works and assess objectively whether or not the “enemy” is also using correctly all those strategies and in the end, try and compare the results. The language it uses, the narrative, the message, its objective, its target audience. According to a speech Mr Farwell gave a couple of years ago, the answers to those questions will provide insight into the awareness and visibility of actions and communication; how believable, persuasive, and credible the themes and the messages are. (Farwell, June 2014) But while quantitative and qualitative data is helpful, such data should inform, not serve (Farwell, June 2014)
CHAPTER 6: Efforts and Approaches to Address Extremism

Techniques-Strategies

It is understood that there is no “one size fits all” in terms of a violent extremist profile, radicalization trajectory, level of extremism, set of motivations, organizational profile, or counter-terrorism responses/solutions. If there were a simple solution for countering violent extremism, a solution would have been found centuries ago. (Fenstermacher & Leventhal, 2011) There are a variety of approaches used by leaders, diplomats, military experts, third parties, and others to address extremism. The choice of such strategies is usually determined by the perspective taken on the primary sources of extremism (from individual pathologies to social, political and economic conditions) as well as the level of representation of the larger population’s legitimate interests that the extremists are able to secure. (Coleman & Bartoli, Adressing Extremism, 2003) According to Kundnani (Kundnani, January 2015), the most appropriate way to start organizing an effective counter terrorism policy is by starting to understand the reasons that make terrorism flourish, because this way, an effective response will be orchestrated against the terrorist attacks with the help of the police and the military and in an even better scenario, terrorist attacks will be prevented in the first place. (Kundnani, January 2015) Solutions for stopping individuals and groups from engaging violent extremism include disengagement/de-radicalization/rehabilitation programs, mediation, deterrence (or influence), and coercion. (Fenstermacher & Leventhal, 2011) There are two distinct types of responses to extremist acts. The first is the natural reflexive response to a breach in security, which elicits a tightening of security and possibly military retaliation. (Gupta D., 2011) The second is a reflective approach. This approach brings to light issues such as poverty, lack of education and economic opportunity, injustice, oppression, lack of voice, absence of basic services, and so on. In the real world, the course of action is somewhere in between and the balance is critical. (Gupta D., 2011) While countering extremism, we should have in mind that there are two different kinds of groups that need to be countered. The first is the central, ideologically driven core of extremists such as Al
Qaeda. Action against this group could achieve success only in the short-term. In the longer term, such action can have the perverse effect of strengthening the recruiting base of the organization. (Alahdad, 2011) This type of groups can only be dealt with solid ideological arguments on a large scale, which aim to expose their distorted messages. Then there is the other group which we need to contend with, referred as “the disenfranchised.” This group consists of frustrated and neglected individuals by the society with no social or economic benefits. More and more people are joining these types of groups, with the delusion that justice will prevail and things will be different. Such exclusion from their own society leads to violence. Thus, with the help of NGO’s, development agencies and institutions socioeconomic advancement is the answer and should be achieved. The vast majority of violent extremist organizations disappear within a few years of their formation. The ones that survive are typically those that are able to secure funding/support from various sources. (Gupta D. K., 2008) Thus, according to Fenstermacher and Leventhal, any set of strategies to counter violent extremism must include strategies for countering the supporters of violent extremist organizations. Having strategies that aim to change the violent behavior of individuals so that they wouldn’t be violent anymore or/and eliminate radicalization, is of the essence. (Fenstermacher & Leventhal, 2011) Violent Extremist Organizations may seek legitimacy by providing what an insufficient or absent government cannot give to its people. These efforts should be de-legitimized resulting in discrediting the violent extremist organization so that the last would not be able to give better solutions to problems created by the governments. A definition by Fenstermacher and Leventhal define de-legitimization as weakening a hostile movement or ideology by undermining its ability to persuade and inspire people, affecting the support and the ability to recruit new members. (Fenstermacher & Leventhal, 2011) Security and law enforcement are considered to be the leading efforts in countering extremism. According to research conducted, neither relocating, nor placing in prison or even killing violent extremists, is effective in solving the situation. On the contrary,

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28 Rapoport, Ibid.
the number of the recruits will rise and will restore and surpass the number of those extremists that were removed let alone the civilian casualties that will also arise from operations conducted by the military. (Fenstermacher & Leventhal, 2011) “Burden sharing is the only effective long-term strategy to adopt” (Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, 13-15 June 2016)

The efforts should be a combination of top down approaches- those who are implemented by the governments for the protection of the state’s citizens- and bottom up initiatives- those who are implemented by the local communities. According to Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh International Organizations should concentrate on trying to bring together governments and local communities to discuss their strategies and implement them with the best long-term result; autonomy and space should be given to local authorities. (Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, 13-15 June 2016)

**Using Popular Public Figures**

Popular public figures should help with the effort of countering radicalism and extremism. Huda, in his analysis, refers to those kinds of people as citizen messengers. Religious leaders may also be included because their words have a great effectiveness among their believers. These people have a double role; firstly to affirm positive messages about society and secondly to neutralize or defuse the messages promoted by extremist groups. Of course this should be a process that would not involve lies and deception of the public no matter how uncomfortable a situation can be. “Citizen Messengers” should give emphasis on the stable nature of society but should also examine the wrong policies that were implemented in the past, and explain the way they have been revised for the achievement of better and more imminent results. Public figures should aim to discourage vulnerable people from joining extremism or an extremist group and on the other end, to encourage them to leave an extremist organization that they are members of and ultimately to discourage the citizens from being friendly towards extremism in general. Public figures use mass media to achieve the aforementioned purpose. Their role is to rebuild the damaged, radicalized communities they
are living in, by urging people to follow legal methods to settle a dispute, rather than violence.
(Huda, 2011)

CHAPTER 7: Strategic Communication on Countering Extremism

In a previous Chapter, the -complicated for many- notion of Strategic Communication was analyzed and examined in a general way and then in according of the way NATO uses it for its benefit. In this chapter, apart from all the approaches analyzed above, there is a particular focus on how one can counter extremism through Strategic Communication.

