biiss Journal

Khawaja Masnoon Zayeem

RADICALISATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: A SALIENT FEATURE OF MODERN TERRORISM

Abstract

The world is witnessing an era of globalisation, the influence of which cannot be ignored by anybody. Effects of globalisation have also influenced the evolution of modern terrorism. With the advent of modern technologies in various fields, the violent extremist groups have been using them to their own advantage and expanding their activities at a rapid pace. One of the major contributions of the modern communication technology is the development of Social Media Sites. The global militant groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have been using the social media platforms to further strengthen their operations, especially in their propaganda mechanisms and radicalisation process to recruit new members. With this changing scenario, radicalisation through social media emerges as a big challenge for the counterterrorism forces around the world to face the growing threat of modern terrorism. The situation requires the counterterrorism strategies to be re-evaluated and amended in a way that is adaptable to the changing tactics used by the militant groups. The paper tries to critically analyse the use of social media in the radicalisation and propaganda efforts by the violent extremist groups as well as the changes brought into the contemporary terrorism through this phenomenon. The paper also tries to relate the strengths and weaknesses of the global counterterrorism strategies with these changes to formulate some pragmatic policy recommendations.

1.   Introduction

Terrorism is currently one of the biggest global challenges in the world. The militant groups are continuously changing their strategies and adopting new tactics to meet the new challenges. This changing tactics also include the modernisation and modification of the means of radicalisation to recruit new members. In this era of globalisation, nobody can ignore and escape the advancements of communication technologies. The development of modern communication technologies like Internet and online Social Media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others have immensely fostered the flow of information and ideas across the world. As a result, violent extremist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS have begun to fervently use the social media sites to radicalise the young Muslims around the world and recruit new members. Cases of online radicalisation have been emerging constantly and as the investigations

Khawaja Masnoon Zayeem is an independent researcher and currently pursuing a Masters Degree in International Relations at the University of Dhaka. His e-mail address is: msn.zym@gmail.com

have revealed, perpetrators of some of the high-profile militant attacks around the world were all radicalised through some form of social media influence.

The paper mainly focuses on the contemporary Islamist militancy led by the ISIS and Al Qaeda. The context of the paper is the relation between the process of globalisation and modern terrorism. With improved telecommunications, the extremist groups have become more powerful than ever before. This new strength is strongly visible in their propaganda efforts which have proved to be highly effective. With this end in view, the research question of the paper is: how the radicalisation through social media is affecting global terrorism? The main objectives of the research are to understand the modern radicalisation process, identify the loopholes in the global counterterrorism strategies and suggest possible ways forward.

The research conducted for this paper is qualitative, based on secondary sources. The research took place in duration of three months and includes extensive reviews of literatures by some distinguished scholars and experts related to terrorism studies. Because of being relatively a recent phenomenon, there is yet to be much study over the use of social media in contemporary terrorism which explains the low amount of available literature about the topic. The research in this paper also relied on some online photos and videos collected from social media to analyse the process of radicalisation through social media and the overall propaganda movements by the extremist groups. Reports of some government agencies are also reviewed to understand the counterterrorism strategies.

The paper highlights the selection of individuals as well as the process of their radicalisation by the extremists. Here, some notable instances are discussed to explain the main components of the propaganda strategies of militant groups, especially in the use of social media. After the radicalisation process, the possible outcomes are also shown which are leaving huge impact in the membership and organisational structure of the terrorist groups. The latter parts of the paper analyses the favourable changes in the operations of extremist groups through the use of social media, as well as the counterterrorism strategies of different countries to combat their growing strength. To analyse the counterterrorism strategies, the representative countries have been selected with a view to portraying a global picture in the context. Lastly, some policy recommendations have been proposed to formulate more effective strategies.

2.   Contextualisation: Globalisation and Spread of Modern Terrorism

Globalisation has become one of the defining features of modern era that has been influencing almost each and every activity in this world. Without delving into the steadfast definitions of globalisation, it can be explained as a process of interconnectedness. Through globalisation, faster flow of information has been ensured with the development of advanced communication technologies. As a result, people

living in long distance can stay connected to each other through adopting these improved communication systems, like Internet. The consequences of globalisation have affected everybody and people are both benefitting as well as suffering from its effects. Among the many effects of globalisation, the spread of modern terrorism is one of the most prominent global challenges the world is facing at present.[1]

