Information-as-Persuasion and Radicalization
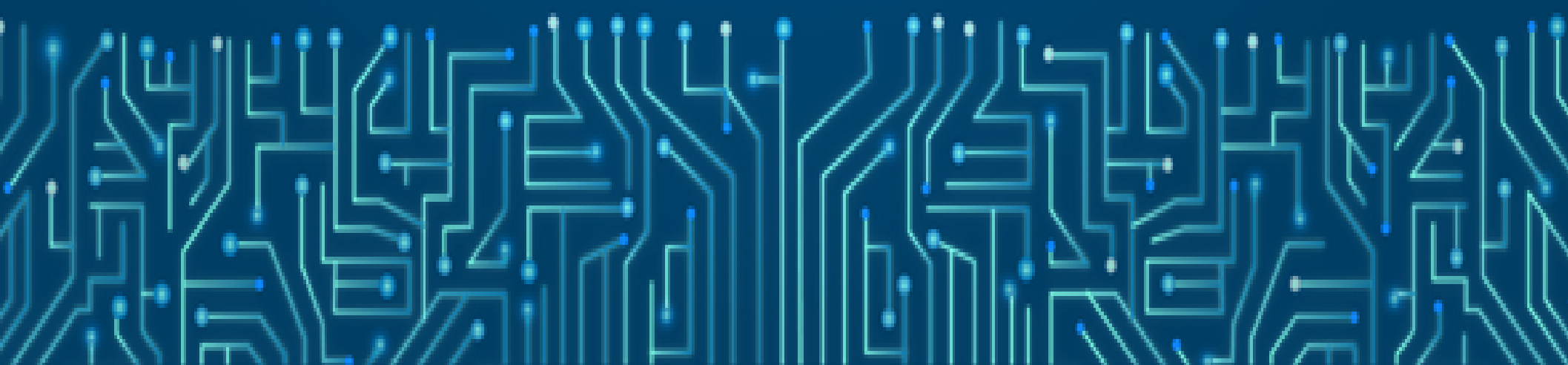
Информация-как-убеждение и радикализация

Маалымат-ишендирүү жана радикалдашуу катары

Central Asia Security Forum
Countering Extremism Online
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan 13-14 September 2018

Өзүм жөнүндө

Саламатсыздарбы урматтуу кесиптештер, менин атым Кристофер Шварц, Америкалык журналист жана философ. Учурда Борбордук Азиядагы Америка Университетинде ошондой эле Католик Лёвен Университетинде иштеп жатам.

Менин доктордук изилдөөм журналистиканын философиясы жөнүндө, ошондуктан мен бүгүн ушул тема жөнүндө сөз кылам: тактап айтканда маалыматтын философиясы – бирок бул жердеги "маалыматтын" мааниси зат атооч катары эмес, этиш катарында демек "маалымдоо"/"маалымат берүү".

Кечиресиздер, мен Кыргыз тилин үйрөнүп жатам (и я говорю по-Русский как ребенок). Презентация менин эне тилимде (Англисче) улантылат – бирок албетте, эгер суроолор болсо сиздер Кыргызча, Англисче, Орусча сурасаңыздар болот.

The potential of CVE counter-narratives remains untapped:

"Mobilization and Radicalization Through Persuasion: Manipulative Techniques in ISIS' Propaganda" by Noemi M. Rocca (2017)

"Losing the Plot: Narrative, Counter-Narrative and Violent Extremism" by Andrew Glazzard (2017)

Two Kinds of Information

Empirical (эмпирический)

phenomena

sensations

Discursive (дискурсивный)

abstract ideas

(My focus: discursive)

Promoters of violent extremism already understand that content is only one aspect of the information process.

They understand that the very *act of informing* is itself an *act of persuasion.*

Persuasion is an attempt to shape an audience's perception of reality.
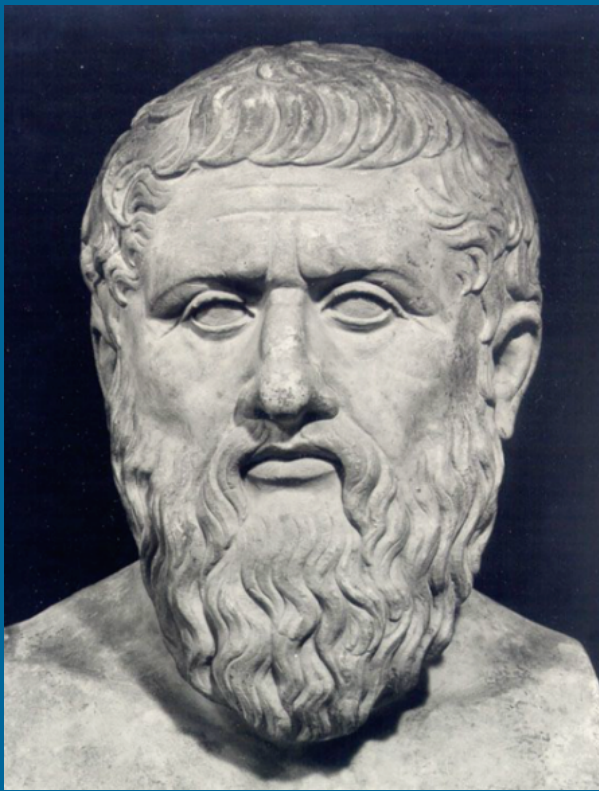
Philosophically, CVE counter-narratives are one reality fighting against another.

