

DEMOCRACY DIGEST

Antidote to jihadism debunks ISIS ideology

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European researchers and Indonesian kyais – traditional religious scholars – are collaborating to develop theological arguments [to debunk the ideology of radical groups like Islamic State](#) (IS):

The University of Vienna has partnered with [Nahdlatul Ulama](#) (NU) – Indonesia’s largest Muslim organization – and [LibForAll Foundation](#) in a research program on terrorism and extremism called VORTEX, which is funded by the Austrian interior ministry.

Researchers said key to addressing radical ideology is understanding the environment in which it is conveyed and spread, which is increasingly on social media at a highly sophisticated level. Using a dynamic network graph, researchers are able to visualise extremist views in the cyber sphere. Over a four-month period they were able to show 3.4 million tweets relating to IS, clusters that acted as echo chambers to reinforce radical thoughts.

In addition, IS has produced high definition videos – visual representations of their ideology – which have become one of their most effective media tools.

“So we have about 1,300 videos. 98-99 per cent of these videos are in Arabic. We need to understand the theological interpretations they are conveying in these videos that are directly related to Muslim brotherhood, Wahabi teachings, AlQaeda and others since the 1980s in particular,” said Dr. Nico Prucha, a research fellow at VORTEX.

As world leaders call for Muslims to take the lead in the ideological battle against a growing and increasingly violent offshoot of their own religion, analysts say the group’s campaign is a welcome antidote to jihadism, [The New York Times adds](#).

“I see the counter narrative as the only way that Western governments can deal with the [ISIS](#) propaganda, but there’s no strategy right now,” said Nico Prucha, a research fellow at King’s College London, who analyzes the Islamic State’s Arab-language online propaganda.

“The spread of a shallow understanding of Islam renders this situation critical, as highly vocal elements within the Muslim population at large — extremist groups — justify their harsh and often savage behavior by claiming to act in accord with God’s commands, although they are grievously mistaken,” [said A. Mustofa Bisri](#), the spiritual leader of the group, [Nahdlatul Ulama](#), an Indonesian Muslim organization that claims more than 50 million members.

<http://www.demdigest.info/welcome-antidote-to-jihadism/>