As Archetti underlines, “strategic communication approaches to countering terrorism tend to be based on an outdated understanding of the information environment.” The “hypodermic needle model” is widely used and assumes that the audience is characterized by passiveness and that a great amount of the public could change behavior according to the way a message is perceived. But the reality couldn’t be more different; the audiences are not passive recipients at all; instead they are selective upon the information they consume and the way they interpret these information. Furthermore, the view that the Internet and Social Media are somehow dangerous, is misked; what the Internet and Social Media are in today’s world, what the TV and radio, even the printing press and the telegraph were to the past. We always see the new technological advancements as something beyond our control. The Internet and the technology in general, it is a fact that changed many things in the way our society is perceived and it helped reaching a great audience globally as far as gaining supporters is concerned; although, “the not unjustified, but certainly disproportionate, focus on the Internet prevents us from seeing the wider social (and never online-only) space in which extremism is rooted.” (Archetti, 2014)

The role of the internet in extremism, as in any political mobilization, is relative: in the mountains of Afghanistan, where there is no electricity and most of the population is illiterate, the terrorists’ narrative is not conveyed through the Internet but rather shabnamah (night letters), leaflets affixed to walls. (Archetti, 2014)
There is a widely popular belief that the prediction of terrorism is in many cases possible, however, this belief couldn’t be more wrong due to the fact that radicalization is a temporal outcome and “it depends on an individual’s unique position within a configuration of relationships (which can also be imagined, as in the case of the feeling of admiration for a terrorist leader one has never met) at any given time” (Archetti, 2014)

Last but not least, according to Archetti, “although communication is crucial, it is important to understand that the message is not all”, but also “the consistency between words and deeds is paramount”. (Archetti, 2014) A great example from the world of politics helps us understand where a message against extremism should aim at; like in politics, the political campaign’s aim is not to convince people who are already involved in politics or who to vote for- they made up their minds. Instead the political campaign focuses on affecting the opinion of the public who is yet indecisive. The same technique should be implemented on anti-extremism campaigns; the campaigns shouldn’t try to target the extremists but the ones who are yet to be radicalized. (Archetti, 2014)

Counter Terrorism (CT) Communications

According to Glazzard and Zeuthen, researchers are only now beginning to examine the various responses to violent extremism. The responses can be placed under three categories: counter-terrorism (CT, e.g. using military or policing resources to deter or disrupt terrorists), countering violent extremism (CVE – preventative approaches using mostly non-coercive means), and risk reduction (seeking to ensure that violent extremists do not cause harm, e.g. through efforts to change behavior) (Glazzard & Zeuthen, 2016)

Counter Terrorism Communications a specialized form of strategic communication uniquely different from other forms of messaging, and in some ways, particularly difficult. (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 4-5 June 2014) It includes a Counter Terrorism Component- which causes disruption in order to destroy an extremists group capabilities and a Counter Violent Extremism Component- which aims in influencing the public against extremism by preventing radicalization. The goals of CT Communications vary according to the audience
being targeted—ranging from uncommitted, to radicalized, to mobilized audiences—and require different messaging strategies and approaches. (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 4-5 June 2014)

Direct-Indirect Messages

Direct messages are offering a competing response and are reducing the incentive to spread extremist ideas by making them appear less appealing. However, this technique could bring the opposite results; attention to the extremists narrative and force engagement of Counter Terrorism Communications to the terms of the extremist side. (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 4-5 June 2014)

Direct messaging techniques use “counter narratives” to challenge and discredit extremist messages, their messengers and or cause disruption within extremists’ groups. Such techniques include “refutation, denigration, condemnation, and agitation”. (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 4-5 June 2014) These techniques can be successful when focusing on an already mobilized audience by confusing, distracting extremists. Although a direct approach many times may result is alienating individuals who have deep-rooted beliefs, which increases the chance of entrenching extremist beliefs. Radicalized audiences—those who agree with the violent extremist narrative but haven’t begun to support it actively yet—may not be as firm in their beliefs and could be more receptive to counter argumentations. If so, direct messaging can be used to create enough uncertainty to discourage them from engaging in violence.

Indirect messages include the promotion of positive narratives that emphasize solidarity, common causes, and shared values. Uncommitted audiences are more likely to be effected by indirect messages, being either unsympathetic or neutral towards violent extremist narrative. Narratives such as these try to discourage radicalization and additionally inspire some to participate in countering violent extremism themselves, which leads to the creation of common interest communities and movements for positive change. Indirect messaging may be more effective in revising the ideas of radicalized audiences. The “alternative narratives”, used by indirect techniques, are designed gain the audience’s attention and to replace the
competing narrative - without making reference to it - and to turn non-participatory audiences against it. This is achieved by indirectly undermining the credibility and appeal of extremist arguments and not directly challenging them.

**Limitations-Problems**

Implementation of indirect messaging by the government requires a deep understanding of the culture, as well as credibility with audiences who may be deeply suspicious. Thus, employing other techniques to the effort, like training programs to create credible communicators or partnering with messengers of the local community is of the essence. Such techniques also tend to require continuous, intensive efforts to build relationships, trust, and the necessary nuance to succeed and they are long-term strategies that seek to cause change through a gradual insertion of doubt. (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 4-5 June 2014)

Counter Terrorism Communications are a long-term process that contains a lot of effort from multiple factors, preparation for the right messages and so on. Thus, the demand of quick results in many cases is great challenge because the process of changing the public mind upon serious matters as extremism and terrorism is not a result of a quick search and a quick implementation. In addition, a worth examined challenge is the response to negative stories that needs to be quick and effective, countering all propaganda in the media all over the globe. Counter Terrorism Communications consist only a fragment of information that the public ultimately receives thus they should be characterized by *persistence and pre-preparation*. Creating and preparing ready scenarios for the future, plays a major part in counter terrorism communications, because it creates the opportunity for putting out the right messages before an event occurs and also the right messages immediately after the incident-event. Governments do not tend to take advantage of the opportunity to be responsive during or after an event and this attitude should change. On the other hand, in many cases a response is not even appropriate, because it could make matters worse and thus in those cases, “strategic silence” is the best possible
solution, while matching words to deeds is not viable. (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 4-5 June 2014)

Contesting Extremist Narratives

There are two ways for contesting Extremist Narratives. Narrative coherence has to do with whether or not the stories communicated make sense structurally, in other words, the sequence of events, the characters and their actions and the resolution are all scrutinized. Narrative fidelity has to do with scrutinizing whether or not the story can relate with the values and experience of the audience. (Corman, 2011) Narratives are a powerful tool for influencing target audiences, because they offer a different rationality based on values deeply rooted in culture. Analyzing and understanding how extremist narratives are designed can make strategic communication more effective in two ways. First, it creates a better understanding of extremists’ rhetorical tactics and the reason of their effectiveness. Second, with better understanding of a narrative it is possible to devise contesting arguments by using comparisons and alternative framing. (Corman, 2011)