The distorted, engineered reality of *propagandists*
vs.
The shared consensus-based reality of *the rest of us*

Latin *informare:*

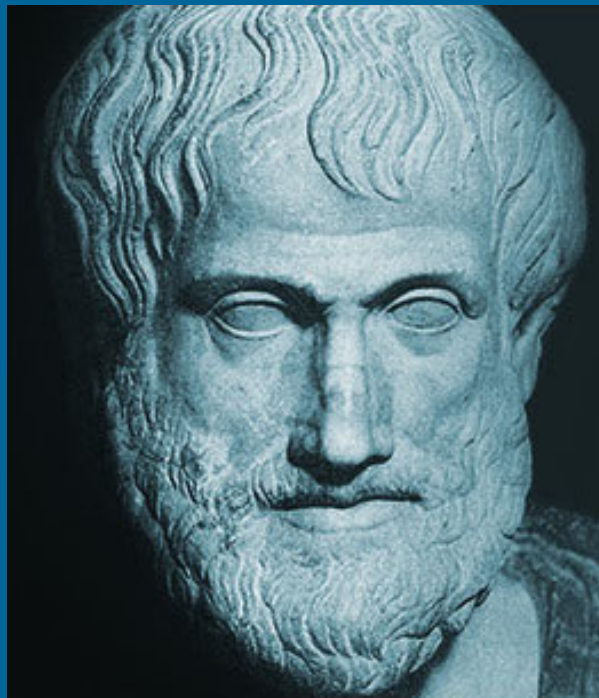"to shape, give form to, delineate"

"train, instruct, educate"

Plato:

εἶδος
(ἰδέα) + μορφή

Idea + Form

Aristotle:

An idea (εἶδος) "*carves*" (ὕλη) matter
into a specific form.

Messages operate most effectively when there exists pre-existing receptivity in the audience.

But can receptivity be induced?

Probably...

... but it depends on the quality of information systems and audience cultivation.

Two Types of Audience

Chaïm Perelman:

Particular Audience

"We" ≈ group, e.g., tribe, nation, gender, race, religion, etc.

Universal Audience

"We" ≈ the human species as a whole

Two Types of Speech

Basil Bernstein:

