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The NCITEr Newsletter May 2023

National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

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The NCITeR

National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

MAY 2023



Dear reader,

I write this from my Ottawa, Ontario, hotel room where I see a sky that is a different shade of blue than any I have seen in the United States. Same sky we all share, of course. Just a different view of it on Day 3 of the Canada Centre's 2023 Conference on Countering Radicalization to Violence: What to Measure, How to Prevent.

Gathered here are some of the leading experts in government, academia, and industry, all trying to prevent extremism. I am energized by the advancements our international allies have made in prevention and measuring its effectiveness.

Today's challenge presents a fractured threat environment with individuals motivated by composite violent extremism, which is arguably a more complex threat than any of us have seen.

What gives me hope is the unbending and still-united effort of our closest allies here at this international conference. In addition to seeing five DHS officials, all members of the NCITE board, I have met NCITE's counterparts in the U.K., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. We have spent our time discussing ways we can work

together to present would-be violent extremists with other alternatives and keep intact our beloved communities and free way of life.

For example, [Canada's Community Resilience Fund](#) launched a project with [Moonshot](#) to build resilience in their behavioral health providers to add preventing violent extremism to their skillsets. Moonshot CEO Vidhya Ramalingam moved the audience by emphatically stating, "Online prevention is no longer an option, it's a requirement."

As NCITE wraps up its third research year and prepares for a fourth, we keep our focus on new and emerging threats with our partners in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the U.K. NCITE is focused on international capacity building to help answer the call for more international collaboration. We will co-host an event later this year in the U.K. focused on how government and academia can help prevent and thwart ideological violence. Early career researchers should stay tuned for information on data collection opportunities.

In a few days, I'll be back under the Omaha sky. It will look different than the one above Ottawa. Different views of the same thing is not unlike how our consortium works — providing unique lenses on the shared problem of extremist violence. This newsletter offers a snapshot of these different vantage points.

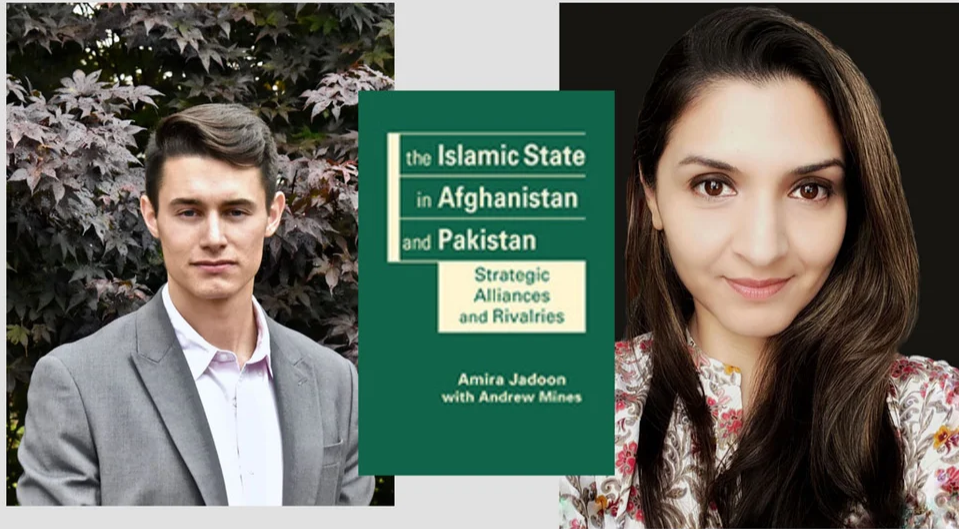
NCITE has done *well*, which now allows us to do more *good*.



GINA LIGON
NCITE Center Director



Amira Jadoon and Andrew Mines: A Q&A on ISK



A Q&A on the Islamic State with
Amira Jadoon and Andrew Mines

Researchers Amira Jadoon and Andrew Mines recently visited NCITE to participate in a panel discussion on the Islamic State's activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Here, the pair share insights from their new book, *The Islamic State in Afghanistan and Pakistan: Strategic Alliances and Rivalries*.

[READ THE Q&A](#)

Meet DHS: Q&A with Jorge Comas of CBP



New NCITE board member Jorge Comas is the director of the Counter Network Division within the National Targeting Center. Read about his background and advice he has for students.