An ever occurring weakness in our information campaigns is the weakness of narratives. The approaches used may be good at relaying facts and dealing with single events but are poor when addressing perception and motivation. Succeeding in the long term means taking advantage of narrative, understanding and responding to our variable audience even if not matter how difficult task it might be. Hardest of all, though, can be recognizing and dealing with the fact that our messages are not working because our audience understands them and simply does not agree. (Steve Tatham, 2009) We must backup our narratives with actions, otherwise they have no credibility. The major challenge is that of true engagement, listening, understanding and responding. Terrorists are rarely supported but hidden in their community while using the local narratives and using violence against those that they cannot persuade or keep silent. (Steve Tatham, 2009) The strength and the weakness of extremist narratives lie in that fact that they are oversimplified. Although an oversimplified narrative is easy to spread
and understand, the simplicity makes it weak in facing scrutiny, additional information and different views that can lead adherents to second guess it. By introducing complexity into extremist narratives, these techniques gradually undermine their appeal by creating doubt in radicalized audiences. But if the adherent is feeling threatened this might have adverse effects. According to narrative theory, this can be remedied by utilizing narratives that are not confrontational and that seek to provide additional information. Confronting and defeating the terrorist in the information game is fundamental to defeating the overall threat. We must neutralize not just the bomber, but the person who videoed him; we must counter not just the violence but the opinions and beliefs that drive some to violence and cause others to support or tolerate it. So the challenge for us is not just to speed up our existing processes but to challenge and change them. What are needed are less stratified layers of command and more networking, where all levels are part of an informal community of interest. (Steve Tatham, 2009)
PART 3: Methodology

On this thesis paper, the question that was set in the beginning to be examined and answered was “What is the role of NATO, as to how it addresses extremism and violent extremism through communication and strategic communication techniques?” Through that question many more arose and needed to be answered like “What is Public Diplomacy?” “What is Strategic Communication?” “How do these notions apply on a contemporary world?”

In order for the thesis question to be answered, it was decided first of all to research NATO as an organization and what has been done so far, concerning the battle against extremism; an extensive research was conducted including NATO’s new media and social media accounts, websites, posts and blogs used for NATO. Secondly, it was decided to conduct small interviews with NATO officials and journalist, to use their point of view on how NATO is countering extremism through strategic communication. In the last part of the paper, the results of the responses as well as the research on NATO are being analyzed to reach a viable conclusion on the thesis question.

The sample

People that are currently or were working in the past within NATO as NATO official and of certain Greek journalists were approached and asked about the matter in question and how the media they work at understand it and reproduce it. As a result, 9 questions -with certain sub questions- were prepared and written, in the form of a word file and were given/sent to a certain number of NATO officials to answer them as well as a few journalists, in order to have the journalistic point of view upon the matters in question. These NATO officials and journalists were reached by email based on their expertise and the position held in relation with the topic of the dissertation. The sample of all these official/journalist was conducted for a comparison to be made, on what was examined and found during the research for this paper, and what NATO does. Although, the file was sent to quite a few NATO officials, and a few
journalists, most of them did not answer the questions and did not respond to the message, declining to answer the questions. However, individuals of two different European NATO countries, working in NATO’s Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy NATO Units of their Country answered the question and this analysis was based on their answers. There was no restriction on the length and the content of the answers and everyone answered to their best knowledge of how things work with NATO. The questions were prepared having in mind a logical sequence (past, present, future), were considered to be like a small interview for the people that answered them. They were given a choice concerning whether they prefer their names to be revealed or they prefer all their personal details to be kept confidential, due to the nature of their work.

The questions

The questions were the following:

1. How does NATO address extremism through strategic communication?
2. Is there an official campaign? How does it work?
3. Do you have any system of measurement regarding the results of the communication campaign?
4. Who is responsible for producing the messages of the campaign and communicate them?
5. Is there an official campaign to address extremism through social media?
6. Does NATO division in your country take initiatives on countering extremism? If so, how?
7. Are there any changes in NATO campaign after the latest incidents of terrorist attacks in Europe?
8. What are the results so far?
9. What are NATO’s plans for the future in order to address violent extremism?
PART 4: The Research-The case of NATO
CHAPTER 8: Countering Extremism within NATO

For over a decade, NATO’s counterterrorism strategy has been built on taking the fight abroad with member nations being involved in this effort as contributors to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, to the Multi-National Force in Iraq and in a variety of smaller missions around the globe. (Page, September 2014) According to defencematters.org, NATO has been fighting extremism for many years; after the U.S.-led mission to destroy al Qaeda in Afghanistan, NATO stepped in. Through NATO, soldiers from more than 50 countries fought terrorist groups, as well as the Taliban. NATO trainers built an Afghan army-the professional force of more than 350,000 that is now responsible for Afghanistan's security. As the mission in Afghanistan demonstrated, the NATO alliance enables small and medium-size nations to contribute to the fight against terror. (Stoltenberg, NATO ready to fight ISIS, 2016) Lately, the Alliance’s attention was monopolized by “homegrown terrorism” in the form of soldiers and foreign returning back home—wherever that was—from Syria and other war zones. A great number of individuals from NATO member and partner countries left their homes and families to go to war zones and fight and there is a great chance, according to counterterrorism experts, that many of those fighter will return home supporting an Anti-West ideology, after having spent time amongst extremists groups, such as Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat al- Nusra and the Islamic State (IS), popularly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which were all founded by al-Qaeda members. In fact, US intelligence officials recently acknowledged IS was pushing some of its European recruits to return and establish cells back home. (Page, September 2014) NATO efforts to “safeguard the freedom and security of its members”—the Alliance’s “fundamental and enduring purpose”—according in the 2010 Lisbon Summit Declaration—should include efforts on the political end of the spectrum to “encourage consultation and cooperation on defense

30 Barrett, R., June 2014
and security issues” in the area of countering violent extremism. (Page, September 2014) In support of national authorities, NATO ensures shared awareness of the terrorist threat through consultations, enhanced intelligence-sharing and continuous strategic analysis and assessment.32 (Countering Terrorism)

NATO’s Counter-Terrorism Policy Guidelines focus Alliance efforts on three main areas: awareness, capabilities and engagement. As a result, NATO:

1. Develops new capabilities and technologies to tackle the terrorist threat and to manage the consequences of a terrorist attack
2. Cooperates with partners and international organizations to leverage the full potential of each stakeholder engaged in the global counter-terrorism effort
3. Will support the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL by providing NATO AWACS to improve situational awareness 33 (Countering Terrorism)

Defense against terrorism Program

This program was approved by NATO leaders at the 2004 Istanbul Summit to strengthen the Alliance’s contribution to combating terrorism by enhancing capability development, supporting operations and fostering partnerships. It is influenced by NATO’s new counter-terrorism policy guidelines endorsed at the 2012 Chicago Summit. The DAT POW projects are rationalized under three capability umbrellas: Incident management, force protection and survivability, network engagement.34 (Defence against Terrorism Program of Work) “Defense against terrorism” is one of the two focal areas of NATO’s Science for Peace and Security program. Within the framework of this program, scientists from NATO and partner countries work together on new technologies and the research includes the human and social aspects of terrorism while projects include explosives detection; physical protection from chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents; emergency preparedness; cyber defense; and

33 Ibid
environmental security. With the "Defense against Terrorism Program", NATO is developing new, cutting-edge technologies to protect troops and civilians against terrorist attacks. The program is based on common funding - member countries pool resources within a NATO framework. The aim of this program is to prevent non-conventional attacks, such as suicide attacks with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and mitigate other challenges, such as attacks on critical infrastructure. Ambassador Dirk Brengelmann states: "NATO continues to invest in new technologies and scientific solutions, such as sensors to detect suicide bombers in public places, that help to prevent, detect and protect against terrorism. NATO has also developed expertise in the protection of critical infrastructure and of other vulnerable targets. Our Rapid Reaction Teams and Advisory Support Teams can be sent to assist countries that have come under terrorist attack, including attacks with Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear weapons."