Particular Speech

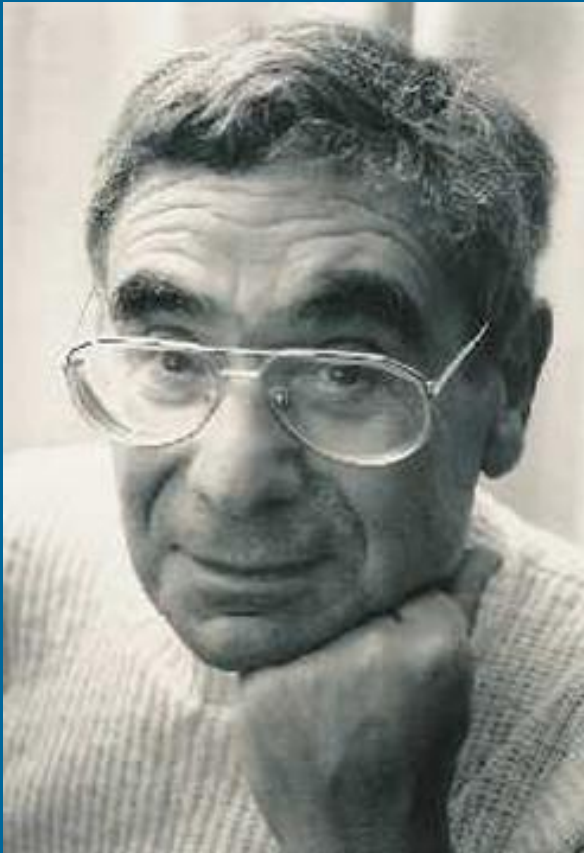≈ spoken only for members of an in-group

typically emotional; invokes membership symbols and group loyalty

Universal Speech

≈ spoken for all individuals regardless of affiliation