MEET JORGE

'Especially Important Today': NCITE Leads Course on Political Violence



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
POLITICAL SCIENCE



Throughout the spring 2023 semester, NCITE's Michelle Black, associate professor of political science at UNO, taught students about violence and the individual and systemic forces behind it. Black's course, "Political Violence, Insurgency, and Terrorism," drew students from a variety of majors.

[READ ABOUT THE COURSE](#)

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RESEARCH FOR RESILIENCE

More than 30 NCITE research deliverables are now available on our new Digital Commons page. Digital Commons is UNO's online research repository which allows NCITE to gather detailed engagement metrics – including downloads and abstract views – for individual projects.

This is a work-in-progress. NCITE continues to upload deliverables and journal articles. If there is something specifically you're looking for that you don't see here, please reach out to ncite@unomaha.edu.

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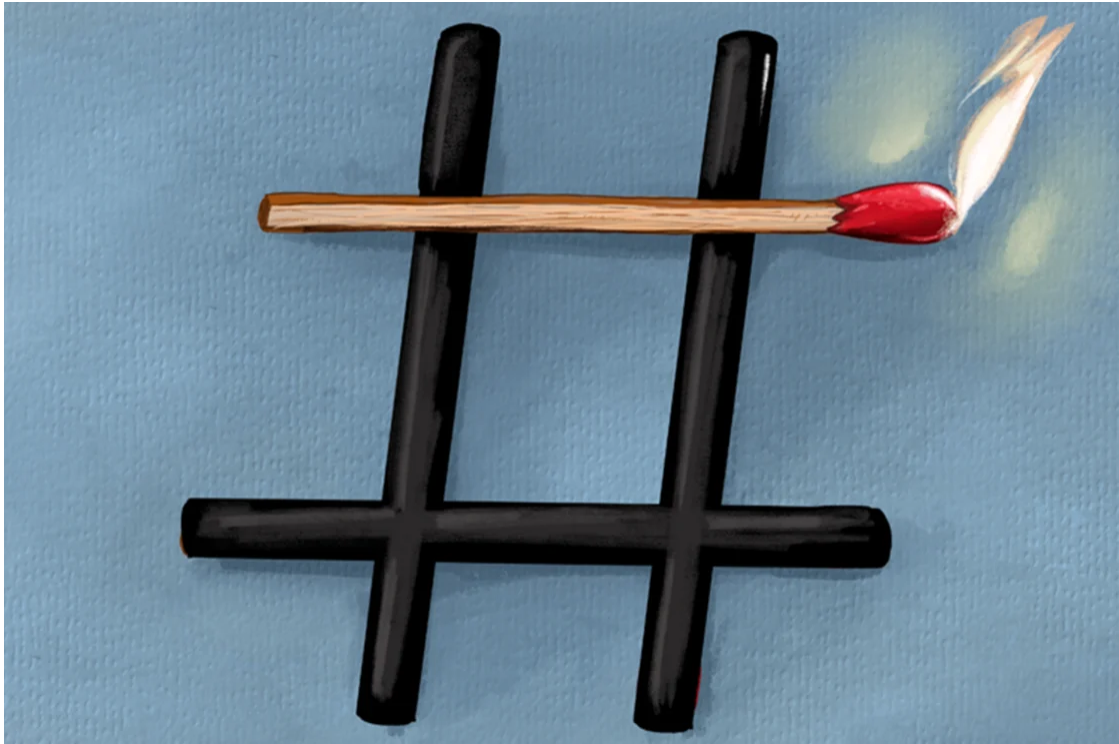
NCITE Triples Funding Agreement with DHS



NCITE has finalized a new agreement with DHS that raises the ceiling of its Basic Ordering Agreement (BOA) to \$35 million from \$10 million. “NCITE has established itself as a valuable resource for the department and our components,” said Dana Saft, S&T OUP program manager.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE BOA](#)

Research Highlights: Reintegration, Radicalization, and Vicarious Trauma



Check out a selection of NCITE research published in the last quarter:

- **[Messaging Matters](#)**: NCITE researchers at the University of Oklahoma are studying how extremist groups use rhetoric and other messaging strategies to influence followers online.
- **[Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighter Families](#)**: NCITE's Austin Doctor is leading a project on how to best reintegrate the families of foreign terrorist fighters who left the U.S. to fight for the Islamic State.
- **[Vicarious Trauma](#)**: NCITE researchers Matthew Crane and Neil Shortland are investigating how trauma from viewing extremist atrocities could affect early career researchers and students.