The prime advantage that globalisation has provided to terrorism is the expansion of its network into a transnational level.[2] The emergence of global terror groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS is the most relevant occurrence of this feature. The two groups have successfully established affiliated terror groups among several countries, almost resembling the characteristics of a multinational corporation. Al Qaeda has formed numerous branches in different regions of the world. The Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) operates in the Middle East region based out of Yemen[3], while the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) is carrying out its activities in South Asia.[4] The organisation has also formed separate affiliated groups in other regions like North and West Africa, Levant and Horn of Africa among others.[5]

The ISIS is another example of a global terror organisation. Based out of the central regions of Iraq and Syria, ISIS has set up a network of affiliated groups in Libya, Sinai, Yemen, Algeria, South Asia and West Africa. The main objective behind such expansion of networks is the promotion and spread of the ideologies and causes of these militant groups, using the tool of globalisation.[6]

Globalisation has also made the militant groups to evolve with the changing tides and adopt new strategies in their operations.[7] An interesting component of this phenomenon is the increasing use of media by the terrorist groups to expand their notability. Coverage among the global media outlets enhances the publicity of these organisations which helps them to swell their networks.[8] In recent years, some terror organisations have established their own media networks to further propagate their agenda. The *Dabiq* magazine and the *Al Hayat Media Centre*, operated by the ISIS, are distinctly a crucial part of the organisation's extensive propaganda movements and so are the magazines *Inspire* and *Resurgence* for Al Qaeda.[9]

---

[1] Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism", *International Security,* Vol. 27, No. 3, 2003, pp. 46-51.
[2] Paul R. Pillar, "The Diffusion of Terrorism", *Mediterranean Quarterly,* Vol. 21, No. 1, 2010, p. 4.
[3] Bryce Loidolt, "Managing the Global and Local: The Dual Agendas of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2011, pp. 102-104.
[4] Dawood Azami, "The Islamic State in South and Central Asia", *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 2016, p. 139.
[5] Celine Marie I. Novenario, "Differentiating Al Qaeda and the Islamic State through Strategies Publicized in *Jihadist* Magazines", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 39, No. 11, 2016, pp. 957-959.
[6] Daniel Byman, "Understanding the Islamic State — A Review Essay", *International Security,* Vol. 40, No. 4, 2016, pp. 127-139.
[7] Albert J. Bergesen and Omar Lizardo, "International Terrorism and the World-System", *Sociological Theory,* Vol. 22, No. 1, 2004, pp. 41-43.
[8] Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy and Paul R. Baines, "Selling terror: The symbolization and positioning of Jihad", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2009, pp. 227-228.
[9] Novenario, *op. cit.*, pp. 956-969.

In this context, the recruitment strategies of these militant groups have also changed over the years. The use of internet by the terrorists is increasingly becoming a frequent occurrence to attract potential militants. The terror groups are now seeking greater presence in the cyber space to promote themselves and their ideas. Members of such groups are also specialising in utilising the social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others to expand their networks. Media and literature related to the militant organisations are spread throughout the internet which is publicly accessible, allowing a greater number of people to get indoctrinated with the extremist ideas and carry out violent actions, some without even directly associating with a militant group.

3.   Radicalisation and Social Media

The propaganda activities of the extremist groups and the process of persuading the individuals to join their causes have been referred to as different terms by different organisations or scholars. This paper, however, will refer to it as 'radicalisation' which is the most used term for such activities among the government documents and academic pieces. Radicalisation is the fundamental activity for the extremist groups to recruit new members and expand the organisation. A growing focus on the issue of radicalisation and its relation with violent acts could be noticed especially after the Madrid Train Bombings in March 2004 and the London Bombings in July 2005, when the European Commission issued a special report titled, 'Terrorist recruitment: addressing the factors contributing to violent radicalisation' to analyse the causes and prelude to such terrorist incidents.[10] However, similar to the situation with the term 'Terrorism', there is no universally accepted definition of 'radicalisation', though some state security agencies of different countries have tried to define it through their own interpretations. According to the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) of the Netherlands, radicalisation is:

> "Growing readiness to pursue and/or support - if necessary by undemocratic means - far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a threat to, the democratic order."[11]

The Danish Security and Intelligence Service defines 'violent radicalisation' as:

> "A process by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a specific political/ideological objective".[12]

---

[10] Magnus Hörnqvist and Janne Flyghed, "Exclusion or culture? The rise and the ambiguity of the radicalisation debate", *Critical Studies on Terrorism,* Vol. 5, No. 3, 2012, pp. 319-324.
[11] Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I : A Review of Social Science Theories", *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2012, p. 12.
[12] *Ibid.*