The Warsaw Summit 2016-The decisions

NATO leaders met in Poland and agreed on three immediate steps to project stability in North Africa and the Middle East.

1. NATO's advanced Awacs surveillance aircraft will provide valuable information directly to coalition forces.

2. The alliance is launching Operation Sea Guardian, a new maritime security operation in the Mediterranean, to include counterterrorism and intelligence-sharing. It can also work with the navies and coast guards of the region to strengthen their ability to fight terrorism.

35 Retrieved 4/1/2017 http://www.natolibguides.info/science
36 Ibid
38 Retrieved 4/1/2017 http://www.natolibguides.info/science
39 Secretary-General’s Symposium on International Counter-terrorism Co-operation, 19 September 2011
3. NATO is stepping up support for its partners in the Middle East and North Africa and helping them to better secure their own countries and push back against violent extremism. The alliance is deploying a team to Baghdad to provide strategic advice and support to Iraqi security forces. NATO stands ready to help Libya unify its forces to stabilize the country and better fight Islamic State.40 (Stoltenberg, NATO muscles Up to fight ISIS, 2016 )

NATO allies agreed to increase cooperation with Jordan as part of a plan to boost the alliance’s support for countries battling Islamist extremism in North Africa and the Middle East Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh participated in the Warsaw summit, deputizing for His Majesty King Abdullah. 41 (Jt, 2016) Stoltenberg said “NATO will start training and capacity-building mission for Iraqi armed forces in Iraq, a country central in the fight against Daesh”. NATO is also working to establish an intelligence center in Tunisia, a major recruiting ground for Daesh, and will shortly start providing support to Tunisian special operation forces.42 (Jt, 2016)

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CHAPTER 9: Strategic Communication of NATO

The Allied Command Operations (ACO) is responsible for NATO Strategic Communication activities and execution. AD 95-2, the Strategic Communication Directive (2009) prepared by the ACO, lays down the basics of planning, execution and coordination of Strategic Communication. (Güler, 2012)

According to the “Operating Environment” section of the Directive: ACO conducts operations to succeed in an age, in which information and media have a crucial global importance, while the global information environment paves the way for changes that offer unique opportunities in favor of the opponents. (Güler, 2012)

According to the website of Strategic Communication Center of Excellence, NATO Strategic Communication is “the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO’s aims”. 43 (About Strategic Communications) These activities and capabilities are: Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations. According to NATO, strategic communications aim to contribute positively and directly in achieving the successful implementation of NATO operations, missions, and activities by incorporating strategic communications planning into all operational and policy planning, build, in close and lasting coordination with NATO nations, public awareness, understanding, and support for specific NATO policies, operations, and other activities in all relevant audiences and contribute to general public awareness and understanding of NATO as part of a broader and on-going public diplomacy effort.44 (About Strategic Communications)

44 Ibid
Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence

The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) became functional in January 2014. Centers of Excellence are nationally or multi-nationally funded NATO military bodies that acquire and further expertise and knowledge on specific issues and contribute to its application and dissemination thus supporting the transformation of NATO.45 (Stratcom Coe History)

Strategic Communication of NATO through new media

Website and Online Presence

One, once entering the organizational website of NATO, www.nato.int could read press releases, speeches, news and browse files on an audio-visual library as well as subscribe on NATO’s newsletter for constant email notification of the news of the NATO. (Pagovski, 2015) Additionally, NATO further examines the Public Opinion by utilizing certain existing domains-communities and blogs- such as www.atlantic-community.org, concerning topics of the Organization. In addition to its informational work, NATO performs some broadcasting activities though its NATO channel.tv. (Pagovski, 2015)

NATO puts into action a digital strategy with specific social media guidelines for both the official and personal use of social media and other Internet activities for all NATO employees. (Pagovski, 2015) Furthermore, the online magazine NATO Review aims to provide a platform where experts come to talk and examine transatlantic security matters through articles, videos, pictures, etc. The magazine which is accessible through online subscription is open for submissions (analysis articles, book reviews, history pieces, military matters pieces, and opinion pieces) that follow strict guidelines while the platform is optimized for use on smart phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs). (Pagovski, 2015)

45 Retrieved 27/11/2016 http://www.stratcomcoe.org/history
Social Media

NATO has accounts on Facebook, Twitter, a YouTube Channel, Flickr, Pinterest. As far as mobile devices are concerned, one can download the official application of NATO for IPad. More analytically:

**Facebook**: for the organization is a platform for communication, in other words it allows the audience to directly communicate with NATO by interacting with the posts or by sending private messages and feedback. (Davis, 2014)

**Twitter**: Four Twitter accounts preside. One for the NATO Spokesperson, one for its Secretary General, one for NATO itself and a fourth for the NATO multimedia library (Davis, 2014). So, we can see that NATO’s public officials use their own social media accounts to interact with the perspectives audiences. (Pagovski, 2015)

**YouTube**: NATO has channels in four languages – English, French, Arabic and Russian. The videos are the same, recorded in French or English and dubbed in the other languages. NATO gets around 7,000 video views per day on this platform (Davis, 2014).

**Flickr and Pinterest**: Through these internet-based communities, NATO shares photos from organized events under the umbrella of NATO and everyone from the public, worldwide, can see and browse these photographic materials.

**Instagram**: last but not least, NATO started an Instagram account, by uploading its first post on December 21rst 2016. The post a not the many yet on this platform since it is a recent edition NATO’s social media accounts.

Every social media platform, appeals to different sections of the public and promotes a different kinds of content interaction.

**Facebook** is the most popular social media platform worldwide, as a result, creating an Facebook account, gave NATO the opportunity by posting it activities to become more known to the general public that uses Facebook and at the same time let them comment on the content itself and on each other’s comments as well.
Twitter, more popular in the US as a social media platform, allows the managers of NATO accounts to reproduce the contents they share on other platforms using less text due to the restriction to 140 characters.

NATO is extensively using YouTube by uploading content from its exercises, its seminars and briefings, its interviews, the training of its troops and everything they document. Then they reproduce the videos through their other social media accounts in different platforms to reach more potential audience.