typically unemotional; invokes impartiality and commitment to principles

(right now, I am trying to speak to you in elaborated code!)
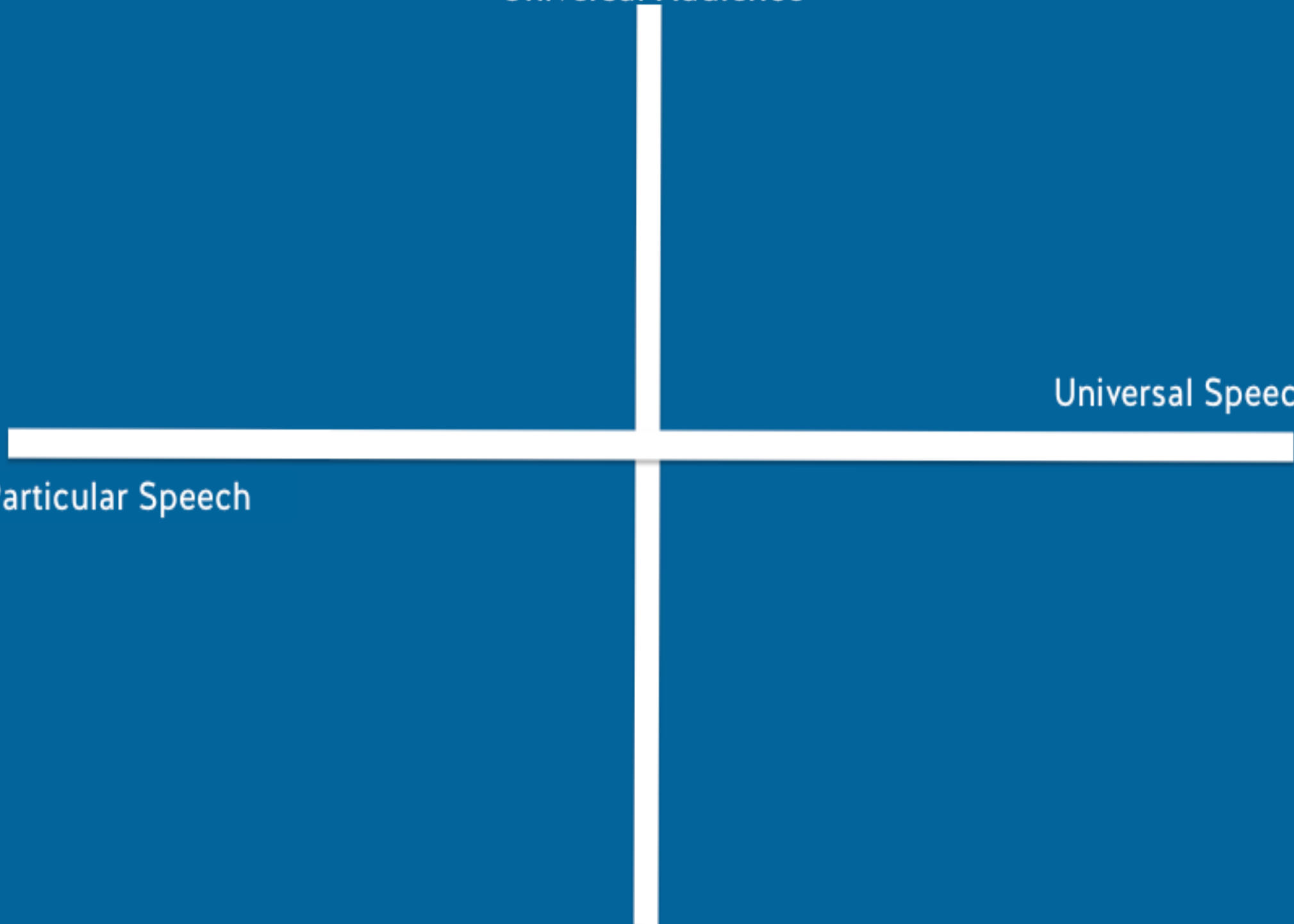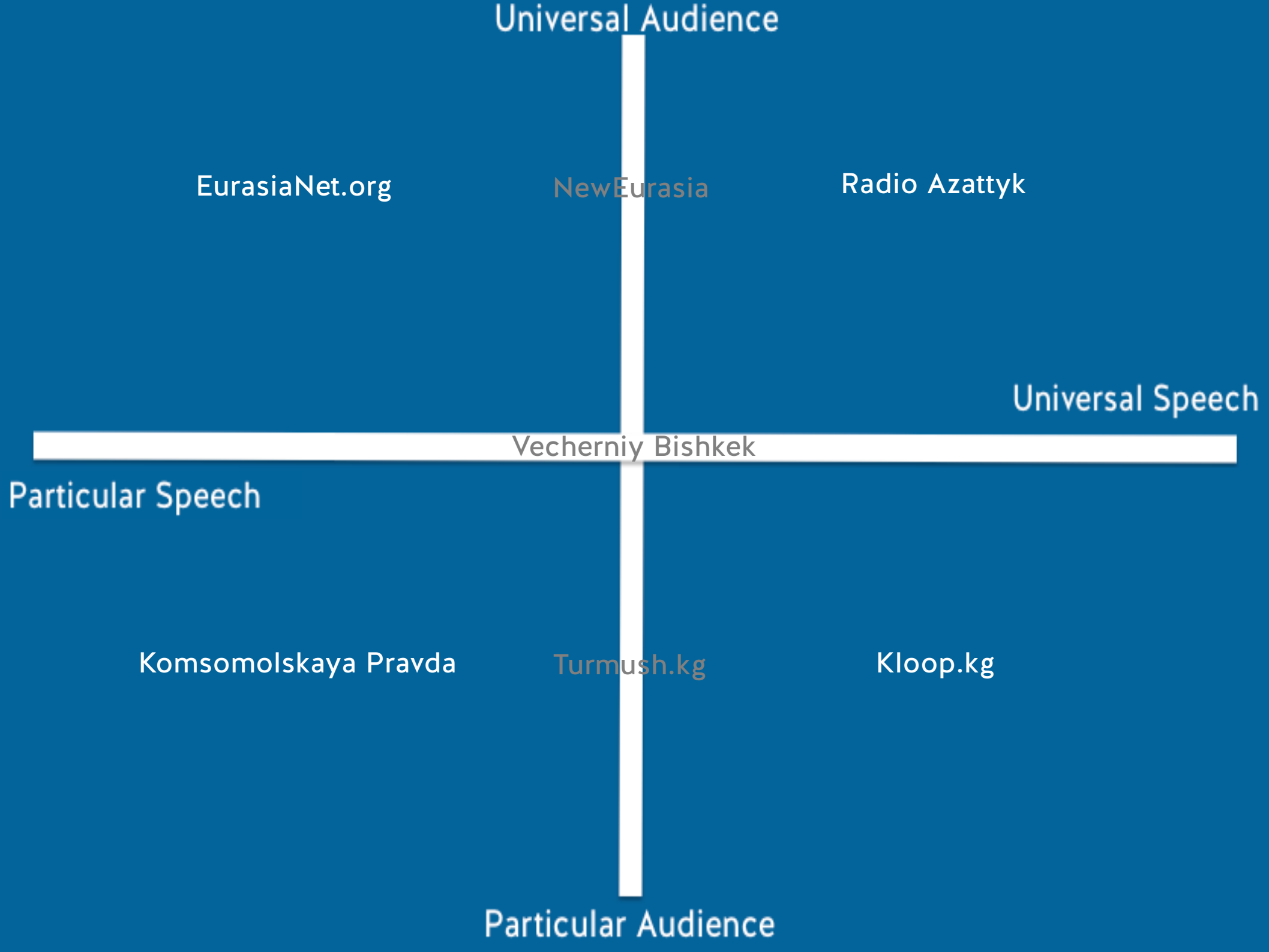
Universal Audience