The UK Home Office refers to radicalisation as:

"The process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism[13] and, in some cases, then to join terrorist groups."[14]

Some similar key elements could be identified in these definitions, for instance, a considerable emphasis on the perceived threat to democracy. Even though a pro-Western bias could be seen in the definitions, as of now these state agencies are the only ones of their kind in the world who have tried to define the issue of radicalisation. To overcome these biases, it can be asserted that radicalisation is a process by which an individual receives the elements of ideas and ideologies which are considered to be too extreme from the conventional interpretations and which makes the behaviour of the individual to be violent in promoting those ideas.

Radicalisation could be either self-processed or deliberately induced by others. Different violent extremist groups have developed their own strategies of radicalisation though there are some common elements. Traditionally, the extremist groups have used some sort of incentives to recruit new members. These incentives could be material or abstract. Consequently, in the earlier stages of contemporary terrorism, a general perception existed that most of the recruits were mainly influenced by their economic and cultural backgrounds, which has been countered by opposing arguments as well as evidences.[15]

The key objective of radicalisation is to indoctrinate extremist ideas within the individual. During the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, the Afghan Mujahedeen was formed through propagandas of how Islam was being degraded in the Soviet controlled Afghanistan. This made the masses to rebel against the rule and join the Mujahedeen.[16] Soon this propaganda spread all over the Muslim world and foreign fighters were recruited to fight the Soviets. After the Soviet-Afghan War, these foreign fighters returned to their countries of origin and started to promote the same extremist ideas that they received before the war.[17]

In the post 9/11 era, Al Qaeda emerged as a leading militant group in the world and one of their main strategies to radicalise the Muslims were triggering anti-Western sentiments. Al Qaeda's chief recruiting hubs were situated in the countries, most notably Afghanistan and Iraq among others, heavily affected by the Global War

---

[13] The UK Home Office defines 'extremism' as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Extremism also includes calls for death of members of the armed forces". See Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales, p. 7.
[14] Borum, *op. cit.*
[15] Anne Marie Baylouny, "Emotions, Poverty, or Politics? Misconceptions about Islamist Movements", *Connections,* Vol. 3, No. 1, 2004, pp. 41-43.
[16] Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War,* Leavenworth, USA: Mentor Enterprises, 1995, pp. xiii-xix.
[17] Barak Mendelsohn, "Foreign Fighters - Recent Trends", *Orbis,* Vol. 55, No. 2, 2011, pp. 189-192.

on Terror, fought by the US led coalition forces.[18] People in these countries joined the extremist groups, trusting them to drive the US away and escape the massive human rights violations committed by the coalition forces. The human rights violations of the Muslims were later propagated in other countries to radicalise individuals around the world and establish affiliated networks.[19]

In rise of ISIS, the primary tool in radicalisation was the propaganda of repression of Sunni masses by the Shia dominated regimes. The Iraq War in 2003 left the country with a huge vacuum of power which was later filled up by a majoritarian system of government, dominated by Shias. The new regime was not surprisingly prejudiced toward the Sunni community of the country and as a result, several Sunni tribes were dejected from this outcome and rebelled against the government. Anti-Shia sentiments later reached the neighbouring Syria which, in 2011, was facing a massive civil war against Bashar Al Assad, the Shia dictator of the country. Riding on this anti-Shia sentiments, ISIS under Abu Bakr al Baghdadi amassed a large militant group and occupied vast territories within Iraq and Syria with a vision to establish a Caliphate across the globe.[20]

Based on these evolving strategies of the extremist groups, it can be said that during the radicalisation process, the groups mainly seek for individuals going through some sort of marginalisation, discrimination, repression and grievances. Besides, the target audience also includes the people who are sympathetic to the cause of these extremist groups and inclined to give support in any form.

3.1.   *Use of Social Media*

Social media platforms have emerged as a key tool in recent years in the development of the modern communication system. Use of social media as an instrument of faster flow of information and messages has made them a part and parcel of human lives. A major advantage of social media is that the information flow through such platforms could reach a massive audience within a very short time. As a result, social media has become a popular tool for social mobilisation or any collective action for a public outcry. A notable example is the Arab Spring, especially in Tunisia and Egypt where social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were extensively used by the protesters to organise the anti-government movements against the unpopular autocratic regimes. In December 2010, the images of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia were extensively shared in Facebook by the protesters to further strengthen the movement against

---

[18] Bruce Hoffman, "Al Qaeda, Trends in Terrorism, and Future Potentialities: An Assessment", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 26, No. 6, 2003, pp. 429-437.

