

Forum: General Assembly 1

Issue: Measures to Limit the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes

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Introduction

Terrorism has been a gruesome issue that has dawned the world since the 1st century with the Sicarii Zealots and has continued to be an issue in the current society. As technology has evolved the world has become a closer place, enabling accessibility to immense amounts of data and information with a touch and allowing for distance to not be a limiting factor for immediate communication. However, such power can be manipulated to perform illicit activities.

The internet serves as platform for terrorist groups to host recruitment, display propaganda and pose public threats. New America has estimated and identified around 129 US militants who have attempted to join terrorist organizations in Syria such as ISIS. Most cases were not in-person recruitments, but most citizens had developed such views through encrypted –messaging platforms to seek guidance from members of ISIS in the Middle East. From this it is clear to see that the impact of the internet – social media in particular – on terrorism and its spread.

Therefore, if the issue of terrorism is to be contained then monitoring their activity on the internet and providing adequate solutions to the issue can ensure that the spread of its activity on a global scale can be minimized.

Definition of Key Terms

Terrorism

Illegal use of violence to promote political beliefs and aims, this can also be done through public intimidation

Rebel group

A group of people with similar political or social mindset that opposes the regulated norms of social life. Their thoughts are promoted through violence and terror and they strive for establishing governmental control of nations or areas in order to implement such ideology.

Propaganda

Information that is publicly displayed and may or may not be completely true. Their objective is to brainwash viewers through their biased and one-dimensional perspective of the situation.

Cyber Terrorism

The trigger of fear and discomfort in a widespread of nations, through the use of technology and the internet, in order to promote specific political beliefs.

The Dark Web

Is a section of the World Wide Web that can only be accessed through the use of special software. Once users gain access their identity is anonymous and untraceable. Website operators also remain anonymous.

Encryption

Prevent viewing of unauthorized information. This can be done through changing code in some data, however some social media platforms provide such secrecy to users to disable their access to their content.

Terrorism

Illegal use of violence to promote political beliefs and aims, this can also be done through public intimidation

Background Information

The internet has enabled terrorist groups to establish an international name for them and also remain relatively concealed from the public eye. This is through the ability of manipulating the dark web. United Kingdom's Home Secretary agrees that governments need access to such encrypted services to ensure safety. Even though many controversial posts are displayed on the open-web, in dept matters that ultimately determine the fate of many wrongly-influenced individual recruits take place on encrypted messaging platforms.

Stated below are some ways that Terrorist organizations have manipulated the internet for illicit purposes.

Internet Usage for Recruitment Purposes

The internet catalyses the speed of terrorism recruitment, mainly through its one-dimensional view of issues at hand. With the aid of social media platforms such twitter Groups such as the Islamic

state are able to radicalize many internationals- especially youths in Western nations. This can be seen through the 129 militants who were identified of attempt to join the opposing group.

Following London's terror attack evidence confirmed that the person of interest had made contacts with an unknown person. The contents of the conversation remain unknown as it had taken place in an encrypted platform.

Their recruits have been able to set of media outlets everywhere. Especially, through Western influence such as British Muslim "Jihadi John". His rise in prominence through him uploaded execution of other Westerners, only reinforces the damage that such brainwashing is leading to.

Recruitment has said to follow a textbook approach with similarities in the Islamic States and Al-Qaeda, resembling cat fishing methods.

Financial Aid

Setting aside their political difference, terrorist groups have made use of the internet in order to maintain, financially, their movement. Some of their methods of developing a stable budget is not even through donations from members and outreaching parties, but through usually money laundering methods such as gambling. Reports from the telegraph in 2009, reported a security analysis that shows that many rebel groups purposefully recruit youngsters through their experience with such acts and place them on security protected area in order to have an input of money.

In addition to this, there are also many ways that their publicity enables a steady income. For example, the terrorist group al-Qaeda had previously initiated an online university called the "University of Jihad". Similar to most higher-education programs, they required an annual fee and extra expenses. These fees help to generate a large profit for the group and may have even enabled a door for conducting future recruitment as it they had a financial incentive.

Media-Spread Propaganda

Rebel groups have promoted their campaign several times in order to get media recognition and support. However, propaganda presented through social media may be the only view presented to adolescent users as their exposure to news broadcasting is significantly less in comparison to adults. Hence, this leads to brain-washing youth into submission to their campaign. Such examples are seen through the constant forms of propaganda posters and images.

This sense of community that they create is what increases their dominance.

Influence on Youth

As seen before, many children like to present themselves on social media and this can make them a clear target for many targeting groups. Apart from the fact that they increase their chances of getting recruited, rebel groups have developed alternative ways to instigate a more passionate following.

For example, the use of biased propaganda can paint a wrong dominant narrative into the brains of the youth. In fact, there is no way of contradicting any statement made as governments don't periodically publish factual or nation support images or clips and hence this leads to our youth following the wrong path.

This unfiltered atmosphere that is also found in social media platforms exposes children (who in some cases aren't necessarily eligible for the use of such sites), to such content. Companies find it hard to distinguish between actual jihad messages and oriented lies that de promote member states governments.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

The Islamic State has caused a significant amount of damage since its prominence in social media. Especially to the youth of twitter, they have inspired many. They follow similar plot when recruiting to that of a stalker with the use of friendship to first lure specimens into an encrypted area. Here any information will be passed on and recruitment procedures are taken place.