Instagram, Pinterest and Flickr are dedicated to photography content. So NATO uploads all the archive photos there from all the official activities, the summits, the exercises, and everything NATO related for everyone who wants to browse through them. So every single Social media account that NATO preserves seems to be concentrated on different forms of content (text, photos, videos) ultimately, everything works complementary, for NATO to become a more open organization and the public to be able to browse through all the available content on the web.

NATO and the New Media Efforts

NATO’s former Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, is the first ever Secretary General who has made extensive use of the social web at NATO while encouraging other top military and civilian officials to follow.46 “We have deepened our bonds with bloggers from member countries. We have established ties with eminent digital activists and online journalists” Babsts says, while in her opinion, “sharp, thoughtful analysis from policy experts combined with the wisdom of the crowds gives organizations an unprecedented opportunity to make increasingly more informed, more nuanced, and certainly more thoughtful decisions”.47 For Babst, successful communications today is not about “shouting out” core messages and hoping, if they are only repeated loud enough, they will eventually be

heard and supported. She concludes by saying “NATO and Facebook pursue two very distinct missions; NATO’s mission is peace and security; Facebook’s mission is to make the world more open and connected. But we both strongly believe that today’s policy issues are increasingly global and the social web helps all to connect by raising the curtain between the windows that once separated us from each other’s outlooks”. 48 (Babst & Linder, NATO and Facebook Join Forces in the Global Digital Age, 2012)

According to Steven Mehringer, Head, Communications Services,49 NATO Public Diplomacy Division, there has been a 60% increase in traffic of the official NATO website in 2014 and 20% increase in mobile usage because of modifications made in the website, giving it a lighter look, along with new functionalities; “the interest is there for NATO on social media and quality content and dedicated resources have led to definitive results for NATO on the web”. More people are seeing NATO’s content than ever before because of social media initiatives. And finally NATO’s commitment to social media should continue, but to proceed with strategic, careful and planned steps forward. NATO Spokesperson Oana Lungescu said that there are several initiatives that led NATO evolve in the past years; developing a set of coherent counter-myth arguments, getting NATO’s message out and promoting a schedule of Allied exercises (twitter, website, fact sheet). More analytically, more than 200 Secretary General interviews were conducted in 2015, Six op-eds in 13 outlets, more than 50 press tours and more than 2,000 media queries & corrections. All these were part of a 300% increase of NATO’s engagement compared to 2014. 50

48 Ibid
49 The following information were gathered from a speech Steven Mehringer made on February 2016, titled “Online and on the air: Nato’s digital outreach”
Posts on countering extremism on NATO’s official Facebook Page

During the past 6 months, in NATO’s Facebook page only seven posts were made, concerning the contesting and fighting against extremism. The same posts were reproduced on twitter and on instagram as well, and the posts that contained videos, were initially uploaded on the official account of NATO Channel on you tube. The first one was posted on September 9th 2016 and was a video, fist posted on you tube with the caption “At a training facility in Jordan, NATO experts are teaching the Iraqi Armed Forces the skills they need to clear their towns and cities of improvised Explosive Device (IEDs)” . The course is part of NATO’s Defense Capability Building Package in IRAQ and had 6.6 thousand people reacting on it. The second was posted on September 28th 2016 with the caption “The Gulf monarchies have been active partners in the global coalition against so-called Islamic State since its launch. Yet competing regional interests and rivalries get in the way of full cooperation against transnational jihadism”. The post was an article on “NATO Review” and NATO wrote with a comment that “articles posted on NATO review do not necessarily represent the official opinion or policy of member governments or of NATO”. The post had 1.2 thousands of people reacting on it. The third post was a video, uploaded on October 25th 2016 with the caption “NATO AWACS surveillance planes fly counter-ISIL missions. The flights out of Turkey will help the coalition by building a picture of the airspace over Syria”. It had 3 thousand people reacting on it and 1.253 shares. The forth post, was uploaded on November 17th 2016, containing an opinion article, published by NATO Review, titled “Content Wars: Daesh’s sophisticated use of communications” and the caption “Learn more about how Daesh applies a content marketing blue print to propagate terror and win recruits”. 462 people reacted on this post. The fifth and the sixth posts were dedicated to Turkey; the first of the 2 was posted on December 11th 2016 and it was a Statement by the NATO Secretary General on Istanbul Bombs, having 837 people reacting on it. The second of the 2 was an image of solidarity for Turkey posted on January 3rd 2017 with the caption “All flags outside NATO headquarters in Brussels are at half-mast today in solidarity with Turkey after the
terrorist attack in Istanbul during the New Year’s Celebration #Reina’. 2.5 thousands of people reacted on in and 364 people shared it. The next post was a video, uploaded on February 5th 2017, with the caption “Today NATO launched a new training program in #Iraq teaching Iraqi security forces to counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). Around 30 enlisted soldiers are participating in the first five week course”. 1,000 people reacted on the video on Facebook.
PART 5: The Analysis

First of all, as mentioned in the previous sections of this thesis paper, in this last part, the findings of the bibliographical research and the answers of the questions NATO officials were asked are analyzed, in order for a final conclusion to be reached ultimately, concerning the way NATO addresses extremism through strategic communication.

To begin with, according to the responders, NATO addresses extremism through Strategic Communication with “the core message for 2016 of the Alliance “Securing our future together” that illustrates in the best way its narrative towards the protection of its border and beyond through a collective effort”. Moreover, according to the responders, NATO has three core tasks to fulfill: “Collective Defense – Crisis Management – Cooperative Security” and in order for those tasks to be achieved, the Alliance has agreed to provide guidance to its members’ subsequent strategy, including Strategic Communication. Furthermore, according to the answers “each year a Strategic Communication Framework is drafted and agreed by its members that provide the overarching guidance in accordance for all ACO communication and engagement activities”. According to other responders, NATO addresses extremism “through co-operation with its members”. The last part of the answers is in accordance with what was found in the research because firstly, as it was decided during last year’s summit in Warsaw, NATO started enhancing the cooperation between its members, for countries that have an increasing problem concerning violent extremism, to be helped in a way by other NATO allies. Plus, there is the "Defense against Terrorism Program", based on common funding - member countries pool resources within a NATO framework. Each year, new challenges emerge, that need solving and violent extremism is definitely a challenge that NATO only in the recent years seems to have begun to understand. Through Strategic communications, NATO aims to contribute positively and directly in achieving the successful implementation of NATO operations, missions, and activities by using Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations and Psychological Operations.
Regarding to whether or not there is an official NATO campaign to counter extremism, a number of responders answered that “NATO works on counter-terrorism by focusing on three main areas: Awareness – Capabilities – Engagement. Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) are working closely in support of the implementation of North Atlantic Council (NAC)51 approved strategic communication campaigns.” The Alliance is trying to communicate with extremism “through consultations, enhanced intelligence-sharing and continues strategic analysis and assessment”. Indeed as concluded from the aforementioned research, the Allied Command Operations (ACO) is responsible for NATO Strategic Communication activities and execution and the Strategic Communication Directive AD 95-2 (2009) prepared by the ACO, lays down the basics of planning, execution and coordination of Strategic Communication. On the other hand, other responders pointed out that there is no official NATO campaign for countering extremism at this point. Indeed, as it can derive from the aforementioned research, there is actually no official campaign against extremism and violent extremism on NATO’s side. Of course, NATO prepares certain actions and narrative against extremism that change and evolve around it, but that is not enough. As it was analyzed in the theoretical analysis, narratives are a basic part of a strategic communication campaign and Western liberal democracies and extremism-organizations are competing for support from strategic audiences. Although, this competition appears to be uneven because extremist organizations use narratives better, in order to gain supporters; the narratives of extremist-organizations are based on the history, the culture and contemporary policies of Western liberal democracies and their inherent claim that “the West is at war with Islam”. An ever occurring weakness in Western information campaigns is the weakness of narratives. The approaches used may be good at relaying facts and dealing with single events but are poor when addressing perception and motivation. Succeeding in the long term means taking advantage of narrative, understanding and responding to the variable audience no matter how difficult task it might be. NATO must