[19] Royce Hutson, Taylor Long and Michael Page, "Pathways to Violent Radicalisation in the Middle East: A Model for Future Studies of Transnational Jihad", *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 154, No. 2, 2009, pp. 20-23.

[20] Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate", *Middle East Policy,* Vol. 21, No. 4, 2014, pp. 69-79.

the Ben Ali regime and ultimately succeeded to overthrow the Tunisian President by January 2011, leading to the beginning of democratic parliamentary governance in the country. The spirit of this Tunisian revolution spread to the neighbouring Arab countries and triggered a series of sturdy protests against the oppressive dictators.[21] In recent times, a new trend could be noticed where many top level government officials (including heads of states and governments) are using different social media sites to be more connected with the citizens and enhance their popularity among the masses through easily disseminating favourable information or messages.[22] As such, social media has redefined the concept of e-governance, by enabling the digital medium of communication to enhance the governance activities.[23] Consequently, the extremist groups have also become increasingly involved in social media in their radicalisation process and propaganda activities.

An important feature of social media is that its user base is mainly dominated by the youths, a key characteristic in the target audience sought by the militant groups. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have become sort of a necessity for the youths, especially the urban ones. These youths are also well educated and quite tech-savvy, being exposed to modern technologies and gadgets. The recent terror incidents have shown that the global militant groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS have now been seeking educated and technologically knowledgeable new recruits. This serves mainly two purposes. First, having educated people joining the extremist groups will raise the acceptance of the ideologies that they propagate. Second, technologically skilled recruits will enhance the capabilities of the groups in various terms to fight the increasingly stronger counterterrorism forces.

Social media has become a powerful tool for the militant groups to spread their message and further promote themselves. Since 2004, Al Qaeda has been showing a changing pattern in its propaganda operations by uploading video messages of its leaders online rather than sending them to global media outlets. Anwar Al Awlaki[24], often dubbed as the 'Bin Laden of Internet', established substantial presence of Al Qaeda in the cyber space, having a Facebook page as well as a blog site. Videos of his lectures on YouTube are still inspiring the potential militants to carry out attacks.[25] In 2007, Al Qaeda launched its own online messaging application, 'Mujahedeen Secrets', to enhance the clandestine communications among its networks.[26]

---

[21] Habibul Haque Khondker, "Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring", *Globalizations,* Vol. 8, No. 5, 2011, pp. 675-679.
[22] John Carlo Bertot, Paul T. Jaeger and Derek Hansen, "The impact of polices on government social media usage: Issues, challenges, and recommendations", *Government Information Quarterly,* Vol. 29, No. 1, 2012, pp. 30-33.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] Anwar Al Awlaki was a major recruiter and motivator of Al Qaeda. He was killed in 2011 in a drone strike in southern Yemen.
[25] Scott Shane, Richard Perez-Pena and Aurelien Breeden, "In-Betweeners Are Part of a Rich Recruiting Pool for Jihadists", *The New York Times*, 22 September 2016.
[26] Eric Schmitt and Michael S. Schmidt, "Qaeda Plot Leak Has Undermined U.S. Intelligence", *The New York Times,* 29 September 2013.

The ISIS also has a large and sophisticated presence in the cyber platforms which is considered as a unique feature of this militant group. Use of Twitter by the ISIS members is a distinctive element of their propaganda efforts where they have even launched their own Twitter app 'The Dawn of Glad Tidings' to send latest news and updates about the organisation to its subscribers.[27] Since 2015, the ISIS members have also begun to use the online messaging application 'Telegram', after increasing surveillance and crackdown on other social media platforms by the security agencies around the world.[28] Messages, photos and videos related to the fighters and their attacks as well as the overall society of the ISIS held territories are quite often shared on the social media to increase their acceptance and notability among the wider audience.

