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## RADICALIZATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an effective tool to use to radicalize and recruit members to a cause. It is always there whenever the user is. It lures its users with a promise of friendship, acceptance or a sense of purpose. It is an addiction for half of its users. They may one day find themselves down the radical rabbit hole, unsure of how they ended up there, or they may very well have chosen that path – either way, social media enabled user access. Due to engagement and the way algorithms work, some social media actually welcome and encourage users to support causes for political and social change – even if those are harmful.



### Why is social media the perfect "voice" for radicals?

#### 1. *Widely available internet*

Easy access to extremist ideas and content, as well as enabling anonymity and creating echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs, are what make radicalization spread immensely online. As opposing information is hard to find and there are no real consequences to participating in online discussions, polarizing extremist views become more common. Extremist groups use social media and online platforms for recruitment and to spread disinformation, conspiracy theories and propaganda.

#### 2. *Rallying support for a cause and ideology*

Alongside the aforementioned reasons, online groups create a sense of community and belonging, which can be powerful motivators for individuals to become radicalized. Group dynamics also contribute to the "us vs them" mentality, where individuals are more likely to view those who disagree with them as the enemy. Social media can also amplify extremist views and give people a larger audience than they might have in real life, making the cause appear more legitimate and mainstream.

#### 3. *Everyone is a "sensor" and "an intelligence collector"*

Every person with a cell phone and social media application acts as a sensor capable of collecting and distributing raw, real-time intelligence. This is useful for news channels that receive immediate feedback from events but presents great danger when used for a wrong cause (e.g. when organizing riots). Extremists can use social media to command, control and communicate with others to inflict damage more successfully. Alongside that, the vast amount of information available on social media can be used by extremist groups to identify potential recruits and spread their ideology.

REFERENCE:

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