

# I N T E R P O L

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*Table of Contents*

Land Acknowledgement	3
Equity Disclaimers	3
Tech Policy	4
Letter from the Secretary General	5
A Letter from the Dais	6
<b>Topic A: Rise of Online Extremist Groups on Social Media</b>	7
Terms and Definitions	7
Statement of the Problem	8
Current State of the Issue	10
Case Study: Red Pilling into Black Pilling	11
Case Study: Anarchist Extremist Networks	13
Questions to Consider	14
<b>Topic B: Impacts of Consumerism on Labour and Environmental Crimes</b>	16
Terms and Definitions	16
Statement of the Problem	17
Current State of the Issue	18
Case Study: Shein	19
Case Study: Blood Diamonds	20
Case Study: Coca-Cola	22
Questions to Consider	23
Work Cited	25

### *Land Acknowledgement*

The staff at HCMUN XII acknowledges that we are situated on the traditional territories of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and are now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13, signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties, signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

As we prepare to attend and direct conferences such as HCMUN, we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the continuous injustice that affects Indigenous and Inuit peoples. As we gather together, it is important to reflect on the discrimination and the lasting impact our government has had on Indigenous communities across Canada. We take this time to recognize those who continue to share their culture and push back against discrimination, for the good of future generations.

### *Equity Disclaimers*

Dear delegates,

Throughout this committee, delegates may be challenged to engage in complex and heavy discussion on a broad range of important world issues. At Havergal College Model UN, our top priority is to ensure that every delegate feels respected, included, and able to participate fully. In the meantime, they also feel comfortable in the committee they are in. We would like to ask participating delegates to approach all discussions on sensitive topics with a great deal of professionalism, empathy and respect.

The staff here at HCMUN are here to support you, so if you experience or observe behaviour that makes you uncomfortable, or have concerns related to diversity, equity, or inclusion involving a delegate, chair, or staff member, please contact the equity team. You may submit an anonymous report or reach out to a team member directly, whichever you prefer. All reports are taken seriously and will be reviewed promptly. Delegates who engage in inappropriate behaviour may become ineligible for awards and may face further action if necessary. We hope you feel supported throughout the conference and wish you a positive experience!

Sincerely,  
Belle Guo and Mia Liu

### *Tech Policy*

At HCMUNXII, we are committed to creating a fair, focused, and academically honest environment for all delegates. To uphold these standards, delegates are expected to follow the conference's technology guidelines throughout their committee experience.

During committee sessions, technology may only be used during unmoderated caucuses. At these times, delegates are not permitted to access online research, external sources, or any materials beyond what they prepared before the conference. Technology is allowed strictly for the purpose of drafting resolutions and collaborating on written documents. To maintain transparency, all draft resolutions, working papers, and collaborative files must be shared in real time with the Dais. Any document not shared with the Dais may be considered invalid for committee use.

Outside of formal committee time, delegates are free to access technology and conduct research during lunch and scheduled breaks. However, the conference maintains a firm commitment to academic integrity. The use of any AI tools — including generative AI, automated writing tools, or AI-based research systems — is strictly prohibited throughout any point before or during the conference. Plagiarism of any kind is not tolerated, and all work presented in committee must be original and reflect the delegate's own preparation and analysis. Any violations of these expectations will be handled in accordance with HCMUNXII's academic policies.

These guidelines are designed to ensure that committee work remains equitable, that debate is grounded in authentic understanding, and that HCMUNXII upholds the highest standards of integrity and professionalism. Let this policy help guide delegates toward productive collaboration, meaningful diplomacy, and an enriching Model UN experience.

*Letter From the Secretary General*

Dear Delegates and Advisors,

It is our honour and privilege to invite you to the twelfth annual Havergal College Model United Nations Conference. Each year, HCMUN brings together passionate, curious, and globally minded students from across the region, delegates who are eager to question, collaborate, and imagine solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.

At its core, HCMUN is more than a one-day event. It is a space where young people can test ideas, challenge assumptions, and discover the power of diplomacy. Whether you are stepping into your very first committee or returning as an experienced delegate, we hope this conference offers you a chance to push your thinking, embrace unfamiliar perspectives, and develop the confidence to advocate for meaningful change.

Our team has worked hard to create engaging, dynamic committees that encourage creative problem-solving and meaningful dialogue. We invite you to participate with curiosity, empathy, and confidence — your voice will shape the experience of everyone in the room.

Thank you for joining us. We can't wait to see the diplomacy and passion you bring to HCMUN XII!