3.2.   *Target Audience*

According to Julian Charvat[29], the audience could be divided into four groups: general population, sympathisers, supporters and activists[30] (see Table 1). The general population includes people living a usual life and opposed to any form of violent extremism. They are highly unlikely to get radicalised by the extremist ideas. The sympathisers are those who are also opposed to terrorism but sympathetic to the cause or objective of the terrorists. This group of people considers the non-violent legal and legitimate protests and movements to be the best ways of achieving the desired goals. Supporters are the people who publically condemn violent extremism but are sympathetic to the cause of the extremists and consider violence to be justified in achieving the goal. The fourth group is the activists who, unlike the other three groups, publically support terrorism and are compassionate to the cause and ideology of the terrorists but yet to join a terror group or commit an act of violent extremism.

Table 1: Groups of Audience for Radicalisation			
Group	Public image	Support to violence	Support to the cause
General population	Condemn terrorism	No	No
Sympathisers	Condemn terrorism	No	Yes
Supporters	Condemn terrorism	Yes	Yes
Activists	Support terrorism	Yes	Yes

Source: Julian Charvat, "Radicalization on the Internet", *Defence Against Terrorism Review,* Vol. 3, No. 2, 2010, pp. 76-77.

---

[27] J. M. Berger, "How ISIS Games Twitter", *The Atlantic*, 16 June 2014, available at http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/isis-iraq-twitter-social-media-strategy/372856/, accessed on 10 December 2016.

[28] Anthony Cuthbertson, "Isis Telegram channel doubles followers to 9,000 in less than 1 week", *International Business Times*, 12 October 2015, available at http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-telegram-channel-doubles-followers-9000-less-1-week-1523665, accessed on 10 December 2016.

[29] Julian Charvat is a former Course Director in the *Centre of Excellence-Defence Against Terrorism*, a NATO affiliated Think Tank in Ankara, Turkey.

[30] Julian Charvat, "Radicalization on the Internet", *Defence Against Terrorism Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2010, pp. 76-77.

The militant groups usually seek some key traits among the individuals to consider them as potential recruits. The marginalised people are one of the prime target groups for radicalisation.[31] These people include religious and ethnic minorities who are victims of discrimination or alienation from the society; immigrants and refugees who are unwelcomed in their host societies; or the politically suppressed groups.[32] This marginalisation could be in the form of lack of some basic rights and amenities like education, judicial access, employment etc.[33] The terrorists also look for people with some sort of grievances toward the society for perceived wrong. Such grievances exist in states with unpopular governments and lack of rule of law.[34] The recruitment of fighters by the ISIS from the Sunni community in Iraq and anti-Assad elements in Syria is a major manifestation of such exploitation of the marginalisation and grievances of communities and individuals by the militant groups. Individuals going through relative deprivation or being lesser privileged than other communities happen to suffer from low self-esteem and identity crisis and become a major target audience for the terrorists.[35] These individuals often aspire to find excitement in their life and belongingness to a group which they try to fill up by joining a militant group.

The recruiters have been using the social media sites and applications in recent years to target the youth community - another major component of the desired features in a potential recruit. Youths are easy to convince and desired due to their energy and zeal. Recruiters typically look for urban educated youths through the social media and try to radicalise them. Social media also links the recruiters to the tech-savvy individuals who are increasingly sought by the terror groups to secure technical knowhow about various gadgets and communication technologies. Through specific forums for likeminded people within the social media platforms, the recruiters also look for categorising the audience into different groups based on their allegiance to the cause and ideology of the terrorist organisations. Such forums also help them to sort the marginalised communities or people with social grievances.[36]

3.3.   *The Radicalisation Process*

The radicalisation process goes through several phases that gradually transform an individual into a violent extremist. Usually, the radicalisation process starts with the sympathisers who gradually climb up the ladder to become a supporter, an activist and ultimately a terrorist. The process includes both the deliberate

---

[31] Sarah Lyons-Padilla, Michele J. Gelfand, Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq and Marieke van Egmond, "Belonging nowhere: Marginalization & radicalization risk among Muslim Immigrants", *Behavioral Science & Policy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2015, pp. 1-10.
[32] *Ibid*.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 20, No. 3, 2008, pp. 417-419.
[35] Michael King and Donald M. Taylor, "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2011, pp. 607-611.
[36] Charvat, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

radicalisation by targeting a particular individual or the general propaganda movements by the militant groups. A recruiter first comes across a potential recruit and gradually gets acquainted with him/her, gets closer through increasing interactions, begin to give knowledge about Islamic way of life and lastly start to plant the ideas of the need for a change in the current world order and the necessity for a global jihad.[37] Besides, an individual may get self-radicalised out of curiosity and accessing the publicly available propaganda literature and media.

