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How Social Media Is Used By the Terrorists for Recruitment

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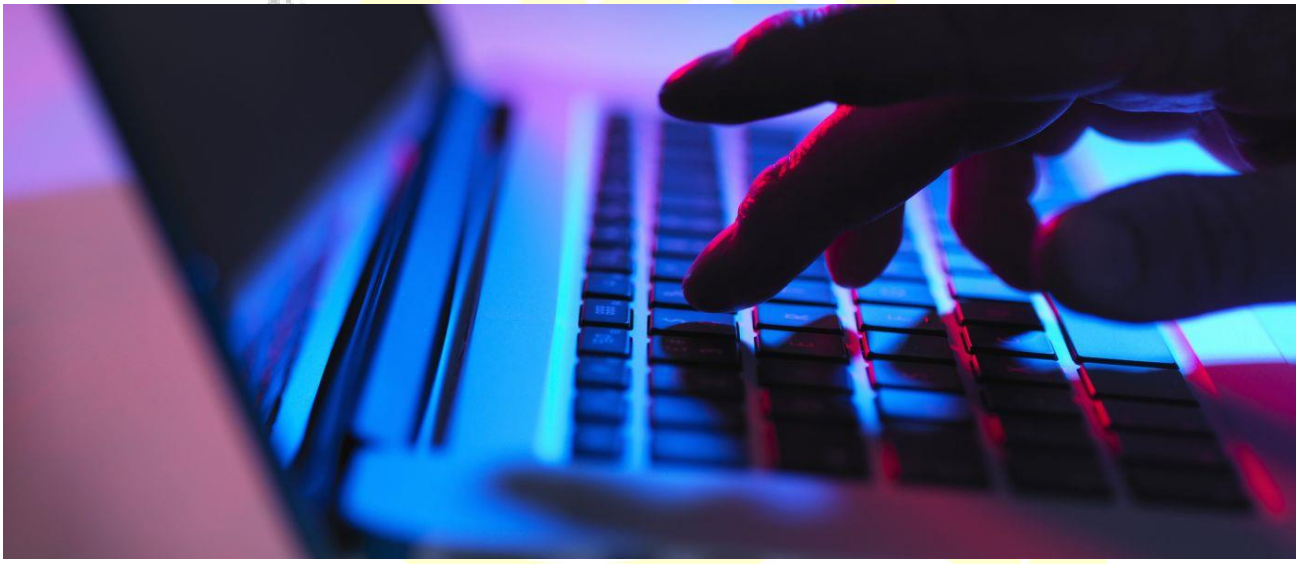

Globalization has transformed and revolutionized the entire world. It has provided fundamental imperative for integration of economy, politics and culture through the idea of "transnationalism". The combinatorial evolution of technology revamped the process dynamics of communication and information. The conventional form of media (books, television, magazines) is overtaken by the internet, predominantly social media. This impetus sufficed the necessity of

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transformation in international political system through replicating the notions of diplomatic affairs, conventional warfare and conflict.

Rhetorically, terrorism and violence are embodied in human willingness of using violence to gain interests and to affect political system. However the emergence of non-state terrorist actors brought a pragmatic shift in mode of terrorism and violence. Presently, the Non-State terrorist actors have adopted social media tools to peruse their agendas. Although, this is a new phenomenon but the usage of social media by the terrorist actors have become prominent and further developed facets of the recruitment strategies. Those groups are now accessing a larger number of people by persuading their ideology online through social media and internet, where naïve minds are exposed.

Broadly, terrorist groups use the internet for two different reasons; to spread propaganda and for communication purposes. Both the reasons work unanimously as social media has characteristically become a tool for radicalization. Moreover, recruiters attain their objectives through the communication of propaganda and manipulation techniques. Different social media applications such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Flickr are excessively used to recruit new members and raise funds for terrorist activities .The purpose of promoting their ideology through social media is to fascinate more people to their cause. Initially, Al-Qaeda was the first non-state actor

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which used the social media to expand their sphere of influence. However, ISIS predominantly transformed the notion of terrorism by excessive use of social media.[1]

Arguably, how the process of radicalization occurs and what are the consequential factors which intends or fascinates the individuals? Despite knowing the agendas, motives and consequences of affiliation with such lethal terrorist organizations and groups, the common prejudice is that, radicalized individuals are 'gullible' and are they not devoted Muslims. Mostly, uneducated and socially deprived persons are caught up in online propaganda through social media. However this is sceptical, the demographics diverge broadly, because radicalization occurs in all the socio-economic classes. Numerically, around 30 thousand people were recruited in the ISIS almost from 100 countries around the world and 3400 hundred people were inducted from western states, including the United States, United Kingdom and other developed European states[2].