Sincerely,  
Aurelia He and Marlowe Herman  
Secretary Generals, HCMUNXII

*A Letter from the Dais*

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to HCMUN! Our names are Kasia, Jessica and Stefanie, and we will be your dais for this committee. We are pleased to welcome you to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The topics to be discussed during this conference are nuanced and require careful consideration. We are so excited to see the creative solutions implemented and the interpretation of the role of INTERPOL within these issues.

In this committee, you will debate modern issues impacted by the rapid development of trends and social media. You will need to collaborate with your peers in order to reach solutions that address these issues effectively. This background guide is intended to help you start your research and guide you through the INTERPOL relevance of the topics. However, it is imperative that you supplement this with your own research, especially pertaining to your country's views and perspectives.

We look forward to reading your position papers and learning about the creative solutions that you and your peers will come up with to address some of the modern issues of our time that threaten international safety and security. We hope to see you soon! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to us at [kstanek@havergal.on.ca](mailto:kstanek@havergal.on.ca), [jessicadu315@gmail.com](mailto:jessicadu315@gmail.com), and [Yshi.stef@gmail.com](mailto:Yshi.stef@gmail.com).

Good luck,  
Kasia Stanek, Stefanie Shi, and Jessica Du

## Topic A: Rise of Online Extremist Groups on Social Media

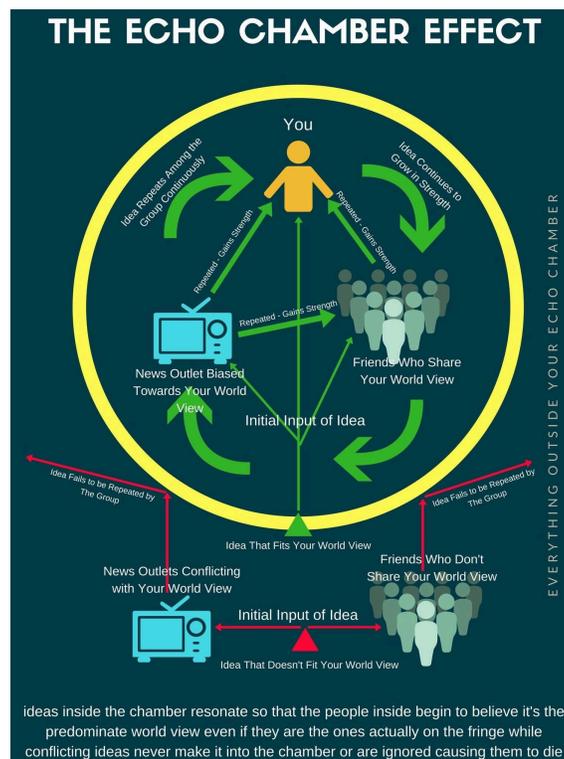
### Terms and Concepts:

Extremist Groups: A group of individuals who promote and advocate for an ideology/opinion based on hatred, violence, prejudice, or intolerance, which aims at rescinding the rights of others or undermining a system of democracy.

Radicalization: The process by which an individual adopts extreme views, whether they are political, social, or religious.

Terrorism: The use of intimidation and violence that is considered unlawful, usually used in pursuit of political aims against a certain segment of the population.

Echo Chambers: An environment (post-prominently intangible ) where an individual only encounters beliefs and ideologies that align with their own; therefore, amplifying their pre-existing perspectives through a confirmation bias, creating a method of thinking where alternative perspectives are not considered.



*Fig. 1: Echo Chamber Effect Diagram<sup>1</sup>*

Hate Speech: Speech that is threatening and derogatory, or writing which was curated based on prejudices of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

Misinformation: False/inaccurate information that is spread without the intention to harm or deceive. The individual spreading the information may believe it to be true even if it is not.

Disinformation: The spreading of false/inaccurate information with the intention of manipulating, misleading and causing harm. The individual understands that the information is untrue and uses it for a purpose. Examples could include financial gain and political impact.

Polarization: When the general public divides into two vastly different groups of opinions.

### **Statement of Problem:**

Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing prevalence of internet access and social media use, online forums promoting both left and right-wing extremist ideologies have grown significantly. Periods of social isolation, economic uncertainty, and increased screen time created conditions in which individuals were more likely to encounter and engage with radical content. Extremist groups have strategically used social media platforms, encrypted messaging services, and online communities to spread propaganda, normalize hateful narratives, and create echo chambers that reinforce extremist beliefs.

These groups deliberately target young people, particularly those under the age of 25<sup>2</sup>, who are often more vulnerable to radicalization due to identity formation, social marginalization, and exposure to online misinformation. Both minors and adults may be recruited to participate in a range of activities, including the creation and distribution of extremist propaganda, recruitment of new members, fundraising, and coordination of offline actions. In more severe cases, individuals radicalized online have been encouraged or inspired to carry out violent acts, either independently or as part of small, loosely connected cells.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clements-Wheeler, Matthew. 2017. "Beware of the Echo Chamber – MidlandsSBM." June 12, 2017. <https://www.midlandssbm.org/2017/06/12/beware-of-the-echo-chamber/>.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police. 2024. Five Eyes Insights – Young People and Violent Extremism: A Call for Collective Action. RCMP.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. 2024. "Online Extremism is a Growing Problem, But What's Being Done About It?" GAO WatchBlog, February 13, 2024.