ISIS especially popularized their name through the use of twitter. Their updates and visually stimulating images have an effect on users and also use their modernized ideas to lure recruits. New America estimates 129 United States Militants attempted to leave the nation in hopes of physically joining the group.

To make matters worse, their social dominance only encourages others to use violence to perform hate crimes and enable their voices to be heard which is only makes matters worse. An example of this is 2014-2015 where a man under the name "Jihadi John" had starred in many public beheadings of innocent civilians. This clearly shows the influence that social media can have on people when wrong acts are displayed.

Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda displayed one of the earliest forms of utilization of the web in order to manipulate and lure recruits and followers into their support group. Their use of the internet through setting up the online "University of Jihad" has not only been a means of brainwashing students into the wrong ideology about

Islam but, but also generated an immense profit through the fees. Therefore, this displayed a gross effect on international supporters and enabled them to open their doors for many more.

Furthermore, public display ultimately affects the major age group that utilizes online platforms, that is: teenagers and the youth. Al-Qaeda took this into account and managed to put good use to the many minors that instilled themselves to the group. Their maneuvering was ultimately a useful asset in enabling them to increase the group's income. Acts such as gambling, were a useful asset to establishing a financial income, and with youthful minds conducting the act, their perspective was good when drawing the odds in their favor.

United States of America

The United States of America has been to subjects acts of social violence presented by terrorist organizations. For example, after the San Bernardino shooting in December 2012, Barack Obama had addressed the situation as an extreme case of radicalization and highlighted the prominence of social media handles of terrorist groups. This crucially showed citizens of the on spread on terrorism on a multi-national level.

However, this situation is not seen as that severe in the eyes of the nation in recent time, as Trump administration has not yet used its \$80 million trust fund to combat terrorist propaganda.

Many main stream companies in Silicon Valley, California, have taken the issue into account- in fact; Facebook recruited 3000 more employees to take down such violent imagery from being displayed on their site.

United Kingdom

United Kingdom has also been subject to some of the after effects that have evolved from terrorism's influence all across the world. Most notably, the 2017 London Bridge Terror Attack in which 7 people were killed and 12 have been severely injured. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom had called for the drafting of a new international agreement that "deprive the extremists of their safe spaces online".

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- 2010 Convention on the suppression of Unlawful Acts Relating to International Civil Aviation
- Council of Europe Convention on Cyber crime
- 2000 United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Most recently President Trump had suggested cutting off the internet in order to simply eradicate the idea of terrorists gaining a multi-national spread. In assumption, that his statement meant to close the dark web- there are many issues that are generated with feeling the idea. For starters, the idea of ensuring that all perspectives of the deep web is eradicated is absolutely impossible and even if done so, still leaves the main world wide web susceptible of more influence from terrorist groups to strike their propaganda and threats.

Following the London Bridge Terror Attack in 2017 Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May instigated that a means through which entering the Dark Web is made significantly harder. This is useful; whether or not a terrorist group is able to still gain access to such a site is not as significant as ensuring a barrier between the common man and the dark web is created. Ensuring this can help segregate the public and its youth from gaining direct influence through chat rooms and encrypted conversations. However, there is still the issue of constantly having to stay one step ahead- as similar to bacterial resistance, a hacker will develop its skills with the progression of the firewall or program set up to disconnect data transfers between the two devices. Hence, this could suggest why the program didn't work

Lastly, during 2016 Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, had shown initiated the Investigatory Powers Act. The act registered commonly visited websites of its users and this browsing history can be accessed by police officials without a warrant. This is useful in ensuring that during investigations of people susceptible to political brainwashing can be tracked down and the source of such recruitment can be narrowed further down. However, many people will not be happy with the idea that their online footprints are being recorded and if anything can affect data collection for the act negatively.

Possible Solutions

In order to contain the issue of terrorism as a whole, it is vital that we prevent its spread across the world. Therefore, through initializing overall safety and security can enable a more stable environment for people to utilize and not manipulate.

Furthermore, many guideline need to be produced (or maybe even existing ones altered) in order to make them less lenient than those that have enable terrorist to bend for their own purposes and intentions. An example of this is through governmental access to encrypted information. By specifying details on when expansions or warrants may be granted is useful for extinction the issue of terrorist making contact with younger children.

A means for denying access to internet to those who use it political rebellion needs to be in place. This can contain the situation. However, this may seem to be quite unrealistic in terms of implementation. Through simply cutting connection with unknown sites and feed, many can escape their brainwashing tactics. Therefore, users- especially the youth- need to be educated on e-safety or safety regulations need to be introduced. These can be both physical and digital monetization.

Some believe to balance out the bias that is being explicitly posted online by rebel groups; governments should discredit their propaganda through publication of a better-rounded approach towards an issue. These messages should be public and present a case purely based on facts or can even be messages on the government's aim to promote peace.

In addition to all of this, developed media filtration needs to be implemented. Currently there are many possible ways in which photoDNA can detect generic issues such as child pornography. However, things such as pro-terrorist posters and so forth, are much more harder for detecting automatically and more time consuming for manual check-ups.

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