

Cyber Technology, Radicalization and Terrorism in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Cyber technology is widely used for the sharing of information and data and to create a communication to an almost limitless audience. The development of this technology has created a global network. Cyber technology is multifunctional and has the potential to use as a modern tool in the warfare. It may also be used by the religious extremist organizations for the propagation of their religious ideology. The aim of the propagation is to gain the support among the masses and disseminates the message about the terrorist cause. Cyber technology is relatively cheap and easy to search and recruit the like-minded people from all over the world. It also helps in the financing, propaganda, training and incitement to commit acts of terrorism. Through the use of cyber technology the access to the youth is very easy and they are vulnerable to be radicalized in a few minutes. The benefits of the cyber technology are numerous, starting with its unique suitability for sharing information and ideas, which is recognized as a fundamental human right. It must also be recognized that the same technology may be used for the terrorist purpose or to disseminate the hatred and violence in the society. The use of cyber technology for the purposes of radicalization and terrorism creates a challenge in the fight against terrorism.

Key words: **Radicalization, Cyber technology, Terrorism, Pakistan**

Introduction

We live in a world where our lives are constantly dependent on the media, from weather forecasts to entertainment. Media gadgets surround us everywhere; from the cell phones clinging to our bodies to the digital screens in our homes, offices, and streets; we are provided with a steady stream of information all day. Our brains are constantly fed by the media, thereby forming and shaping our minds. In this agonizing unknown brainwashing we are becoming victim to our greatest foe i.e. Terrorism.

Researchers have found an astonishing relationship between Terrorism and Media. They have a symbiotic relationship; terrorism provides media with the blood, gore and all the sensational material that the media uses to sell itself. Unfortunately, for us, this is exactly what the terrorists want. They want us to see all that bloodshed and cruelty, to scare us, to drive us with fear.

The greater and more violent the act of terrorism, the more it will be reported by the media. Most of the general public depend on media for their share of knowledge on current issues and the wider world. The media is therefore an important channel for influencing mass public opinion. For a terrorist group the media is an essential means for attracting attention and spreading its message. How they form a symbiotic relationship is interesting. Terrorism provides the media with emotionally exciting and violent stories which sells news products and the media provides terrorists with means of spreading their message and creating fear among the public.

For terrorists, the media is a vital because it not only spreads the fear to immediate victims but to a far larger audience, where they aim to propagate terror and uncertainty. They try to use the media through three ways: firstly by gaining public attention; secondly to gain sympathy for its cause and thirdly by creating public pressure on the political leaders. The higher the public support, the higher the pressure on decision-makers.

Terrorists with a simple camera and internet access, deliberately create horrifying images and videos to provide the media, which not only broadcasts their message of fear but amplifies it a great deal through tactics such as sensationalizing with heavy metaphors; repeated footages; minute by minute coverage. This gives rise to panic and over reaction of the public, also creating pressure on the government policies and action plans. One such example is of the 9/11 in the US, when even the government overreacted in waging wars in Iraq, later Afghanistan in the wake of public outcry but such distorted media coverage designed to sensationalize gave rise to the ugly head of Islamophobia. This not only further exacerbated racial and ethnic issues inside the country but millions of lives were lost worldwide (Partnerships for Preventing Online Radicalization | Sustainable Security, 2017).

To this impending problem, several solutions arise. It can be considered that what will happen if the media do not cover terrorist attacks. That way the aim of the terrorists is lost, therefore there will be less terrorist attacks. The problem with this thought is that then freedom of press is harmed and if the media is controlled by the state this could brew up further trouble. While the media is falling into the trap of terrorist groups it does have its benefits when it covers and aims to expose everything. It would be dangerous to democracy if a censorship is introduced. It is better to know everything rather than have things hidden. Yet the problem remains that how can the impact of terrorists through media be lessened.

Throughout the internet, people have expressed different ideas. Some of the prominent ones include that first of all the media needs to differentiate between local criminal attacks and actual terrorist attacks; they need to define what terrorism is. Nowadays the word is thrown out way too much, creating a disproportionate image of terrorism; it creates useless fear and panic. It also motivates other attention seekers to use similar stunts to gain attention for non-terrorist motives. An example of this is the British Press, blowing up the Westminster Attack and several others like this.

