Manipulation of the Public Sphere to Win Cultural Hegemony: The Process by Which Islamic State Uses the Principles of the Overton Window to Engineer Extremism

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Abstract : In order to be successful in a campaign against terror and maintain a favorable world order, we must recognize the effects of priming, framing, and agenda setting on the public sphere, and address how terrorist organizations are able to manipulate language and symbols to shift public opinion and increase recruitment success. Because of their unprecedented activity in the region and foreign recruitment success, this study specifically addresses how the Islamic State (IS/ISIS/ISIL) manipulates the public sphere to amplify support and increase western recruitment. By following a grounded theory methodology and coding triangulated data from IS propaganda, a model for the process of terrorist recruitment has emerged, concerning both environments and personalities susceptible to recruitment, and the steps by which an extremist can be created. This has resulted in the ability to reverse engineer a method by which counter recruitment operations can be facilitated in an effort to lessen the vulnerability of areas and individuals, as well as create dissent among current extremists.