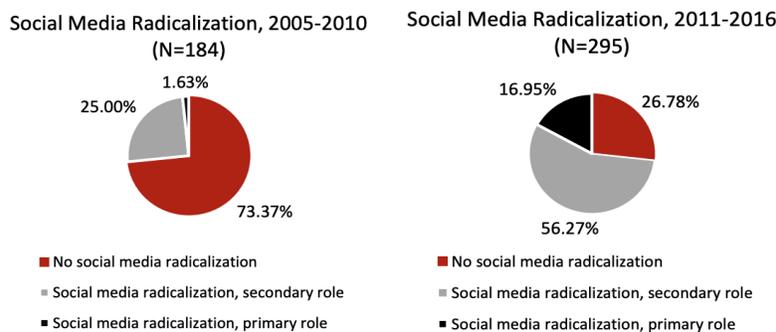


Fig. 2: Social Media Radicalization, comparing 2005-2010, and 2011-2016.<sup>4</sup>

The data attained above is from the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States, or PIRUS Dataset. PIRUS is a database of 1867 far-left, far-right, Islamist, and single-issue extremists who radicalized to violent and non-violent extremism in the USA from 1948 to 2016. As displayed above, from 2005 to 2010, only 49 out of 184 extremists used social media in their radicalization or mobilization endeavours. However, in the more recent years (2011-2016), social media has become a very pervasive method of consuming and creating extremist content and communicating with other extremists all around the globe. More specifically, in the time frame of 2011 to 2016, 216 out of 295 (73.2%).

The growing presence of extremist and violent ideologies online has contributed to rising levels of both physical and digital harm. This includes lone-actor or small-cell attacks, harassment campaigns, hate crimes, and the spread of misinformation and disinformation designed to undermine public trust in institutions. In addition, extremist networks often intersect with other forms of cyber-enabled crime, such as hacking, financial fraud, and the distribution of child sexual abuse material, further increasing risks to vulnerable populations.

Given the relatively recent and rapidly evolving nature of online extremism, existing legal and enforcement frameworks often struggle to respond effectively. New systems, policies, and forms of international cooperation are required to address the cross-border nature of digital radicalization while protecting freedom of expression and human rights. Law enforcement agencies, governments, technology companies, and international organizations must work collaboratively to monitor extremist activity, disrupt recruitment networks, and protect

<sup>4</sup> Jensen, Michael, Patrick James, Gary Lafree, Aaron Safer-Lichtenstein, and Elizabeth Yates. n.d. "The Use of Social Media by United States Extremists." Start National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. Accessed December 27, 2025. [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_PIRUS\\_UseOfSocialMediaByUSExtremists\\_ResearchBrief\\_July2018.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_PIRUS_UseOfSocialMediaByUSExtremists_ResearchBrief_July2018.pdf).

individuals from both the dangers of joining extremist groups and becoming targets of extremist violence.<sup>5</sup>

### **Current State of the Issue:**

Online extremist activity has increased in severity in recent years as extremist content has become more accessible across a wider range of digital platforms. Groups have expanded beyond fringe forums to mainstream platforms with younger audiences, including Telegram, TikTok, Instagram, and X, allowing extremist narratives to spread more rapidly and widely.<sup>4</sup> Content creators have adapted to platform moderation systems by using memes, emojis, coded language, and slang to evade detection, while also shifting toward youth-oriented formats such as short-form videos and visually engaging content.<sup>4</sup> Platform algorithms, which are designed to promote highly engaging or provocative material, often unintentionally amplify extremist content, increasing its reach and normalizing exposure to hate speech and conspiracy-driven narratives.

To further avoid moderation and enforcement, many extremist groups have transitioned to decentralized networks and encrypted messaging applications, which are increasingly used for coordination, recruitment, and propaganda. While some extremist content remains visible on mainstream platforms, encrypted and private spaces allow networks to persist even after public-facing material is removed.<sup>6</sup> This has contributed to the continued spread of extremist ideologies and the difficulty of fully disrupting recruitment pipelines. Hate speech and conspiracy-based extremism have gained increased visibility online, reinforcing echo chambers and accelerating radicalization, particularly among younger users who are heavily active on social media.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Galuzzi, Ottavia, and Arthur Bradley. 2025. "Right- and Left-Wing Violent Extremist Abuse of Digital Technologies in the Global South." International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, October 15, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Fishman, Brian. 2023. "Dual-Use Regulation: Managing Hate and Terrorism Online before and after Section 230 Reform." Brookings. March 14, 2023.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/dual-use-regulation-managing-hate-and-terrorism-online-before-and-after-section-230-reform/>.