Universal Speech

Particular Speech

Particular Audience

Universal Audience

EurasiaNet.org   NewEurasia   Radio Azattyk

Universal Speech

Vecherniy Bishkek

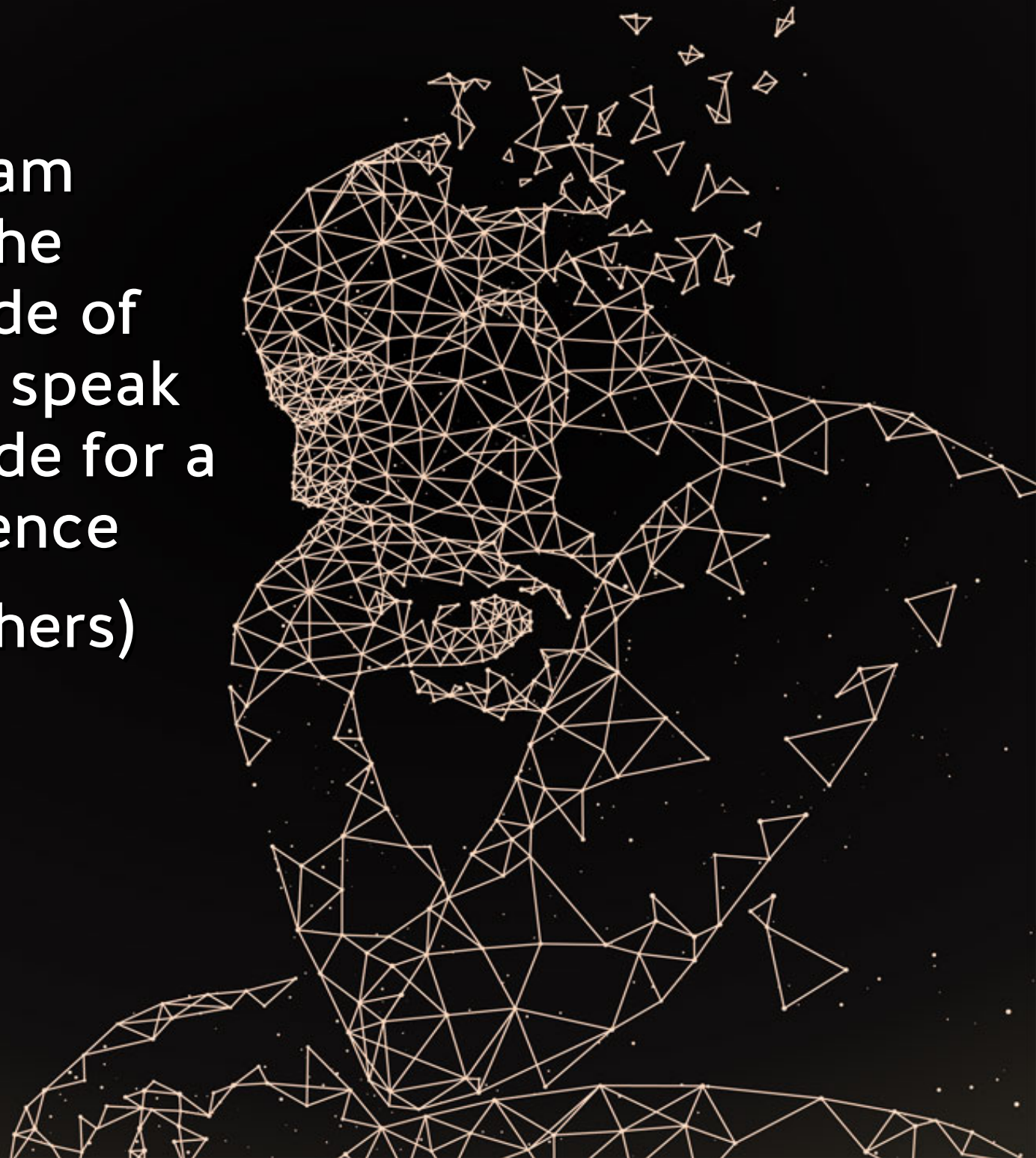Particular Speech
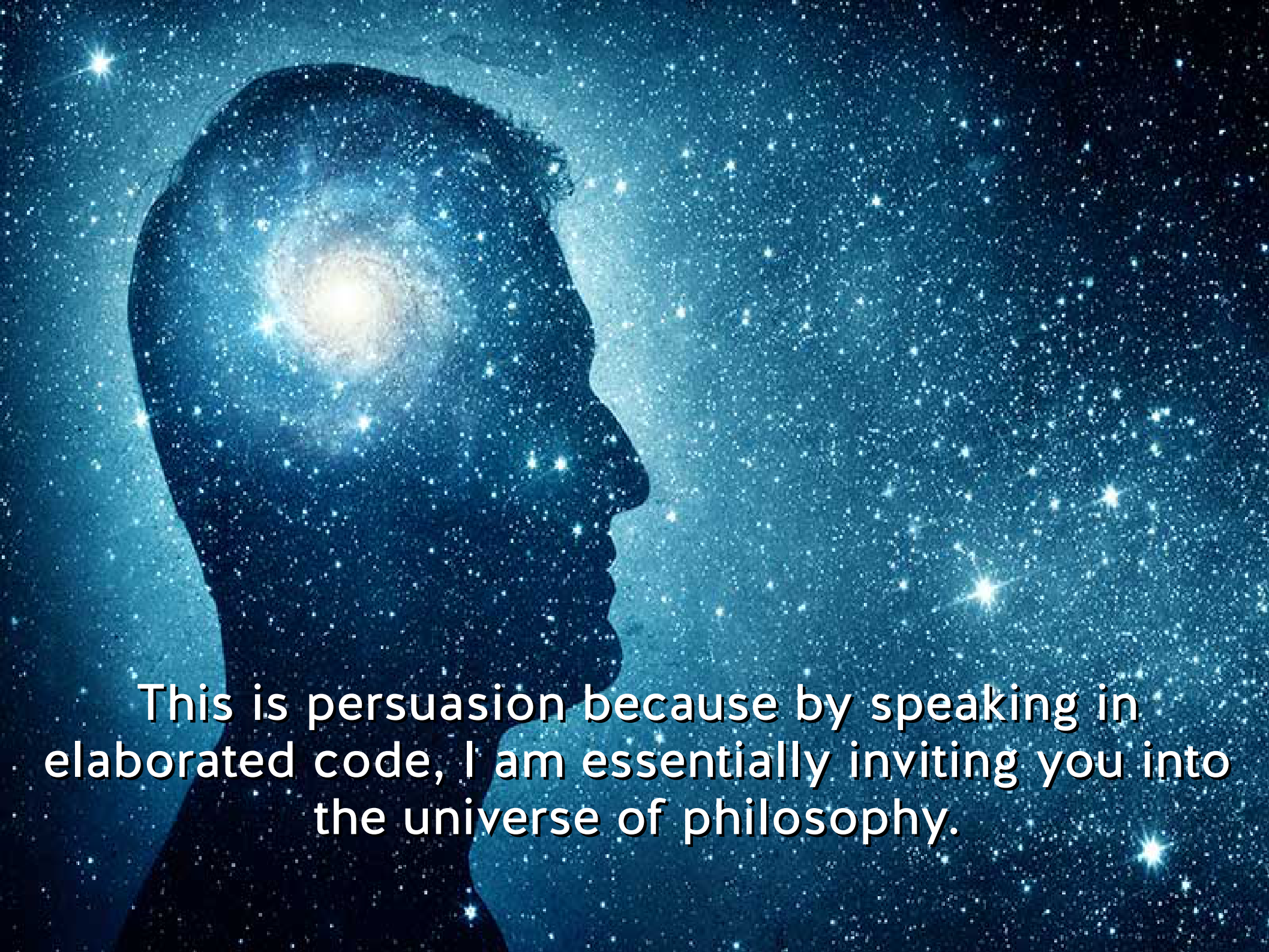
Komsomolskaya Pravda   Turmush.kg   Kloop.kg

Particular Audience

Right now I am discarding the condensed code of philosophers to speak an elaborated code for a universal audience

(non-philosophers)

This is persuasion because by speaking in elaborated code, I am essentially inviting you into the universe of philosophy.

Human beings are neurologically and culturally primed to respond to messaging as essentially invitations of mutual understanding – and even solidarity – into another's reality.

The Key: Authority of Platform

Two Types of Reality

Audiences presume that a message is intended to represent a reality:

Particular Reality

≈ subjective: the perceived or experienced conditions of "our" group

"What is true for *us*"

vs.

