



COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: EMERGING TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Date: November 20, 2025

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KEY EVENTS

On November 20, 2025, Matthew Kriner presented *Countering Violent Extremism: Emerging Trends and Challenges* at the 2025 West Coast Security Conference. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period with audience members and CASIS Vancouver executives. The session examined contemporary pathways to radicalisation, with particular focus on Nihilistic Violent Extremism (NVE), the role of school shooter cultural scripts, and the increasing uptake of non-ideological violence frameworks within online extremist ecosystems.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

The discussion focused on the evolution of online radicalisation dynamics, particularly those impacting minors and accelerating pathways to offline violence. Mr. Kriner emphasized a shift away from coherent ideological frameworks toward violence fixation, where online networks exploit aesthetics, memes, and cultural scripts to normalise and incentivise harm. The presentation highlighted how these dynamics can complicate detection and intervention, as they operate below traditional ideological thresholds while still producing severe security risks.

BACKGROUND

Mr. Kriner framed contemporary violent extremism as increasingly youth-driven, with pathways to harm becoming more compressed. He noted that young individuals can be radicalised to violence in short timeframes and that

perpetrators may be younger than in previous waves of extremism. He stated that ideology has diminished as a defining feature in violent extremism, replaced by an obsession with violence itself. Cultural artefacts such as memes, music, imagery, and symbolic actions were described as reinforcing violent outcomes independently of political or religious beliefs.

Mr. Kriner introduced Nihilistic Violent Extremism (NVE) as a distinct and emerging threat category drawing from militant accelerationist tactics and strategies. NVE was described as violence-driven rather than outcome-oriented, seeking to destabilise society through acts of harm rather than to achieve political goals. NVE networks often exploit youth and can escalate rapidly from online interaction to offline violence. Mr. Kriner emphasised that although NVE networks are relatively small, they have been linked to a disproportionate number of attacks.

NVE ecosystems were described as hierarchical, operating across tiers. Core actors promote accelerationist narratives and strategies, while lower-tier participants are encouraged and pressured into committing acts of violence. Online environments facilitate this process through normalisation of harm, peer reinforcement, and mechanisms of coercion, including extortion and demands for livestreamed or recorded proof of violence. Mr. Kriner stated that this structure enables the translation of online incitement into offline harm with increasing efficiency.

Mr. Kriner described how true crime content, namely school shooter cultural scripts, can be weaponised through romanticization of perpetrators, fetishization of gore, and normalisation of extreme violence. The Columbine High School shooting was cited as a formative moment in the development of these scripts, with diaries, imagery, and symbolic cues frequently emulated. He noted that these narratives evolve over time into fragmented cultural scripts that can be adapted across platforms.

Mr. Kriner highlighted how NVE actors increasingly appropriate school shooter scripts to radicalise individuals without requiring ideological commitment. Case studies, including Natalie Rupnow and Solomon Henderson, were used to illustrate how individuals embedded in NVE spaces adopt these scripts as mechanisms for identity formation and societal disruption. Indicators of this pathway include fixation on casualty numbers, referencing prior attacks, use of

TCC language, and the incorporation of adjacent belief systems such as antinatalism or antisemitism. The fragmentation of these scripts, combined with their aesthetic and symbolic nature, was identified as a key factor making detection and prevention more difficult.

Question and Answer

How would you classify NVE as distinct from terrorism and legally established motivations for extremism? What are the differences in identification, indirection, and deradicalization?

Mr. Kriner stated that NVE is distinct in its lack of aspirational political or social outcomes. Violence is pursued for its own sake, for notoriety, or as a form of coercion within insular online ecosystems. Motivations may shift between violence, extortion, and financial gain, complicating traditional classification and legal frameworks. Effective responses should prioritise disruption of violent behavior rather than ideological deconstruction, including pressure on platforms that enable congregation and early intervention through counseling and behavioral support.

What new and upcoming technologies, such as generative AI, pose the biggest threat to the defence against these harms? How would we, if possible, monitor and alleviate the threat?

Mr. Kriner highlighted the growing use of generative AI, particularly large language models (LLMs), within NVE spaces. These tools were described as unregulated “sidecar” influences that can reinforce psychological harm and accelerate progression toward physical violence. He emphasised the need for greater accountability and oversight from AI providers, given the unexpectedly high adoption of these technologies within violent extremist ecosystems, including NVE.

Where do governments and social media platforms fall short in countering violent extremism, and what would success look like?

Mr. Kriner suggested that counter-extremism efforts often lag behind evolving language, aesthetics, and modes of harm. Regulatory uncertainty and limited platform accountability can contribute to inconsistent enforcement, particularly

regarding suicide encouragement and incitement to violence. He proposed clearer regulatory standards and targeted platform design interventions, for example restricting livestreaming capabilities for newly created accounts, to reduce opportunities for harm.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- Contemporary radicalisation is increasingly youth-driven and violence-focused, with diminished reliance on coherent ideology and greater use of memes, aesthetics, and cultural scripts.
- NVE, rooted in militant accelerationism, exploits online ecosystems to coerce and pressure individuals, often minors, into real-world harm aimed at societal destabilisation.
- School shooter cultural scripts and true crime fetishization function as primary radicalisation pathways within NVE, enabling violence-driven mobilization that is difficult to detect using traditional ideological indicators.

FURTHER READING

Kriner, M. and Bernardo, I. (2023, September 25). *A New Image of Terror and Dread: The Significance of Dark Foreigner's Arrest*. Global Network on Extremism and Technology. <https://gnet-research.org/2023/09/25/the-significance-of-dark-foreigners-arrest/>

Kriner, M. (2024, April 4). *Behind the Skull Mask: An Overview of Militant Accelerationism*. Global Network on Extremism and Technology. <https://gnet-research.org/2024/04/04/behind-the-skull-mask-an-overview-of-militant-accelerationism/>



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