<sup>7</sup> Over, Harriet, Carl Bunce, Jonathan Baggaley, and David Zendle. 2025. "Understanding the Influence of Online Misogyny in Schools from the Perspective of Teachers." Edited by Mahdi Zareei. PLOS ONE 20 (2).  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0299339>.

The United Nations has identified online spaces as a key driver of radicalization and recruitment and has developed policies aimed at preventing violent extremism through education, digital literacy, and counter-narratives.<sup>8</sup> UN strategies emphasize cooperation between governments, technology companies, and civil society while maintaining strong human rights protections to avoid censorship and discrimination. These approaches also seek to address root causes such as inequality, marginalization, and misinformation. However, measuring the effectiveness of UN policies remains challenging due to limited data and inconsistent implementation across states.<sup>6</sup> While content removal efforts can reduce visibility, they often fail to dismantle underlying networks, leading critics to argue that current approaches remain largely reactive rather than preventive.<sup>5</sup>

### Case Study #1: Red Pilling into Black Pilling

“You take the blue pill – the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill – you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.” - Morpheus (The Matrix, 1999)



Fig. 3: The red pill and the blue pill from *The Matrix* (1999).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> “Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) | Office of Counter-Terrorism.” 2024. Office of Counter-Terrorism. 2024. <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/en/preventing-violent-extremism>.

<sup>9</sup> Tye, Charlie. 2022. “The Matrix: how conspiracy theorists hijacked the 'red pill' philosophy.” *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/the-matrix-how-conspiracy-theorists-hijacked-the-red-onpill-philosophy-174935>.

The term “Red Pill” originates from the film *The Matrix* (1999), and has emerged as a widespread symbol representing major contemporary secular male supremacist communities mainly hosted on Reddit, in which individuals describe their awakening to a previously hidden supposed reality. Major male supremacist movements, such as the Men’s Rights Activists, PUAs, The Red Pill, and Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), use this term to describe their “awakening” or “realization” that men do not hold systemic power or privilege as opposed to their female counterparts. They collectively awaken to the “truth” that, socially, sexually, and economically, men are at the whims of women’s power and desires, specifically feminists. By targeting young men who often felt left out of or blamed for the feminist movement and radicalizing them, the movement was taken up on a large scale.<sup>10</sup>

Starting in 2016, misogynist communities began to move from the red pill mentality to an increasing “Black Pill” mentality. This more newly established “awakening” adopts the red pill ideology of society being poisoned by female domination, but rejects individual-level attempts to advance the movement. The black pill mentality asserts that only change at a societal level has the chance of advancing the movement. Members of the Black Pill community believe that looks are genetically determined and that women choose romantic partners solely based on physical attraction (“lookism”). Based on this set of beliefs, many young men have considered themselves completely incapable of attracting women sexually, and under the black pill mentality, this is deemed pre-determined. These young men attempt to prove the black pill true through online dating datasets, false interpretations of scientific studies, and their self-conducted “experiments” to prove that women only value physical features. Although some of these individuals still seek out ways to enhance themselves physically, such as working out or plastic surgery, many believe that such efforts are pointless, as these beliefs are a result of society and not of the individual. Members of black pill forums are aware of appearance and sociability strategies that may help them, but choose to reject them as solutions. The philosophy typically only offers two ways to deal with their newly accepted reality. They either accept their fate, or try to change society to benefit them, which is usually deemed potentially achievable through means of mass violence and terrorism, but not politics or other means of change.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia Contributors. n.d. “Red pill and blue pill - Wikipedia.” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Accessed January 7, 2026. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_pill\\_and\\_blue\\_pill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_pill_and_blue_pill).

<sup>11</sup> “From Red Pill to Violence: Misogynist Incels and Male Supremacism.” n.d. Newndividual-level America. Accessed December 27, 2025.

For those who have chosen to accept their fate under the black pill, suicide is unfortunately presented as the inevitable final solution; this behaviour is sometimes even encouraged in black pill communities, redefined as a form of “sacrificial violence” and/or martyrdom.

## **Case Study #2: Anarchist Extremist Networks**

Anarchism is the belief that society should not be governed, have no police, laws, or any other form of authority. Having said belief is perfectly legal, and in fact, the majority of anarchists in the U.S advocate for advancement through non-violent, non-criminal means. However, there is a minority that believes that change can only be achieved through violence and criminal acts, and that is against the law.<sup>12</sup>

Anarchist extremist networks can be traced back to the late 19th century, with many movements that rejected state authority and capitalism.<sup>13</sup> They carried out assassinations and bombings in Europe and North America between the 1880s and 1920s.

