

Bringing Women, Peace, and Security Online: Mainstreaming Gender in Responses to Online Extremism

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The relevance of gender to discussions about extremism and technology has been acknowledged, but not fully capitalised upon.

The current report seeks to understand how gendered frameworks—particularly, the global agenda on Women, Peace, and Security—may be better engaged to understand these issues.

Key to this analysis is an incorporation of principles from research in Feminist Security Studies. As a subfield that links international relations, security studies, and gender studies, work in this area lays out principles relevant to both academics and practitioners. Among these are: The need to understand “violence” broadly, the need to envision how gender is linked with other social hierarchies, skepticism regarding the roles of state actors and advocacy for civil society engagement, and an understanding of the intertwined nature of discussions about security and development issues.

Taking these principles as guidelines, the report explores three trends in extremist uses of technology that explicitly speak to gender. First, it looks at how technology is used by extremists to directly facilitate physical and sexual violence against women and other marginalised groups. Second, it looks at gender-based patterns of online recruitment by extremist organisations. Finally, it explores the emerging challenge of semiotic violence online, examining the various ways that extremist groups engage with online platforms with the intent to silence or discredit women. Overall, the report concludes there is much to be gained from further dialogue about extremism and technology from a gender perspective, though developing such an approach requires both political will and responsible engagement.