Universal Reality

≈ objective: "What is true for *everyone*"

Which reality is expected...
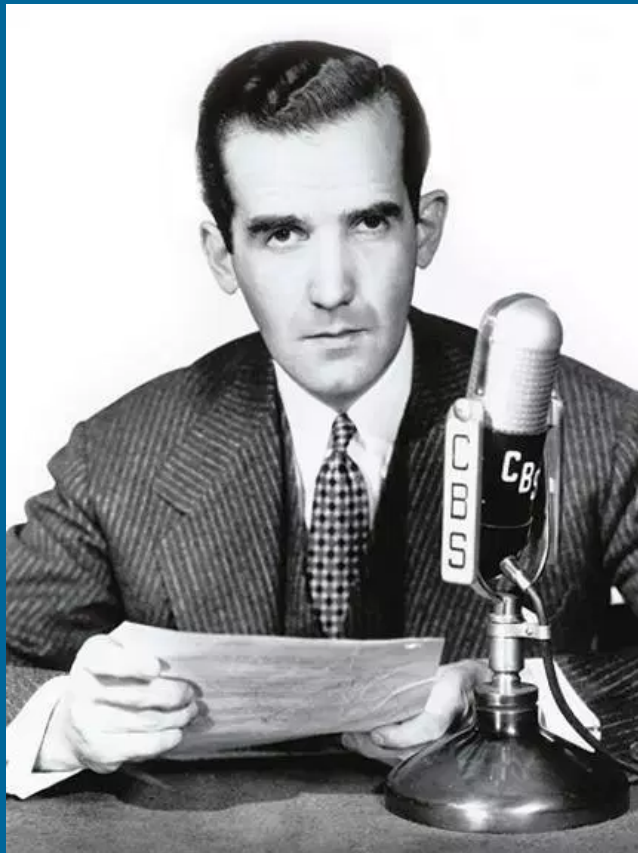
...whether an unexpected reality will be accepted...

...depends upon how the audience has been cultivated:

Particular versus Universal Mindset

Propaganda ≠ Journalism

Journalists (should) seek to enlighten.

Propagandists seek to exploit.

Propagandists want to use the audience relationship "[to] build a new universe of significance which leads to a detachment from [common] reality" (Rocca 2017).

Journalists want to use the audience relationship to build a common reality for everyone.

Kyrgyzstan in Danger of Attacks by Radical Islamists, Say Experts and Officials

Social Transformation and Economic Problems Since 1991 Make Some Susceptible to Radicalization

By Christopher Schwartz

"Islam fills the ideological void left by Communism," says a high-ranking official in Kyrgyzstan's national security agency, commenting on the basis of anonymity due to the controversial nature of the subject. "Communism was an anti-imperialist ideology; it mobilized the population for conflict. So, perhaps it is natural that some of our citizens would apply the logic of Communism to their newfound religion."

According to government statistics and groups that monitor terror, more than 500 people — including 121 women — have left Kyrgyzstan to fight in Syria and Iraq since 2014. Dozens have returned in recent months as losses for Islamic State mount. Their growing presence has caused concern for the government.

Plague of Radical Islamic Violence Will Hit Kyrgyzstan, Military Intervention Needed

Security Officials Terrified of Admitting True Scale of Security Problem

By Maximilien Robespierre

Up until now the cowardice of Central Asian regimes in facing up to the danger in their midsts has not been common knowledge outside a few Western experts. But following the announcement in Bishkek of frightful statistics concerning the number of Kyrgyzstani citizens fighting in Syria — more than 500 people, including 121 women — the threat that the Kyrgyzstani people pose to world security can no longer be covered up. It is time for Western governments to react, diplomatically but militarily if necessary.

CVE Counter-Narratives

"Narrative" (CVE) = two basic categories of interrelated discursive information:
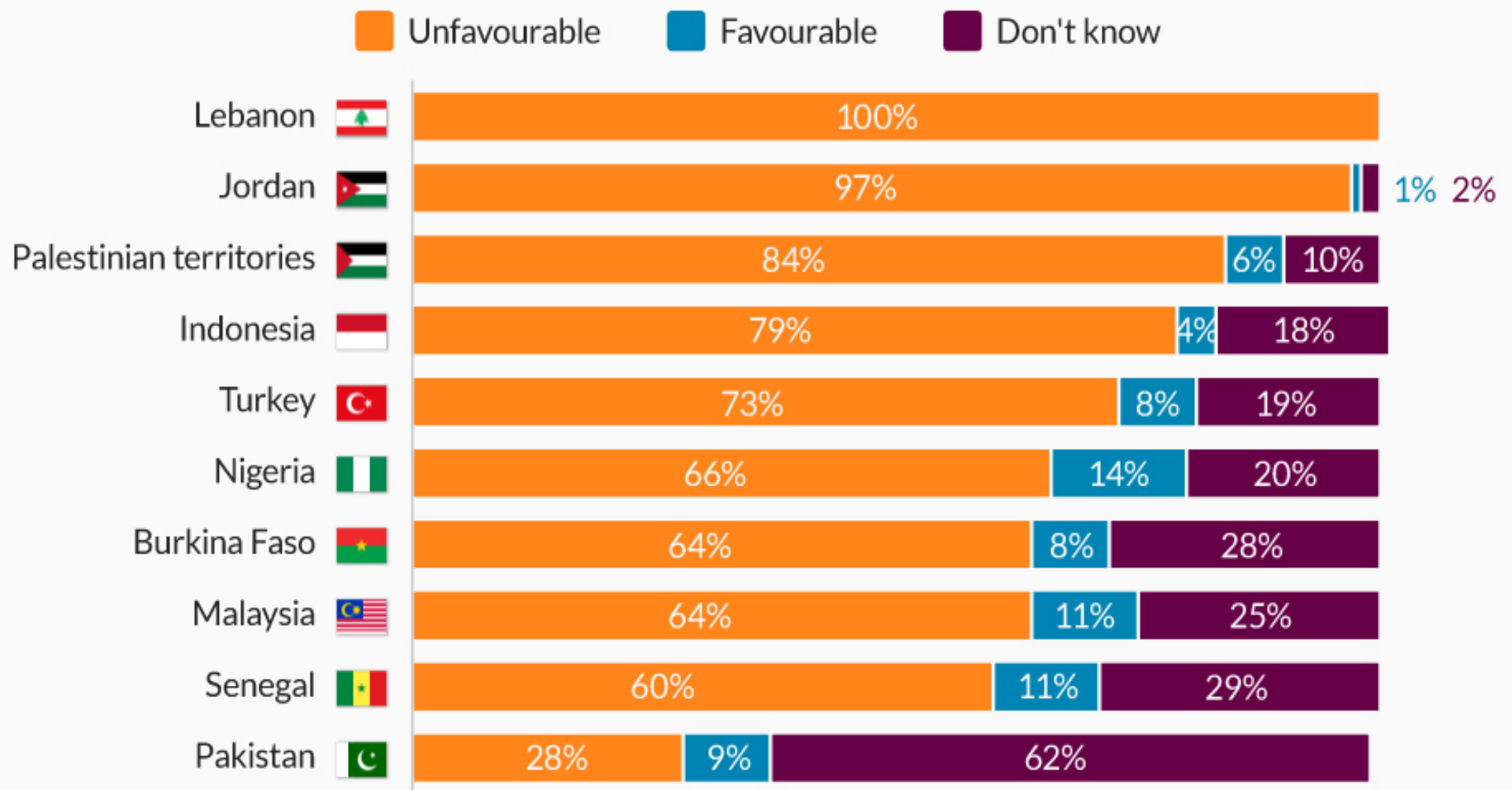
Data