However, anarchist extremism re-emerged in the late 20th century through anti-globalization and anti-state protest movements.<sup>14</sup> These networks are typically decentralized, lacking formal leadership structures or hierarchical organization. They operate through loosely connected individuals through online platforms that are used to share ideology, protest tactics and calls for direct action.<sup>15</sup> In particular, some anarchist groups prompt black bloc tactics, which involve anonymity and property destruction during protests. These networks often frame their actions as resistance against oppression or authoritarianism. As a result, their targets commonly

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<https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/misogynist-incels-and-male-supremacism/red-pill-to-black-pill/>

<sup>12</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2010. “Domestic Terrorism Anarchist Extremism: A Primer.” The FBI Archives. [https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2010/november/anarchist\\_111610/anarchist\\_111610](https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2010/november/anarchist_111610/anarchist_111610).

<sup>13</sup> “The Extremist in Historical Perspective: Lessons From the Era of Anarchist Terrorism,” n.d., <https://www.prosocial.world/posts/the-extremist-in-historical-perspective-lessons-from-the-era-of-anarchist-terrorism>.

<sup>14</sup> Seth G. Jones, “The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in the United States,” August 5, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rise-far-right-extremism-united-states>.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Jensen, Patrick James, and Gary LaFree, Safer-Lichtenstein, Yates Aaron, Elizabeth, “The Use of Social Media by United States Extremists,” accessed January 10, 2026, [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_PIRUS\\_UseOfSocialMediaByUSExtremists\\_ResearchBrief\\_July2018.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_PIRUS_UseOfSocialMediaByUSExtremists_ResearchBrief_July2018.pdf).

include symbols of the state, police and large corporations. In recent years, acts linked to anarchist extremism include arson, vandalism and clashes with police.

Recruitment into these movements rarely occurs through formal membership processes but rather occurs through activist spaces. Due to the potential for these groups to escalate into organized violence, security agencies continue to monitor their activities.

In the current digital world, online anarchist extremist groups are expanding their presence on social media platforms such as Telegram, TikTok, Instagram and X. They increasingly rely on memes, short-form videos and visually engaging content to appeal to younger audiences. Platform algorithms can unintentionally amplify extremist material by promoting content that is provocative or highly engaging. To avoid content moderation, many extremist groups have shifted toward decentralist networks and encrypted messaging apps, which are now increasingly used for coordination, recruitment and propaganda.

The United Nations has identified digital spaces as a key driver of extremist recruitment and radicalization. In response, UN policies emphasize preventing violent extremism through education, digital literacy and counter-narratives. UN approaches also aim to address the root causes of extremism, including inequality, marginalization and misinformation. However, measuring the effectiveness of these policies remains challenging due to limited data, inconsistent implementation across member states and the rapidly evolving online platforms. As a result, critics argue that current policies are largely reactive rather than preventive, highlighting the need for more proactive and comprehensive strategies to address online radicalization.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How might marginalized communities be targeted by the effects of confirmation bias that comes with extremist forums?
2. How can the interpol mitigate accusations of censorship when attempting the minimize extremism on online platforms?
3. How might the interpol be able to amend the faults in past UN papers, such as Security Council Resolution 2354 from 2017?

4. Could the conditional nature of the word “terrorism” affect how the committee addresses the issue?
5. Should online platforms be held liable for the behaviour that plays out on their premises?

## **Topic B: Impacts of Consumerism on Labour and Environmental Crimes**

### **Terms and concepts:**

Labour exploitation: The use of unfair wages, unsafe working conditions and denial of rights for workers in global supply chains to cheaply manufacture products.

Supply chains: A series of international interconnected systems managing goods and services from origin to consumer.

Demand: The quantity of a good or service that consumers are both willing and able to buy at various prices during a specific time period.

Demand Theory: The idea that as prices rise, the quantity demanded falls, and vice versa, assuming other factors remain constant.

Outsourcing: The practice where a company hires an external third-party provider to perform tasks, create goods, or deliver services that were previously done internally, primarily to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and focus on core business activities by leveraging specialized expertise or lower labour costs, often involving international trade and impacting labour markets.

Dependency theory: The idea that more developed countries are dependent on less developed countries to outsource labour for cheaper products to continue the lifestyle of developed countries

Profit maximization: The need for companies to produce a product for the lowest possible price and sell it for the highest possible price.