DHS S&T Under Secretary Visits OU

Dimitri Kusnezov, the top DHS official for academic research, visited NCITE partner the University of Oklahoma earlier this year. He gave a fireside chat and discussed how technology has impacted homeland security. Meeting with him were researchers [Matthew Jensen](#), [Shaila Miranda](#), and [Shane Connelly](#). The researchers discussed their work studying societal shifts in susceptibility to violent messaging and how artificial intelligence and automation will impact the future.

Welcoming the NU Regents



The University of Nebraska System Board of Regents, along with President Ted Carter and UNO Chancellor Joanne Li, visited NCITE in March. After viewing tech with Joel Elson, head of information science and technology research initiatives, in Mammel Hall, the regents crossed the street to Maverick Landing to hear from Director Gina Ligon. The visitors also had the chance to demo metaverse technology with students Alexis d'Amato and Madison Scott. They also heard about NCITE's education and workforce development efforts from students Anthony Roberson, Cynthia Kennedy, and Eva Burklund.

Congratulations, Dr. Kat Parsons!



Kat Parsons, research associate at NCITE, passed her dissertation defense in support of her Ph.D. in Justice, Law, and Criminology from American University. Her dissertation is titled “The relationship between ideology and support for violence.” Parsons recently spoke on an NCITE panel covering the use of memes by violent extremists.

Notice of Funding Opportunity: Terrorism and Targeted Violence Research and Evaluation

DHS S&T has opened a new NOFO seeking basic and applied research that will further understanding of why individuals radicalize, mobilize, and disengage from violence.

[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)

A New Organization to Secure Research

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is seeking input from the research community on the creation of the new Research Security and Integrity Information Sharing Analysis Organization (RSI-ISAO). The new organization will help the U.S. research community address issues of foreign interference, support security-informed decision-making, and connect researchers with stakeholders in government.

[LEARN MORE](#)

MORE FROM NCITE

Events Recap

NCITE's first quarter of 2023 was busy:

- **Feb. 16 – [Daveed Gartenstein-Ross](#)**: Gartenstein-Ross, CEO of Valens Global and author of “Enemies, Near & Far,” spoke at NCITE, answering questions about the current terrorism threat landscape and his research.
- **Feb. 23 – [Terrorist Use of Memes](#)**: NCITE hosted a panel featuring Kat Parsons, Oliver Goodman, and Arthur Bradley about how terrorists and extremists use memes to spread their ideology and build group identity.
- **March 27 – [A Conversation with Nick Rasmussen](#)**: NCITE co-hosted a conversation with DHS Counterterrorism Coordinator Nick Rasmussen in Washington, D.C.
- **March 28 – [Reintegration Panel](#)**: NCITE hosted a panel on reintegrating families of foreign fighters who supported the Islamic State. Panelists were Austin Doctor, Andrew Mines, Omar Mohammed, and Julie Coleman.
- **April 11 – [Islamic State Panel](#)**: NCITE co-hosted a panel on the Islamic State in Afghanistan and Pakistan with UNO's Center for Afghanistan Studies. Panelists were Amira Jadoon, Andrew Mines, and Austin Doctor.
- **April 27 – [Global Jihadist Leadership](#)**: NCITE co-hosted a panel on the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and the State of Global Jihadist Leadership.

Congratulations to Our Graduating Students!

Nine NCITE students are graduating this May. They are:




- **Bryan Botkin**, Master's – Economics
- **Daniel Cook**, Master's – Economics
- **Bradley Corwin**, Bachelor's – Computer Science
- **Stanley Goh**, Master's – Economics
- **Neil Koul**, Master's – Cybersecurity
- **Ashlee McGill**, Juris Doctor
- **Isaac Moelter**, Master's – Criminology and Criminal Justice
- **Claire Spethman**, Bachelor's – International Studies
- **John Wonderlich**, Master's – Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Leading the Conversation

Check out the latest commentary from NCITE experts in the news media [on our website](#).



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