statistics and evidence

public education about propaganda methods

Stories

primarily: biographies

How the Muslim world views Isis

% of inhabitants with an unfavourable/favourable view of Isis in 2015

	Unfavourable	Favourable	Don't know

Country		
Lebanon	100%	
Jordan	97%	1% 2%
Palestinian territories	84%	6% 10%
Indonesia	79%	4% 18%
Turkey	73%	8% 19%
Nigeria	66%	14% 20%
Burkina Faso	64%	8% 28%
Malaysia	64%	11% 25%
Senegal	60%	11% 29%
Pakistan	28%	9% 62%

*May not add up to 100% due to rounding

American Taliban
The Saga of John Walker
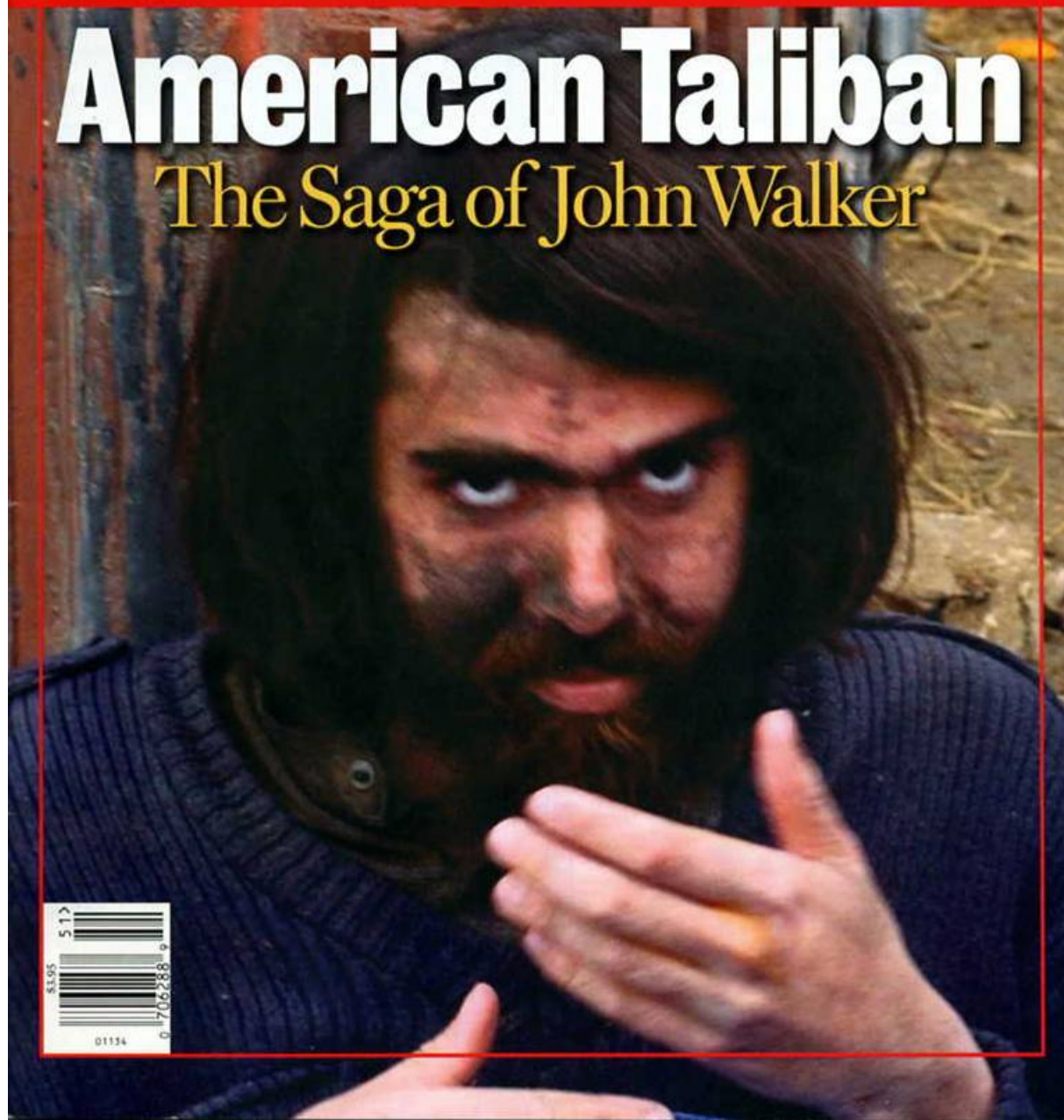
# Hedayah Center's Counter Narrative Library