Externalities: The costs or benefits of economic activity that are not reflected in market prices. For fast fashion, negative externalities include exploitation of workers, environmental pollution and the generation of textile waste.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR): The concept of businesses being socially responsible and ethical. These initiatives emerged as a response to the growing awareness of labour exploitation.

Environmental crimes: Includes but is not limited to: improper collection, transport, recovery or disposal of waste; collection, transport, recovery or disposal of waste; killing, destruction, possession or trade of protected wild animal or plant species; production, importation, exportation, marketing or use of ozone-depleting substances.

## **Statement of Problem:**

Emerging in the 20th century, consumerism has historically driven economic growth and has long since been treated by governments and corporations as a key indicator of economic success. However, there is growing evidence that labour inequalities alongside environmental pressures are embedded within global supply chains.<sup>16</sup> Rising consumer demands place intense pressure on producers to reduce costs and increase output, often by shifting production to regions with weaker labour protections. This dynamic has contributed to widespread labour exploitation, including forced labour, unsafe working conditions, excessive hours and wage theft, many of which fall under labour crimes connected to transnational organized networks. Addressing these abuses aligns directly with INTERPOL's mandate to combat cross-border crime such as human trafficking, forced labour and supply chain-related exploitation.<sup>17</sup>

Regulatory efforts have struggled to keep pace with the scale of the problem. In the United Kingdom, the 2015 Modern Slavery Act requires large companies to report on measures taken to address modern slavery in their supply chain, yet it does not compel firms to implement meaningful preventative actions.<sup>18</sup> As a result, approximately 40 percent of businesses are non-compliant, demonstrating how transparency without enforcement allows exploitation to persist.<sup>13</sup> Increased consumer demand further exacerbates these conditions by incentivizing companies to prioritize speed and profit over worker safety and rights, normalizing violations as a part of routine production practices.

Consumerism-driven productions also contribute to environmental crime, as companies overexploit natural resources and disregard environmental protections to meet demand. Practices such as illegal deforestation, pollution and improper waste disposal are often treated as acceptable business practices rather than criminal acts, particularly in regions with limited enforcement capacity<sup>19</sup>. These environmental harms are frequently intertwined with labour

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<sup>16</sup> Sustainability Directory. 2025. "How Does Consumerism Impact Labor Exploitation? → Question." Fashion → Sustainability Directory. January 26, 2025.

<https://fashion.sustainability-directory.com/question/how-does-consumerism-impact-labor-exploitation/>.

<sup>17</sup> "Focus: Human Trafficking: The Crime That Turns People into Illegal Merchandise." 2020. Interpol.int. 2020. <https://www.interpol.int/fr/Ressources/INTERPOL-Spotlight/Spotlight-Issue-3-Defending-human-dignity/Focus-Human-trafficking-the-crime-that-turns-people-into-illegal-merchandise>.

<sup>18</sup> Anti-Slavery International. 2017. "Slavery in Supply Chains ." Anti-Slavery International. 2017. <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-in-global-supply-chains/>.

<sup>19</sup> Europol. 2022. "Environmental Crime." Europol. 2022. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas/environmental-crime>.

exploitation, as vulnerable workers are employed in hazardous conditions within degraded ecosystems. Together, these realities highlight the need for stronger international cooperation, where organizations like INTERPOL support investigations, intelligence sharing and enforcement against labour and environmental crimes embedded within global consumer supply chains.<sup>14</sup>

### **Current State of the Issue:**

In the current global context, consumerism continues to drive overproduction, intensifying resource extraction and accelerating environmental degradation. High consumer demand pressures industries to prioritize speed and low costs, often undermining safe working conditions and fair labour practices.<sup>20</sup> Workers within global supply chains, particularly in fast fashion and electronics manufacturing, commonly face low wages, excessive working hours, and weak labour protections. These sectors also contribute significantly to waste generation, pollution, and carbon emissions, exacerbating plastic pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change.

These environmental and labour-related harms are frequently displaced to low-income countries, where regulatory oversight is limited, and enforcement mechanisms are weak. For INTERPOL, this presents a pressing transnational challenge, as environmental crimes, labour exploitation, and illegal waste trade often operate across borders through complex and opaque supply chains.<sup>12</sup> The United Nations identifies unsustainable consumption as a major barrier to sustainable development, highlighting the need for international coordination to address crimes and abuses linked to global production networks.<sup>21</sup>

In response, the UN has advanced Sustainable Development Goal 12, which promotes responsible consumption and production through stronger supply chain regulation, protection of worker rights, and increased corporate transparency.<sup>17</sup> UN policies emphasize consumer education and corporate responsibility as tools to reduce exploitation and environmental harm. However, policy effectiveness remains uneven due to voluntary compliance and weak

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<sup>20</sup> “Supplier Risk Management Solutions | Moody’s.” 2025. Moodys.com. 2025.