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The biggest weakness of the media that harbors terrorists is its entrepreneurial desire to gain more profit from sensationalism. This can be checked through promoting ethical and responsible Journalism culture, where journalists are aware of the impact their reports may have. News reports with less horrific scenes, less sensation and more information and prudence are essential to break the symbiosis (<http://nymag.com/selectall/2017/05/the-online-radicalization-were-not-talking-about.html>, 2017).

While the responsible media such as TV and News channels and papers can be guided through a set of guidelines and priorities, another problem arises of the Social Media. The social media, a platform for freedom of expressions is much harder to control; what might be restrained in the newsroom, would probably come out through tweets and posts a lot faster. Sites like Facebook and Twitter have already taken measures to shut down accounts that promote violence and terrorism, they can take a step further by monitoring posts for verification and authenticity before allowing them to publish.

It is said that peace isn't only established through talks and formal signings of papers, an easy coverage for media. The media's more important and difficult role is to provide a counter narrative to terrorism, which would be a much more pragmatic step towards peace. It is the choice of the media to either nurture terrorism in its greedy lap or to crush it under its responsible gaze.

Means by which cyber technology is utilized for terrorism

The cyber technology is often used to radicalize the common public and to promote the cause of extremist ideology. In this approach there are several overlapping factors: propaganda, recruitment, planning, training, financing, online radicalization and cyber-attacks. These factors are discussed in detail below.

Propaganda

Cyber technology is used to propagate the message of the terrorist which may be based on propaganda. Propaganda generally takes the form of multimedia communications providing video messages, justification and explanations of different terrorist acts. In cyber technology there are varieties of channels or sources that the terrorist used for the purpose of propaganda. These sources are commonly called as social connections through internets, like Facebook, Twitters, YouTube, What's up, Messenger, Imo,....., etc. The dissemination of fear and promotion of violence is a common theme in terrorist relating propaganda. Cyber technology has the ability to wide spread the terrorist message to the limitless number of audience and large number of people may be affected. The terrorist may use the videos, pictures, voice messages, news, and information relating to the terrorist activities, use and misuse of religion only for the propaganda tactics. Cyber technology also provides the space for editing or altering or fake videos may consider as real via internet. The legitimacy of the propaganda tactics via

internet is low and sometimes uncontrollable for the state. The sectarian sermons and religious violence videos are easily accessible via internet and there are no cyber checks on these videos. The religious sectarian sermons play a vital role in the promotion of online radicalization and polarization of the society through the use of propaganda tactics (<http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ResearchPerspectivesonOnlineRadicalisation.pdf>, 2017).

Online Radicalization

Online radicalization is the process by which people particularly youth adopt extreme political or religious views via internet. After the 9/11, the phenomenon of online radicalization plays a vital role in the promotion of religious polarization and terrorism in Pakistan. This hypothesis was endorsed by the Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed, Dr. Umbreen Javaid and Prof. Khalid Manzoor Butt. Online radicalization constitutes the polarized sectarian literatures and promotes the cause of religious extremist ideology. Political Scientists, researchers and policy makers are continuously neglecting the aspect of online radicalization in Pakistan. This hypothesis was endorsed by the Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed.

Radicalization and Online Radicalization

There are the linkages between the aims and objectives of the radicalization and online radicalization but different in operation. The differences are listed below. The process of radicalization is slow while the online radicalization is fast. The radicalization is expensive and has the less objectivity while online radicalization is cheap and has the more objectivity. There are the many obstacles in the way of radicalization and dissemination of radicalized ideology while in online radicalization the obstacles are few and limitless audiences are to be addressed via cyber technology. The propagation of the radicalized ideology is slow via conventional means while in online radicalization the propagation of radicalized ideology is fast. For the propagation of religious ideology through conventional as well as via internet, huge funds are required and the market traders, shopkeepers are the main source of giving funds to the radicalized organizations. The researcher conducts a survey to check the validity of this hypothesis.

A survey was conducted in Punjabi, Urdu and in English with a total 1000 respondents across the big markets and shops of the residential areas of the Lahore city. The 74 percent representation is given to the markets traders and 26 percent represent to the residential shops. The survey had a margin of error of 3 percent. The number of respondents represents the market class which the researcher has the hypothesis that the funding comes for the market class for the promotion of religious radicalized ideology. An effort was also made to ensure the representation of respondents from different economic backgrounds, sects and educational levels. 41 per cent of the respondents were between the 20-30 year age group, 46 percent of the respondents were between 30-40 age group, 10 percent