51 The North Atlantic Council is the principal political decision-making body within NATO
backup its narratives with actions, otherwise they have no credibility. The major challenge is that of true engagement, listening, understanding and responding. The strength and the weakness of extremist narratives lie in that fact that they are oversimplified. Although an oversimplified narrative is easy to spread and understand, by introducing complexity into extremist narratives, these techniques gradually undermine their appeal by creating doubt in radicalized audiences.

Additionally, if NATO uses a system of measurements for its communication campaign is a question of great importance that needs to be answered. Responses were either negative - answering that NATO does not even have a measuring system for the results of its campaigns - or on the contrary, positive, supporting that “the Alliance improved a lot in collecting and measuring results in the last years and this is a continuous effort including both traditional and online methods”. Furthermore, still according to the positive responses, new initiatives in this area have been already tested, like “the real time coverage collection data forum created by university and NATO experts during the last Warsaw NATO summit 2016”. However, in the research conducted for this thesis paper, the last part of the responses concerning the real time coverage collection data forum that was created during the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016 was not found at all. Only time will tell, if a technique like this will be viable, or if it will be used by NATO at all. As for whether or not NATO uses a system of measurements, the results in the research part of this thesis paper were inconclusive. However, as mentioned in the bibliographical research, measurements of effectiveness are the difference from a given system state to a desired end state (Steve Tatham, 2009) and should be examined on a regular basis. This is because we live in a world that the pace of life is fast, and the information one can find are countless due to the power of the internet. People can change their attitudes towards a problem, a situation, an incident because of the countless information they receive every day. And the situation couldn’t be more different in any society of the world. Other desired ends might be achieved in Muslim societies and other in Western ones. As a result, different techniques of measurements should be used in different situations and those
responsible for measuring the results of strategic communication campaigns should be familiar with the societal norms for the environment in which operations are being conducted. It is of a great importance for NATO not only to create communication campaigns but to measure them as well in order to have a background on the results and to be able to change the campaigns in the future if inconsistencies or mistakes were found to the previous ones. Furthermore, it would have a database of all the measurements needed for research purposes concerning contesting extremism by NATO as an organization. Thus, a system of measurement for communication campaigns should be implemented for usage as soon as possible, whether this is going to polling, the most famous technique of measurement as mentioned on the bibliographical research, or other, new ways of measurement, like the real time coverage collection data mentioned in the answers.

Continuously, concentrating on who is responsible on producing and communicating the messages of the strategic communication campaign of NATO, a number of responders answered that, the production and the communication of NATO campaigns is the responsibility of the Strategic communication Division of NATO. Other responders answered that while “each campaign has its own character” all campaigns are driven by “a common Strategic Communication Framework or Guidance given for each operation or activity by the Strategic level” Also, according to some responses, it is extremely important for areas like information operations, psychological operations, public affairs, civil-military interaction and liaison officers to convene in a timely manner (daily – weekly) with Strategic Communication Advisor in order to synchronize their effort towards the communication effects that have to be achieved. The answers concluded by declaring that NATO as an alliance has several traditional or new ways of communication and it is important to remember that “a comprehensive planning of a robust campaign is the key for success”. According to the research, the Allied Command Operations (ACO) is responsible for NATO Strategic Communication activities and execution and the AD 95-2, the Strategic Communication Directive prepared back in 2009, lays down the basics of planning, execution and
coordination of Strategic Communication. The directive includes an operating environment according to which ACO conducts operations to succeed in an age, in which information and media have a crucial global importance. (Güler, 2012). There is also a Strategic Communication Center of Excellence, in Riga, Latvia, that is responsible as a branch of NATO, for Strategic Communication matters, like in this case, fighting extremism through Strategic Communication and issues regular reports on the fight against extremism which it uploads online in its website or on its social media accounts.

Focusing on NATO’s online presence concerning social media and new media campaigns against violent extremism/terrorism, a number of websites was mentioned by the responders like home page “Science and Technology to Combat Terrorism”52 and NATO Library account on twitter53, which includes links to content found on the web (e.g. websites, news & blogs, reports, etc.) as well as a select number of articles and books available from the NATO Multimedia Library. Furthermore, it was added that in NATO’s webpage54 one can find programs against terrorism like the Alliance’s “Defense against Terrorism Program of Work (DAT POW)”. This is accordance with what was found during researching for this paper, because of 60% in traffic of the official NATO website in 2014 and 20% increase in mobile usage because of modifications made in the website, giving it a lighter look, along with new functionalities. The organizational website of NATO, www.nato.int contains press releases, speeches, news and files on an audio-visual library as well as a subscription button for NATO’s newsletter for constant email notification of the news of NATO. Furthermore, the online magazine NATO Review uploads articles and personal opinions on matters like extremism and share it on its social media accounts; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, while NATO also has a YouTube channel to share videos created for the battle against violent extremism. On the contrary, other responders noted that there is not a particular new or social

52 http://www.natolibguides.info/science
53 https://twitter.com/NATOlibrary
54 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50313.htm?selectedLocale=en
media campaign to fight violent extremism to their knowledge. This response is also based on the reality of social media and new media. In 2017, the world is waking up to a tremendous number of information online. As a result, if the information by NATO is not strategically shared online, it will not have the amount of viewers/readers/commentators it was initially supposed to have in order to make a difference in the battle against extremism. As mentioned above, in the analysis of NATO posts, during the past 6 months, concerning the battle against extremism, not merely enough posts were made, and two of them were personal-opinion articles posted on NATO review, two of them were videos on the progress of Iraqi forces training against extremism and two were condolences towards Turkey, a country affected in the past months by violent extremism attacks. But these posts are not part of an official campaign. Fragments of information and sporadic posts that do not even amount to a two-digit number in a period of six months, is not even remotely enough, considering the use of new and social media by the “enemy”, in this case the extremist groups.