<https://www.moody.com/web/en/us/solutions/compliance-third-party-risk/supplier-risk.html>.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations. 2025. “Goal 12: Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns.” United Nations. 2025. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>.

enforcement in many states.<sup>12</sup> While some countries have demonstrated progress in sustainability reporting and labour standards, UN impact remains minimal and global consumption levels remain high, limiting overall impact and reinforcing the relevance of INTERPOL's role in supporting cross-border cooperation and enforcement.

### **Case Study #1: Shein**

Shien is a fast-fashion online clothing shop that has become increasingly popular in recent years. Its uniquely low prices, streamlined manufacturing process and strategic marketing have contributed to its massive growth, particularly among younger consumers. It has revolutionized the fashion industry by offering uniquely low prices and a rapid release of new products each week. Shein offers as many as 600,000 items for sale at any given time, each with a price of around \$10. Between July and December 2021, Shein added between 2000 and 10000 styles to its app daily. Shien's rise in popularity has gone hand in hand with the growth of social media, with many hauls appearing on various platforms, including Instagram and TikTok. Shein hauls have become an integral part of the consumption of clothing trends in online spaces and allow consumers to feel more autonomy due to incredibly low prices, increasing accessibility to fashion and trends. However, behind these unusually low prices and their large success, lie labour exploitation and unethical production practices.



*Fig. 4: Inside a Shein Sweatshop in Guangzhou.* <sup>22</sup>

Many workers producing clothing for Shein in Guangzhou work around 16+ hours per day and 75+ hours per week, which greatly violates Chinese labour laws that limit the workweek to 44 hours.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, workers are paid 5 cents per piece made, which was found to be below the living wage. This forces workers to work excessively overtime to be able to support themselves and their families.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, Shein has previously been admitted to child labour within its supply chain, despite publicly claiming to have ethical standards.<sup>25</sup>

However, consumers also play a part in this. The low prices encourage consumers to see clothing as disposable, leading them to buy excessive amounts that end up getting thrown away after just a few uses.<sup>26</sup> Although this enables the lower-income consumers to access fashion, wealthier individuals and individuals end up buying huge quantities of clothing simply because they can. This promotes large-scale overconsumption and has devastating effects on local environments and communities. Although Shein has made goals to reduce its CO2 emissions by 25% by 2030 and has net zero emissions by 2050, it has doubled their emissions between 2022 and 2023, showing no signs of slowing down or reducing production and emissions. They have not taken sufficient action to meet the UN target to combat climate change, although it claims that its model “minimizes overproduction” and produces “less waste” while keeping prices low.

## **Case Study #2: Blood Diamonds**

There has been a long history of demand and reverence for diamonds, this has driven countries with natural diamond resources to prioritize extraction for global markets, often at the expense of labor protections, environmental sustainability, and community safety, reinforcing cycles of exploitation in which artisanal and child miners are forced into dangerous working

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<sup>22</sup> Thibault, Harold. 2025. “Inside Shein's sweatshops in Guangzhou: 'It's an extreme capitalist race.'” Le Monde. [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2025/05/11/inside-shein-s-sweatshops-in-guangzhou-it-s-an-extreme-capitalist-race\\_6741151\\_19.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2025/05/11/inside-shein-s-sweatshops-in-guangzhou-it-s-an-extreme-capitalist-race_6741151_19.html).

<sup>23</sup> Laura Bicker, “Shein: Inside the Chinese factories fuelling the company’s success,” January 12, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdrylgvr77jo>.

<sup>24</sup> Bicker, “Shein: Inside the Chinese Factories Fuelling the Company’s Success.”

<sup>25</sup> Bicker, “Shein: Inside the Chinese Factories Fuelling the Company’s Success.”

<sup>26</sup> Yasmina Silva, “The fast fashion model: why the problem goes beyond Shein | Anti-Slavery International,” Anti-Slavery International, April 15, 2025, <https://www.antislavery.org/latest/shein-fast-fashion-problem/>.

conditions while profits flow to armed groups, state actors, and international intermediaries rather than local populations.<sup>27</sup> With over 65% of the world's diamonds concentrated in the continent's countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), and Zimbabwe, frequently mined in regions of conflict. In these areas, armed groups use revenues from gemstone sales to finance weapons, recruit fighters, and prolong instability, linking consumer purchases in global markets directly to violence on the ground.<sup>28</sup>



*Fig. 5: Congolese miners working one of the thousands of artisanal mines that cover the country<sup>29</sup>*

Despite increased international attention and the visibility brought by social media, exploitative practices remain widespread. An estimated one million artisanal miners in the DRC rely on hand-dug mining as their primary source of income, often selling diamonds at extremely low prices to intermediaries who control access to markets.<sup>30</sup> These conditions trap families in poverty and compel children to work in mines to support household survival. Hundreds of miners die each year in tunnel collapses, accidents that are rarely reported due to their frequency and the absence of effective oversight or accountability mechanisms.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Global Witness, "The Truth About Diamonds," Global Witness, accessed 2026.