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respondents are between 40-50 year age group, 3 percent were between 50-60 year age group. On the sectarian division side, as many as 30 percent were Deobandi, 25 percent were Hanfi Braelvi, 20 percent are shiate, 15 percent Ahle Ahadise , 9 percent were considering themselves only Muslim and 1 percent were Christian. Sectarian differences were an important feature in the context of understanding the phenomenon of radicalization and online radicalization i.e. promoting terrorism, violence and militant extremism in the society. An effort has been made to distinguish between the two factors, through a section of the survey where the question specifically deals with the financing of the sectarian organizations and radicalization and online radicalizations channels. The family links with the different militant organization leaders between the market traders was also observed during the study. The input of the markets traders and shopkeepers in the city of Lahore has been analyzed in order to determine the views about the radicalization, online radicalization and financing of different religious militant organizations.

Survey Questions and Answer of the Respondents

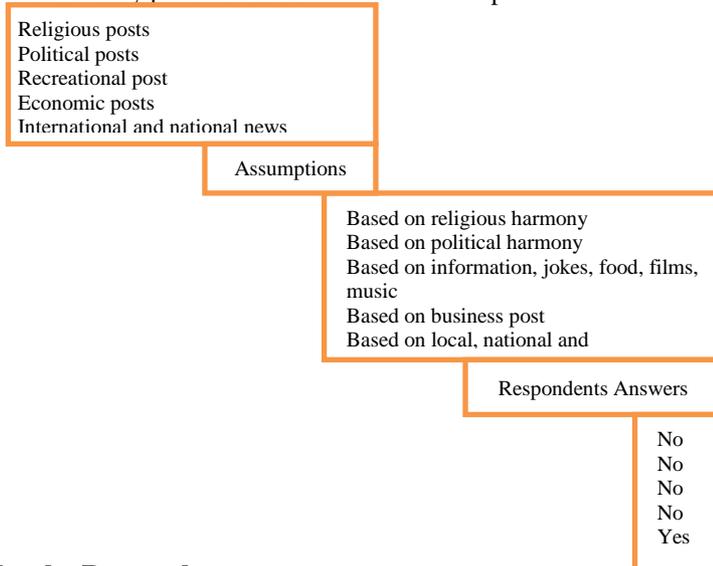
Do you think that giving money to the religious organizations and support their sectarian causes are justified? ANSWER: 80 % consider justified and it is a noble cause to give money for religious cause to the religious organizations.
What was the source of your religious teachings and news in the busy market life? ANSWER: 60% Internet, face book, 20% what's up 10% religious book.
Do you believe in the propagation of one sectarian ideology is justified if you are the follower of the same-sect? ANSWER: 80% consider that it is justified instead of sectarian and hatred cause.
Do you think that sectarian sermons are to be banned in social media? ANSWER: 60% consider Yes.
Do you have the online membership of any religious organization? ANSWER: 35% join different religious Groups pages and 65 % SAY NO.
Do you think that cyber technology is promoting radicalization, religious extremism and terrorism in Pakistan? Answer: 76% says yes

Before looking into the survey findings about online radicalization and ideological views of the respondent, it is highly important to consider the political views of respondents. Whether Islamic political system or secular political system is the priority in the state affairs and what is the status of Islam in the current modern political scenario are questions that confused the discourse on national character and harmony in the state. Pakistani people are traditionally loved that Islam is their first priority and Islamic character must be present in the precincts of

the parliament. But, almost 52 percent respondents are against the sectarian character of the state.

The result of the survey shows that shop keepers have only the financial aid box of the different welfare NGOs Like Shokat Khanum and Abdul Star Ahdi Trust, etc and in market the financial aid box are of two types one from the welfare trust and other for the religious organizations like Tahreeke Labaik Ya rasool Allah, Dawate Islami, Kashmiri cause, Dawat jihad and unlabeled box, etc. It is concluded that money is collected in all the markets of the Lahore through religious ideology and welfare purpose. The researcher collected the data from the markets of the Lahore about the sources of radicalization and checked the research hypothesis that online radicalization is very common in Pakistan now a days. Questions to the market respondents about the Facebook post that what type of post is in your Facebook apart from your family and friends pictures. The Facebook post are divided in sub categories like religious post , political post, economic post that are business related and recreational post and ask about the religious post, assuming that the religious post are based on religious harmony.

