ISIS and Social Media

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Abstract : New information and communication technologies (ICT) not only has revolutionized the world of communication but has also strongly impacted the state of international terrorism. Using the potential of social media, the new wave of terrorism easily can recruit new jihadi members, spread their violent ideology and garner financial support. IS (Islamic State) as the most dangerous terrorist group has already conquered a great deal of social media space and has deployed sophisticated web-based strategies to promote its extremist doctrine. In this respect the vastly popular social media are the perfect tools for IS to establish its virtual Caliphate (e-caliphate) and e-Ommah (e-citizen).Using social media to release violent videos of beheading journalists, burning their hostages alive and mass killing of prisoners are IS strategies to terrorize and subjugate its enemies. Several Twitter and Facebook accounts which are IS affiliations have targeted young generation of Muslims all around the world. In fact IS terrorists use modern resources of communication not only to share information and conduct operations but also justify their violent acts. The strict Wahhabi doctrine of ISIS is based on a fundamental interpretation of Islam in which religious war against non Muslims (Jihad) and killing infidels (Qatal) have been praised and recommended. Via social media IS disseminates its propaganda to inspire sympathizers across the globe. Combating this new wave of terrorism which is exploiting new communication technologies is the most significant challenge for authorities. Before the rise of internet and social media governments had to control only mosques and religious gathering such as Friday sermons(Jamaah Pray) to prevent spreading extremism among Muslims community in their country. ICT and new communication technologies have heighten the challenge of dealing with Islamic radicalism and have amplified its threat .According to the official reports even some of the governments such as UK have created a special force of Facebook warriors to engage in unconventional warfare in digital age. In compare with other terrorist groups, IS has effectively grasped social media potential. Their horrifying released videos on YouTube easily got viral and were re-twitted and shared by thousands of social media users. While some of the social media such as Twitter and Facebook have shut down many accounts alleged to IS but new ones create immediately so only blocking their websites and suspending their accounts cannot solve the problem as terrorists recreate new accounts. To combat cyber terrorism focusing on disseminating counter narrative strategies can be a solution. Creating websites and providing online materials to propagate peaceful and moderate interpretation of Islam can provide a cogent alternative to extremist views.

Keywords : IS-islamic state, cyber terrorism, social media, terrorism, information, communication technologies

Conference Title : ICCTHS 2015 : International Conference on Counter Terrorism and Human Security
Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland
Conference Dates : July 29-30, 2015