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Re-Imagining Violence

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Violence is a ubiquitous aspect of culture and media, pervading many facets of our everyday lives. Its presence can be felt across all social institutions, from micro-level interactions between individuals, to macro level hostilities between nations. Whether censured or legitimated, displays of violence evoke strong emotional responses from perpetrators, victims and witnesses alike. Most recently, the representational character of violence, particularly its affective significance, has leapt to the forefront of our collective conscience through the proliferation of violent images and rhetoric associated with violent extremist groups. In this paper, we work with several key themes in the literature. These include: the extent to which violence is employed as a communicative device, particularly with regard to the construction of extremist identities; the performative and representational quality of violence afforded by (social) media; and the significance of social conditions that contribute to the emergence of extremist identities. We then link the relevance of these issues with literature concerned with countering violent extremism. This work forms part of a wider research program examining the relationship between online and offline social influence in radicalisation leading to violent extremism.