Questions about the daily posts of the Facebook of the respondents



Prepared by the Researcher

Recruitment

The cyber technology is not restricted only to disseminate the sectarian or religious ideology, protected stance in the shape of post or articles or videos, it also helps to search and recruit the likeminded people in one platform and induce the seed of radicalization via internet. “Terrorist organizations increasingly use propaganda distributed via platforms such as password-protected websites and restricted access internet chat group as a means of clandestine recruitment” (Gerwehr & Daly,

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2006). “Terrorist propaganda is often tailored to appeal to vulnerable and marginalized groups in society. The process of recruitment and radicalization commonly capitalizes on an individual’s sentiment of injustice, exclusion or humiliation” (Denning, 2010).

Cyber technology provides an effective medium for the recruitment of the jobless youth and minors, who spend much time on the internet. Many school going students and even university students may be supportive of the terrorist organization and radicalized via internet. There are the different tactics that are used by the terrorist organizations which may be in the form of cartoon, short stories, computer games that are mixed with message and ultimate objective is to overcome the fear of death and recruited minors may be fearless about death and suicide attacks (Weimann, 2006).

Cyber technology provides the cheap source for the terrorist groups to keep in touch with the limitless audience. In third world countries like Pakistan it is easy for the religious terrorist groups to make contacts to the each strata of the society via internet and it also helps in the recruitment of the people who not only support the terrorist vision but also help in a scientific way to the terrorists via internet.

Training

Cyber technology provides different mechanism in the form of visual videos, and information that are supported by the training programmers of the terrorist organizations. There is a growing range of cyber technology that constitutes the detailed instructions about the making of different explosive materials and provides awareness about the modern and soft weapons through the use of cyber technology. There are different motivational videos of the jihad and training programs for the common Muslims in Pakistan to support the Afghani and Kashmiri jihad for the Muslims of the Afghanistan and Kashmir and against the America and India.

Planning

Cyber technology also provides the space and different connections for the terrorists in the form of planning for the secret missions. In cyber technology the users may use the cyber codes and transform the mission in to different codes in the cyber networks. According to the United Nations report, “The Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes” New York, 2012 says “Many criminal justice practioners have indicated that almost every case of terrorism prosecuted involved the use of cyber technology. In particular, planning an act of terrorism typically involves remote communication among several parties”. The cyber technology facilitates the terrorist for secret communication and provides a breeding ground for the recruitment of the different people who helps in the planning of the terrorist attacks. Cyber technology also provides the access to the information of different transnational organizations of the world.

Cyber-Attacks

Cyber Attacks are started as challenge between hackers which slowly turned it into game of money to gain industrial and economic advantages and finally a direct threat to national security of the country. Now, the hackers become the “Key Board Militants” and they have the motives, tools, specific targets, specific affiliations (State & Non-State) and they take actions to fulfill their operations. It is the routine matter for the hackers to attack the governmental machinery websites, bank and data of different intelligence and military agencies of the states. Now states have even start to hire the companies and groups of hackers for their national purpose and to enter in the internet databases of other states.

Cyber terrorism is occurred in two forms, Data theft and control of system. The theft of data and its destruction is connected to damage the running system and System control is to physically control the infrastructure like Bridges, war facilities etc. The data theft is the most common method used in cyber terrorism as it involves less risk to system control method. These cyber terrorists also use the IT technology not only for hacking and cyber attacking but also for propaganda through web pages and social websites and spread their agenda and message throughout the globe (<https://www.checkmarx.com/2016/05/04/cyber-terrorism-real-threat-2/>, 2017).

Conclusion

Cyber technology plays a vital role in the promotion of online radicalization and terrorism in Pakistan. Online radicalization is the common factor in all visible trends and pattern of sectarianism and in Pakistan. The changing aspects of such trends are different in conventional radicalization but same as in online radicalization in Pakistan. Cyber terrorism has made its place in terrorism quite rapidly and makes the security issues more complex and hard to tackle and to adopt a strong counter cyber terrorism policy and mechanism is highly necessary for every state for its own security. According to a report of MacAfee till the end of September 2013 there were 170 million malwares in the digital world which are causing daily hacking attacks on computers. USA president Barrack Obama has also declared that cyber terrorism is the biggest threat to USA security and they need to hire “Cyber Warriors” to tackle and counter these threats. In context of MacAfee report and Obama’s statement it is clear that the cyber terrorism is the one of the major threat to every state of the world and now states not only have to be prepared conventionally and in nuclear aspect but also non-conventionally in cyber security. Cyber technology is promoting online radicalization in the Pakistani society and provides the space for terrorism in Pakistan. The government should increase the cyber checks and vigilantly address this issue.

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