Social media has become the biggest tool for radicalisation process by the terrorists. In some recent incidents, it has been seen that recruiters are increasingly using the social media platforms to lure the youths into joining their organisations. A precedent set by Anwar Al Awlaki while working as a recruiter for Al Qaeda, radicalisation through social media is now a new norm for the militant groups. The existing members of the militant groups often stay connected to their families and friends through social media and contribute to the radicalisation of the natives of their countries of origin. The pattern could be seen in the attempted joining of ISIS by three teenage girls from Colorado, US in 2014, where the girls were radicalised through social media by the Western-origin recruiters in Turkey, Syria and Iraq. These fighters were also supposedly guiding them on the travelling process to Syria.[38] The use of popular Hashtags in Twitter to release major news and updates is a notable component in the propaganda machinery of ISIS.

In their radicalisation activities, a major use of social media by the extremist groups is to spread the graphic images and videos of atrocities of Muslims, particularly in Iraq, Syria and Palestine, among the sympathisers. Nowadays, videos and pictures of injured or dead children from Syria are heavily shared on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter with, in some cases, quite upsetting stories. This makes the audience to be increasingly sympathetic to the cause of the extremist groups. A noteworthy example is that of Colleen LaRose alias Jihad Jane who had unsuccessfully attempted to kill an allegedly blasphemous Swedish artist in 2008 and contributed to the financing of terrorist groups, was mainly influenced by the videos of torture and civilian casualties on YouTube, particularly against the Muslim children in Palestine and Iraq by the Israeli and US forces respectively.[39] Often recruiters use some specific forums where the discussions are focused and specialised and where many young individuals, going through some sort of hardships in real lives, try to seek answers to spiritual questions related to life. Coming across the radical and often misinterpreted religious literature makes these individuals to be sympathetic to the cause of the extremist groups.[40] At some stages, videos in YouTube containing lectures of radical Islamist scholars are shared with the supporters. Lectures

---

[37] Different terrorist guidelines of recruitment, for example, Abu Amru Al Qa'idy, "A Course in the Art of Recruiting", 2010.

[38] Michael King and Donald M. Taylor, *op. cit.,* pp. 607-611.

[39] Tom Holt, Joshua D. Freilich, Steven Chermak and Clark McCauley. "Political radicalization on the Internet: Extremist content, government control, and the power of victim and jihad videos", *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict,* Vol. 8, No. 2, 2015, pp. 113-114.

[40] Charvat, *op. cit.,* pp. 82-83.

of prominent motivators like Anwar Al Awlaki leave a deep impact on the individuals because of their skillful persuasive techniques and make them more dedicated to the cause.[41] The recruiters also use some online chatting applications where users can send encrypted messages, as evident through the use of Telegram by ISIS.

The radicalisation process of ISIS also includes an interesting feature to lure young men. The recruiters often compare the lifestyle of their fighters with that of the protagonists of the popular video games played by the young men and release posters, videos and memes through social media containing such messages asking them to join real wars instead of imitated games.[42] Such propaganda is especially useful in attracting the individuals who seek excitement in their lives.

In recent years, the militant organisations have become more interested in recruiting female members as they can be married to the male fighters which will ultimately lure in more male fighters. The radicalisation of female recruits displays a bit of different strategy with some common elements. The female members of ISIS also use the social media to further promote the organisation among the female folk and try to alter the typical views about the status of women in the ISIS occupied territories. Aqsa Mahmood, an ISIS member who was influential in radicalising three British school girls to join the organisation, used her blog page to explain that women can get their basic amenities in ISIS occupied territories just like any other place in their own country.[43] The ISIS female members also try to portray the romantic relationship with their new husbands through the social media to assert that true love could be found only by joining ISIS. One such member is Bird of Jannah (pseudonym), a Malaysian woman, who used to post stories about her relationship with her ISIS fighter husband on her Tumblr page, embracing poetic expressions about their romantic bond.[44]

4. Outcomes: Shaping the New Breed of Militants

Radicalisation by the recruiters as well as the propaganda efforts by the militant groups make an individual more devoted to their ideology and more inclined towards committing violent acts to achieve the desired goals of the organisations. Some individuals act as 'lone-wolves' who are self-radicalised and do not join a militant organisation but carry out terrorist attacks within their capacities. Between 1993 and 2011, the percentage of online-radicalised lone-wolves increased from none to about 60 per cent (Figure 1). Since 2010, there has been a growing tendency by the terrorist groups to encourage lone wolf attacks, as evident in the issues of Al Qaeda's