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Diamond Trade Still Fuels Human Suffering," May 10, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Baker, Aryn. 2019. "Blood Diamonds." TIME.com. TIME. 2019. <https://time.com/blood-diamonds/>.

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Diamonds in the Rough: Human Rights Abuses in the Marange Diamond Fields of Zimbabwe* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009).

International efforts to address these abuses, most notably through the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, have achieved limited success in reducing the proportion of diamonds traded illegally. While the scheme has lowered the global share of conflict diamonds, its narrow definition, which excludes state-perpetrated violence, has allowed severe human rights violations to persist outside its regulatory scope.<sup>12</sup> The 2008 seizure of diamond fields by the Zimbabwean military, accompanied by the killing of more than 200 miners, illustrates how international frameworks have failed to fully protect workers when abuses are committed by state forces rather than rebel groups.<sup>11</sup>

At the individual and community level, the impacts of overconsumption-driven diamond demand extend beyond immediate physical danger. Communities experience long-term environmental degradation from unregulated mining, limited access to education and healthcare, and sustained economic dependence on informal labour. As consumer markets continue to value diamonds as symbols of wealth and status, the human cost remains largely invisible, underscoring the need for stronger international enforcement, broader definitions of conflict-related harm, and greater consumer awareness of the consequences embedded within global supply chains.<sup>10</sup>

### **Case Study #3: Coca-Cola**

Coca-Cola, also known as Coke, is one of the most recognized soft drinks in the world. With more than 500 brands, Coca-Cola is available in more than 200 countries, making it one of the largest corporations in the United States.<sup>31</sup>

Its business model relies on high consumer demand, which drives large-scale production and resource extraction. Their social media marketing encourages frequent consumption by creating viral campaigns and lifestyle branding. Influencers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok often partner with Coca-Cola to promote products as part of trends, further increasing demand. With this demand comes massive environmental concerns, including plastic pollution and water depletion.

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<sup>31</sup> “The Coca-Cola Company | History, Products, & Facts | Britannica Money,” Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/money/The-Coca-Cola-Company>.

Coca-Cola is the world's largest producer of single-use plastic bottles, selling more than 100 billion single-use plastic bottles each year, which contributes significantly to global plastic pollution.<sup>32</sup> Much of Coca-Cola's plastic waste ends up in landfills, waterways, and oceans, harming wildlife and ecosystems. They break down into microplastics that contaminate soil, water, and food chains. Furthermore, the single-use plastics not only harm the ocean and wildlife, but also directly connect to fossil fuels through their production.<sup>33</sup> Extracting and processing the oil needed to make these plastics contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, which have significant environmental impacts, such as global warming and rising sea levels.

Coca-Cola's bottling process is also highly water-intensive and drains local freshwater supplies. This significantly impacts regions that have scarce water, such as India. In Plachimada, India, Coca-Cola's groundwater extraction was linked to water shortages for local communities. Residents near bottling plants have reported reduced access to clean drinking water and impacts on agriculture. Coca-Cola has faced criticism for prioritizing commercial water use over community needs in water-stressed regions. Coca-Cola has introduced water replenishment and recycling programs, but critics argue these do not fully offset local damage. Coca-Cola's supply chain includes bottling plants where workers have raised concerns about wages, job security, and labour rights. Past allegations in countries such as Colombia linked Coca-Cola bottlers to anti-union violence, drawing international scrutiny. Consumer demand for low-cost beverages reinforces production practices that shift environmental and social costs onto vulnerable communities.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. How can INTERPOL, as a non-governmental entity, encourage the enforcement of international labour standards if it may be detrimental to manufacturing companies?
2. In what ways can consumers be informed about the impact of their choices on labour and environmental crimes?

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<sup>32</sup> Aden Miles Morunga, "Unbottling the Truth: Coca Cola's Role in Plastic Pollution," Greenpeace Aotearoa, July 31, 2025, <https://www.greenpeace.org/aotearoa/story/unbottling-the-truth-coca-colas-role-in-plastic-pollution/>.

<sup>33</sup> Morunga, "Unbottling the Truth: Coca Cola's Role in Plastic Pollution."

3. How can countries transition from a labour-crime-based economy to an economy that is based on ethical production?
4. How might INTERPOL amend past UN papers that have fallen short of the intended goal?
5. How can CSRs be effectively implemented while avoiding the increase of greenwashing?

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