Regarding the initiatives each country takes upon countering extremism, certain responders answered that in their country, there are no initiatives at all taken on the fight against extremism, in opposition with other interviewees who underlined the HQ of their country organized seminars, meetings and exercises, bringing together partner nations and International organizations in order to ensure cooperation on the issue; lectures by professors from the local Universities and national military subject matter experts have spoken on: "methods of protection of critical infrastructure, supplies and personnel, human factors in defense against terrorism, technologies to detect explosive devices and illicit activities and risk management". Moreover, through exercises, military capacity for crisis-management and humanitarian assistance operations are being maintained. The responses are in accordance with the aforementioned findings with several initiatives that led NATO to evolve in the past years; more than 200 Secretary General Interviews were conducted in 2015, more than 50 press tours and more than 2,000 media queries & corrections. All these were part of a 300%
increase of NATO’s engagement compared to 2014. Last but not least, it was concluded that “internal security within a state is a police responsibility but the HQ has developed a close relationship with the local and national police to address this kind of issues” and that “each NATO Headquarters could add that each Military Entity, National or Multinational, follows security procedures and protection of its members is one of the priorities that each Commander set for his personnel”. As for this part of the answer, it is in each NATO member-country’s responsibility to develop a good relationship between the national NATO headquarters and the police force for the better result in combating extremism in all its forms. The difficulty is understandable though that this is really difficult to be achieved but cooperation is crucial for the battle of extremism in NATO member countries. As mentioned above “Burden sharing is the only effective long-term strategy to adopt” (Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, 13-15 June 2016 ) and international Organizations should concentrate on trying to bring together governments and local communities to discuss their strategies and implement them with the best long-term result; autonomy and space should be provided.

Concerning the possible changes in NATO campaigns after the latest incidents of terrorist attacks in Europe the responders answered that “There are always additional considerations from each specific incident that may affect the safety of its citizens and any event that happen within the European border affect the ongoing campaigns and developments” while other responders underlined that as an alliance, “NATO intensified its co-operation with members states” for better prevention of such attacks and for better confrontation of such attacks, in case they occur. All of the aforementioned responses are supported by the research conducted for the purpose of this paper, NATO allies decided during the last Warsaw Summit to enhance security in Europe by military presence with multinational battalions placed in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, in North Africa (Tunisia) where NATO plans to establish an intelligent center to provide support to special operation forces and in the Middle East especially to Turkey, where after the multiple terrorist attacks during the past months it
was decided for additional measures of security to be implemented, apart from NATO enhancing Turkey’s own air defenses.\textsuperscript{56} And since Europe is the heart of NATO, during the latest Summit in Warsaw in July 2016, both the EU and NATO mutually decided to “enhance their cooperation in several areas including: countering hybrid threats, operations, cyber defense, defense capabilities, exercises, training, capacity and more” as it was underlined by the responses to the question. As mentioned in the research part, NATO with its "Defense against Terrorism Program", is developing new, cutting-edge technologies to protect troops and civilians against terrorist attacks. Defense against Terrorism is one of the two parts of NATO’s Peace and Security Program where scientists work together to achieve physical protection from chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents, emergency preparedness, cyber defense and environmental security. (NATO Library Guides)

Continuing, it is essential to figure out what the results are, concerning NATO’s Strategic Communication Campaigns against extremism. It was firstly underlined by the responders that the unpredictability of extremism or terrorism and the methods that we have seen in the latest attacks vary, but, “isolated incidents of terrorist attacks against citizens will not be an inhibitor in the ongoing fight against this phenomenon” and that the results could vary and be exclusive to each of the member states. Other responders answered that it is “too early to tell” since there are many variables to be examined and many approaches to be implemented against the enemy. In accordance with the research, it was made clear that extremism in the form that it is dominant today, which is primarily religious extremism, and the way it manifests itself with violent extremism attacks, is only a recent occurrence. The previous type of extremism that was dominant in the world was political extremism until that change after the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The situation escalated with other attacks in Europe, in Spain in 2004 and in London in 2005 along with numerous attacks in Africa and the Middle East in the past decade and especially in the past year, attacks in Paris, in Turkey and in Berlin monopolized the news cycle. So, it is evident that despite the fact that violent extremism is a

relatively recent development, numerous attacks occurred under its name and many innocent people lost their lives, let alone the fact that all the incidents that occurred so far have certain similarities and many times the organizations like ISIS took the blame, in the name of their god. As a result, future efforts of NATO on countering extremism should focus on fighting such organizations’ narrative in multiple ways directly or indirectly, as mentioned in the research above, varying form online communication campaigns to speeches and more imminent solutions such as deploying to get tangible results. Because, as it was proven in the research, confronting and defeating the terrorist in the information game is fundamental to defeating the overall threat; we must neutralize not just the bomber, but the person who videoed him; we must counter not just the violence but the opinions and beliefs that drive some to violence and cause others to support or tolerate it. Challenge and change the existing process is of the essence. (Steve Tatham , 2009)

What are NATO’s plans for the future on countering extremism? While answering that question, some of the responders focused on the last NATO Summit in Warsaw where it was decided for “NATO AWACS aircraft to provide information to the Global Coalition to Counter- ISIL, NATO to begin training and capacity building in Iraq, while continuing to train hundreds of Iraqi officers in Jordan & Allies to enhance ongoing cooperation with Jordan in areas such as cyber defense and countering roadside bombs”. As it was mentioned above in the bibliography research, during the Warsaw Summit, three points were raised in order to be set in action, with NATO’s advanced Awacs surveillance aircraft to provide valuable information directly to coalition forces being one of them; it was also mentioned in the official social media accounts of NATO on October 25th 2016 with the caption “NATO AWACS surveillance planes fly counter-ISIL missions. The flights out of Turkey will help the coalition by building a picture of the airspace over Syria”. On September 9th 2016 a video was fist posted on you tube with the caption “At a training facility in Jordan, NATO experts are teaching the Iraqi Armed Forces the skills they need to clear their towns and cities of improvised Explosive Device (IEDs)”. Furthermore, as mentioned, Stoltenberg said that
NATO will start training and capacity-building mission for Iraqi armed forces in Iraq, a country central in the fight against Daesh, with NATO allies agreeing to increase cooperation with Jordan as part to boost the alliance’s support for countries battling Islamist extremism in North Africa and the Middle East. (Jt, 2016) This is as of the beginning of February a reality, as NATO posted in its social media accounts-You tube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram a video; a video, on February 5th 2017, with the caption “Today NATO launched a new training program in #Iraq teaching Iraqi security forces to counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). Around 30 enlisted soldiers are participating in the first five week course”. Moreover, in the responses it was pointed out that “NATO as the strongest organization from its establishment will continue to provide security to its citizens within the foundation values and determination of its members”. This response is justified, with NATO increasing its military presence firstly in Europe- with multinational battalions placed in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia- secondly in North Africa (Tunisia) where NATO plans to establish an intelligent center to provide support to special operation forces and thirdly in the Middle East; in Iraq with the deployment of a team to provide support and advice to security forces and in Turkey, where it was decided for additional measures of security to be implemented, apart from NATO enhancing Turkey's own air defenses.  