Daesh Defector Collection:

Stories of ex-Daesh (IS/ISIS/ИГИЛ) fighters "to highlight the weaknesses of the organization and reveal the atrocities of the violence and suffering".

Journalistically, CVE stories:

... serve as a gateway to the "common universe" of non-radicals (you and I) by providing an experiential and emotional foundation for CVE data.

... unveil the distortions and false promises of propagandaists (especially war recruiters).

But content alone is insufficient.
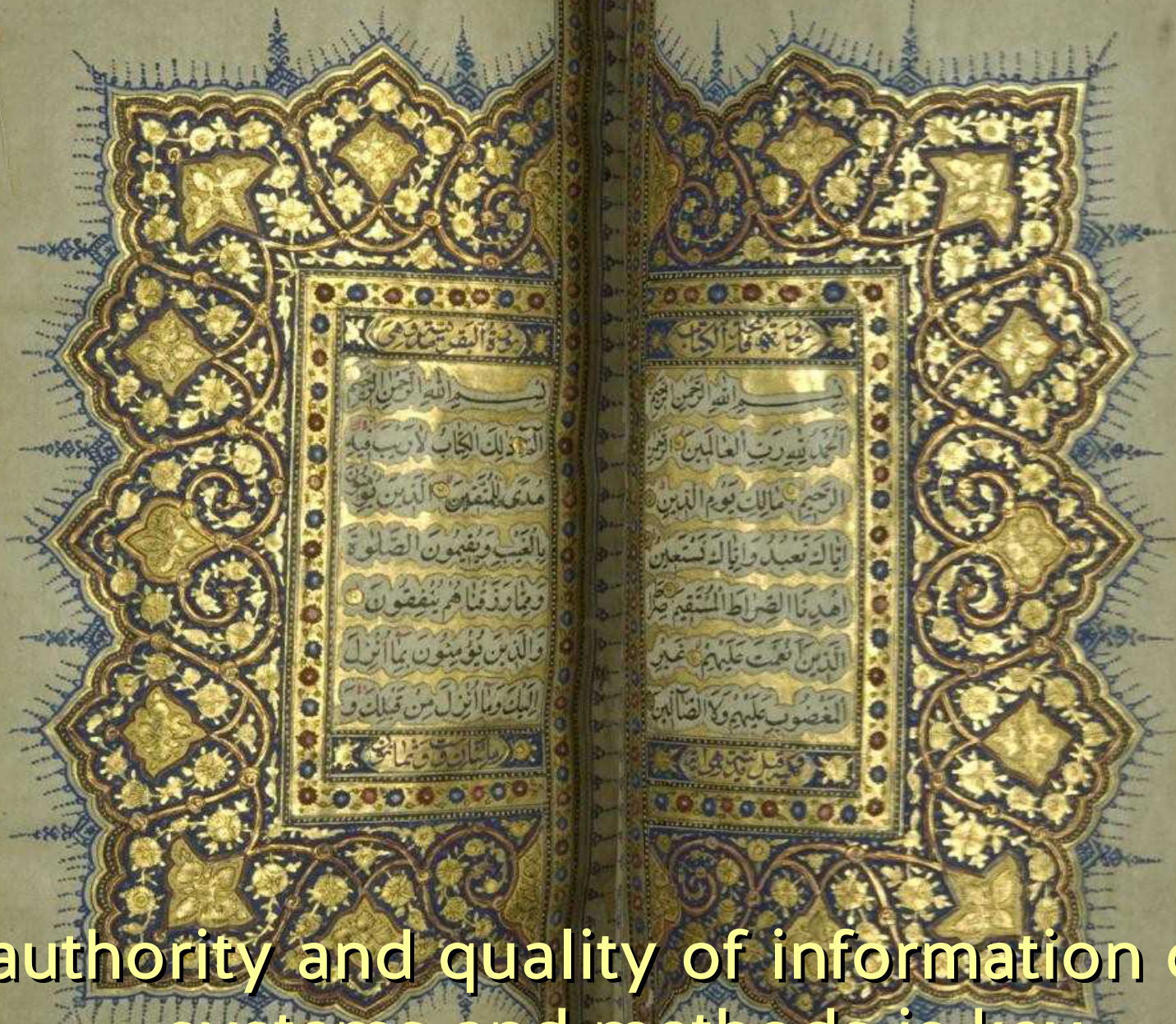
The authority and quality of information delivery systems and methods is key.

This is not about controlling mass media or infiltrating alternative delivery systems.

Rebuild the trust and authority of the messengers (institutions of media, government, religion)

Rebuild the trust and authority of the message
(there is hope and opportunity for normal life)

Thank you! Спасибо! Рахмат сиздерге!