In the context of Pakistan, the process of radicalization is a pre-requisite for the recruiters. Social media is widely used to provoke fascinations in the general masses of Pakistan and indoctrination by using social media tools (Facebook and Twitter) to the like-minded people. Furthermore the data that is usually shared by the terrorist organizations and groups intends to create a sense of "community" to those people

[1]*How terrorists are using social media.* (2014, Nov 4). Retrieved from The Telegraph: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11207681/How-terrorists-are-using-social-media.html

[2]Alarid, M. (2016, May 24). *Recruitment and Radicalization: The Role of Social Media and New Technology.* Retrieved from Center for Complex Operations: http://cco.ndu.edu/Publications/Books/Impunity/Article/780274/chapter-13-recruitment-and-radicalization-the-role-of-social-media-and-new-tech/

who are really being lured by the commitment of Jihad. It is also a primary tool to radicalize common masses.

Generally, literature, videos, pictures and interviews actually romanticize Islamic ideology and Sharia law for recruits. The radicalization modifies the idiosyncratic and psychological approach of the individuals and they heartily desire to follow the agenda of those terrorist wings. The most common indicator seems to be fascinated and sympathetic towards those particular group is Jihad and revival of dominance of the Muslim world. Mostly, radicalization prevails in Pakistan due to socio-economic disparity and political frustration that exists excessively. Additionally, it attracts and appeals those people who have sympathies with the plight of the oppressed and they intend to show the cohesion with them. Consequently, desperation, humiliation and outrage over injustice enforce them for opting alternative ways and options for change.

Mostly terrorist organizations have been using cyber magazines to approach the masses of Pakistan. Those magazines are available on internet in different languages and have easy accessibility. Such magazines includes comprehensive data on their respective narratives and ideologies (jihad, khilafat, and sharia). It also provides methods and techniques for conducting successful attacks by using different tools. The detailed articles provokes the legitimization of their course of action against the antagonistic agendas of the west against Islam.

Facebook is most popular social media application used by the terrorist organization for promotion and advertising purposes. Terrorists groups are consistently and excessively using Facebook, to provide operational and tactical information

regarding shooting techniques, bomb recipes, promos and videos to the viewer's. Likewise, twitter is another major source of propagation the agendas in quick time for the terrorist actor's. Through Twitter those groups usually target the western ideas, values and institutions to gain the sympathies. Terrorists groups are also propagating through posting the videos, and showing beheadings online.

Numerous cases of indoctrination through social media in recent times have been witnessed in different areas of Pakistan. Saad Aziz, a graduate from one of the most prestigious Institute of Business administration, became a militant who provided funds for terrorist activities. The most recent case of Noreen Leghari, a 19 year old medical student from Hyderabad joined ISIS wing and later she was captured by security forces during an operation in Lahore against the ISIS. She admitted that social media was the primary cause of her indoctrination .The material (videos, literature, and pictures) available on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram fascinated her .She eventually decided to migrate towards Syria for Jihad. She also confessed that she was not abducted or compelled to do anything and even planned a suicide attack. However, she belongs to a well-educated family and her brought up was purely based on the rationale of modern educational and societal system. She was not deprived or marginalized by the

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society in social and normative structure of life. The indoctrination and radicalization occurred due to excessive use of social media and the attraction of material available on the social websites[3].

Evidently, in all the cases the terrorist groups have successfully manipulated and indoctrinated the educated people who have good educational and financial background. It depicts the effective intensity of propagation and persuasion of agendas through social media and networking sites.

Recommendations

To reduce the process of indoctrination and misuse of social media, government and stake holders should take certain possible measurements.

a. The authorities has to be more vigilant and conscious regarding the ideological content available on social media. Violent ideological content should be removed from all the sites of social media.
b. State must introduce policies for introduction of guiding courses (text books, magazines) and subjects in academic curriculum regarding the positive social media usage, at school level.
c. State must persuade proper discourse in teaching and guiding techniques (teachers, trainees) regarding the safe and effective usage of social media. Initiative of 'social media awareness programme' through organising

[3]Tanveer, R. (2017, April 16). *Female militant arrested in Lahore found to be IS-affiliate who went missing.* Retrieved from The Express Tribune : https://tribune.com.pk/story/1385163/female-militant-arrested-lahore-found-affiliate-went-missing/

lectures, seminars and counselling sessions at institutional level (Universities, colleges)would help to reduce the process of indoctrination.

d. State must take on board the stakeholders of community (religious scholars, civil society) for creating awareness regarding the use of social media.

e. Cyber security surveillance needs to be enhanced through monitoring the data and material available on different social media sites.

f. To counter the indoctrination techniques, state needs to persuade counter initiative programme through social media by making documentaries, videos, promos and advertisements against the propaganda of terrorist non-state actors.

Conclusion

In a nut shell, social media is becoming one of the major sources of propagation and agenda persuasion by the terrorist actors in Pakistan. The process of indoctrination and radicalization is affecting the masses massively. Consequently, a large number of individuals are being victimized. Moreover it has become a threat for peace, security and stability of the state. There is a desperate need of adopting surveillance policies and measurements to counter the propagating agendas for ensuring peace and stability.

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