As far as communication campaigns are concerned, “NATO leadership through its key leaders addresses in any opportunity the determination to work towards securing our future and our values together” while it is in NATO’s imminent plans to “strengthen its communication campaign” in the future for better results upon the fighting against radicalization and extremism. Of course, the strength of NATO’s communication campaign is imminent. A communication campaign could be strengthened by using steps that will help reach the desired result. This technique involves the deep understanding of the problem, in this case extremism, its cause, the cultural norms, as well as the targeted audience, and then the language that it going to be used and the narratives. The enemy should be analyzed in depth to know its weaknesses upon its campaign. All the answers to those questions will provide insight into how believable, 

persuasive, and credible the themes and the messages are. But while quantitative and qualitative data is helpful, such data should inform, not serve. Additionally, new and social media play a crucial role on the way extremists influence their audience as far as information collection, target selection, propaganda and recruitment are concerned. As such, NATO should start using social media more, by posting more content on countering extremism, either this is going to be videos, pictures, interviews, articles and even live coverage of events, in order to engage the public because as it was presented in the social media posts’ analysis concerning extremism, the number of posts-videos-articles that NATO is posting to inform the public about extremism, the narratives of the enemy or the techniques it uses to deteriorate the situation, is not quite enough while the people on social media are reacting and they are clueless and angry and ignorant about the situation. As a result, NATO’s communication campaign should be strengthened to the best of its potentials.

Opinions of NATO expert on Public Diplomacy

Last but not least, according to Daryl Morini, today’s NATO suffers from a public diplomacy overload rather than an image problem. As he argues, Allied ambassadors often reach reflexively for the public diplomacy tool before others. However, as he states, public diplomacy can replace the need for more substantive and effective policies, by encouraging the illusion that nations which shape the media message can control the outcome of an issue or crisis. In his words, “NATO should strip the values talk to a bare minimum and the publics to whom NATO is accountable should not be patronized by sanitized mission statements for their more pleasant consumption. NATO is a politico-military organization and the custodian of a collective defense treaty, not a book club”. In Morini’s opinion, if NATO is serious about its liberal-democratic values, then the Public Diplomacy Division should persuade the Allied ambassadors of the North Atlantic Council to accept the introduction of regular (perhaps weekly) live sessions of Council meetings. He concludes by saying that “NATO

does not need any more public diplomacy cosmetic changes or facelifts; it needs genuine openness and transparency.”  

(Morini, 2012) As mentioned in the theory, regular meetings are being held which are constituted only of representatives of member countries of NATO and additional meetings are organized in cases unexpected events occur. The communications services provided by NATO itself have been reformed and restructured on numerous occasions to adapt to the different needs of the constantly evolving information environment.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, in this thesis paper the thesis question was set and the case of NATO was examined as to how it counters extremism through strategic communication. In the theoretical part, the notions of public diplomacy and strategic communication, both in and out of NATO context as well as extremism, violent and religious extremism and its causes were analyzed thoroughly. In addition, light was shaded on ways that are used on countering extremism, with specification on strategic communication techniques. Then, in the research section, NATO was taken as a case study and the various techniques it uses as far as countering extremism is concerned, along with the way NATO uses strategic communication, particularly as a technique to counter extremism was examined; its new media and social media presence were analyzed as well. It became clear, based on the theory presented in the paper that NATO has a white gamut of tools and techniques which it utilizes for its Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy; there are official committees, divisions and centers of Public Diplomacy, all devoted to better communicating and familiarizing NATO’s activities to the general public and especially the younger generation. Moreover, an annual official Public Diplomacy Strategy is published. The Alliance has accounts on all major Social Media Platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, You tube, Instagram, Pinterest and FlickR all of them with millions of followers, along with a detailed official website. As far as Strategic Communication is concerned, there is the Allied Command Operation (ACO) that is

responsible for NATO’s Strategic Communication and the relatively new Strategic Communication Center of Excellence, dedicated to the Strategic Communication operations of the Alliance in particular, with an official Facebook account (Stratcom COE). On the battle against extremism, it became evident that NATO has made extensive progress, according to information from all the research made for this paper (from NATO sources and research papers dedicated to this particular subject). Since it condemns extremism in any of its forms, and considers it a threat against the citizens of NATO member and partner countries, NATO as an alliance, works though its capabilities in accordance with the national authorities to battle extremism. Furthermore, with the “Defense against Terrorism Program” and since we live in the 21st century, technology plays a crucial role on countering extremism with new funded programs and initiatives to protect troop and civilians against violent extremism attacks. During the last summit NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016, many changes were decided concerning the further countering of extremism in Africa, Asia, Europe and the US. The measures of precaution are covered by the latest of technology for the protection of the citizens. But are all these enough? NATO, despite its consistent and current use of new and social media, its evolution as an Alliance throughout the 20th century- among misperceptions and enemies against what it stands and its interaction with civilians and the general public, seems to remains a strict military organization to the naked public eye. It is a fact that Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy are quite complicated notions, let alone relatively new, in their current use, so they need more analysis in the long run to be developed as essential tools in our everyday life and more particular in the fight against extremism and its prevention. Of course we can recognize the fact NATO does not stand still and embraces change and the technological tools of the 21st century to inform for its action and engage citizens to discussion and gathering information on such a controversial subject as extremism. But how many people read the official reports and the messages NATO shares and uploads? It may be quite a large number but this number is not enough. Last but not least, The NATO Narratives must change seeking for effectiveness and more campaigns need to be funded for a greater number of the Public to become aware of Extremism and the consequences. To
conclude, the continuously deteriorating situation with attacks which are attributed on violent extremism all over the globe, monopolize the global news every day with more and more victims to be mourned. Now it is time for NATO to be more pro-active on engaging every possibly party that could be helpful on ideally preventing and ultimately countering extremism. The design and planning of a different strategic communication campaign that embraces new and social media, understands the societal norms of our time and still is able to fight the narratives the enemy presents, is of the essence for the NATO Alliance.

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