---

[41] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The use of the Internet for terrorist purposes,* Vienna: Publishing and Library Section, United Nations Office, 2012, pp. 35-36.
[42] Simon Parkin, "How Isis hijacked pop culture, from Hollywood to video games", *The Guardian*, 29 January 2016.
[43] Jethro Mullen, "What is ISIS appeal for young people?", *CNN*, 25 February 2015, available at http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/25/middleeast/isis-kids-propaganda/, accessed on 10 December 2016.
[44] Ellie Hall, "An ISIS Love Story: Till Martyrdom Do Us Part", *BuzzFeed News*, 18 September 2014, available at https://www.buzzfeed.com/ellievhall/an-isis-love-story-till-martyrdom-do-us part, accessed on 10 December 2016.

digital propaganda magazine the *Inspire*.[45] Messages of these issues contain technical information about making a bomb 'at home' as well as comprehensive details on using different weapons and ammunition.[46] The terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California in 2015 is one of the most significant incidents of such lone-wolf attacks in recent times. FBI investigations reveal that the perpetrators Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik were "consuming poison on the Internet", however, no further details have been released.[47] There is a high possibility that this online poison must have been accessed through some social media platforms, most likely propagated by the ISIS.

Figure 1: Online-Radicalised Lone-Wolves
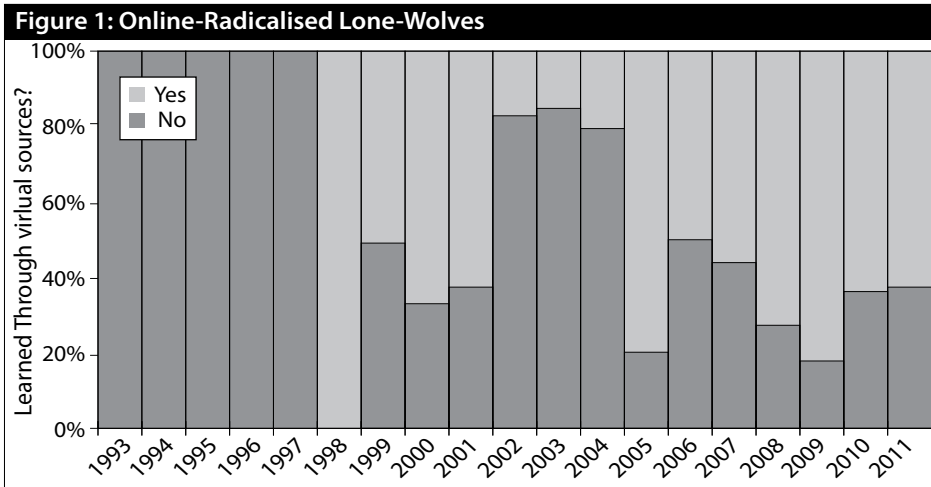
Source: Paul Gilly and Emily Corner, "Lone actor terrorist use of the Internet and the behavioural correlates" in Lee Jarvis, Stuart MacDonald, Thomas M. Chen (eds.), *Terrorism Online: Politics, Law and Technology*, New York: Routledge, 2015, p. 39.

Some of the radicalised individuals directly join the terrorist groups as militants while others work indirectly to the cause of the groups. Such indirect activism includes providing funding to the terrorist organisation in carrying out their militant activities. Since 2013, such private funding has become a key source of financing for the militant groups as evident in the financing of the groups operating in Syria.[48] The private financiers usually use the social media platforms like Twitter to accumulate funds worth millions of dollars from the sympathisers around the world, which would be used to fund the purchase of weapons, grooming or nurturing new fighters or to support specific missions.[49]

---

[45] Martin Rudner, "Electronic Jihad: The Internet as Al Qaeda's Catalyst for Global Terror", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* , Vol. 40, No. 1, 2017, pp. 10-23.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] Al Baker and Mark Santora, "San Bernardino Attackers Discussed Jihad in Private Messages, F.B.I. Says", *The New York Times,* 16 December 2015.
[48] Joby Warrick, "Private donations give edge to Islamists in Syria, officials say", *The Washington Post*, 21 September 2013.
[49] *Ibid*.

A major portion of the social media recruits works in the cyber-cells of the terrorist groups to extend the propaganda efforts on the Internet as well as radicalise others to join the organisation. Apart from the online propaganda and recruitment activities, the cyber cell members of the terrorist groups have now been indulging into defacing and breaching data of websites and online pages of different state agencies which could prove to be a massive threat to the global security. One such recruit was Junaid Hussain, a UK born hacker who worked for the Cyber Caliphate, the online propaganda wing of ISIS.[50] Before being killed in an airstrike in August 2015, Hussain was involved in the hacking of the official Twitter and YouTube accounts of the US Central Command in January 2015 along with the online radicalisation and recruitment of several other fighters for ISIS.[51] Reports indicate that he also worked to develop new hackers for the terrorist group and was believed to be capable of breaching the servers of banks and financial institutions to extort millions of dollars to fund their violent activities.[52] According to a neighbour and long-time family friend, Hussain "was radicalised by a computer"[53] referring to the possibilities of use of social media sites in his recruitment into the ISIS. In August of the same year, a group identifying themselves as Islamic State Hacking Division, published personal details of 1,400 military personnel and officials of influential state agencies of the US, allegedly by breaching the government databases.[54] Although the US officials have denied having their server breached by the hackers, such disclosure of this crucial information is a serious threat to the safety of US military and government officials.

The Al Qaeda has also been making significant strides toward improving its cyber cell, though still not as efficient as ISIS. Initially, only being deployed as the digital propaganda and recruitment arm, the cyber activists of the organisation seem to be expanding their pursuit with the emergence of 'Al Qaeda Electronic (AQE)' in 2015, as the official cyber warfare branch of Al Qaeda led by Yahya Al Nemr.[55] The group is still believed to be at its infancy and has defaced some low value websites with few allegedly denial-of-service attacks.[56] Here as well, the members of this hacking group could be recruited through social media as the group's media wing, Al Maarek, uses its Facebook and Twitter pages to publicise their successful cyber operations.[57] It is true that these cyber terrorist cells are yet to have sufficient capabilities to impose major

---

[50] Kimiko De Freytas-Tamura, "Junaid Hussain, ISIS Recruiter, Reported Killed in Airstrike", *The New York Times,* 27 August 2015.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Russell Myers, "Jihadist hackers targeting celebrity and business bank accounts to fund Islamic State terror campaign", *The Mirror,* 15 August 2014.

[53] Nick Mccarthy, "Isis hacker Junaid Hussain 'was radicalised by a computer', neighbour claims", *Birmingham Mail,* 27 August 2015, available at http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/isis-hacker-junaid-hussain-was-9941768, accessed on 03 July 2017.

[54] Michael Safi, "Isis 'hacking division' releases details of 1,400 Americans and urges attacks", *The Guardian*,13 August 2015.

[55] Eric Liu, *Al Qaeda Electronic: A Sleeping Dog?*, Critical Threats Project, Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2015, pp. 4-10.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] *Ibid.*

cyber offensives, affecting critical digital infrastructure around the world. However, there should be little doubt that they are gradually moving towards achieving that level of expertise and capacity to become a deadlier threat in the coming days.

4.1.   *Values Added by Social Media*

The change in strategy by the terror groups to use social media in their radicalisation process has brought about some favourable ramifications in their operations. Social media, being a blessing of modern communication technology, serves as a major platform for swift and easy flow of information. Through social media, the terror groups can now easily communicate within their networks and disseminate the necessary messages in a very quick time. It helps them to stay connected with their affiliated branches in distant countries and keeps them motivated and dedicated to their cause which ultimately makes it easier to mobilise the members for the collective action of the terrorist groups.[58] These branches could get all the latest updates about their parent organisation with minimum efforts. Social media also helps the terrorist groups to better guide its fighters in their missions and keep a track on them while in action. This makes their operations more effective and raises the morale of their members. In the process, the terror groups become stronger and more capable to inflict larger casualties and damages.

Another major value added by social media is its capability to reach a wider audience. Through the use of social media, the terror groups can now recruit from a diverse pool of population. Such diversity of demographics could be seen in the profile of foreign fighters of ISIS and Al Qaeda. Through such diversity, the militant organisations are now benefitting from a wide range of skills and talents provided by its diverse group of members. Social media also increases the value of propaganda efforts by the terrorist groups manifolds which help them extensively in their expansion of networks. It helps the organisation in their strategic communication system by making it comprehensive, multi-platform and focus-based. Through social media, the recruiters can easily reach the desired target audience with the help of specialised forums and chat rooms. Use of social media also increases the counter-vigilance capabilities of the terror groups by making them untraceable in the cyberspace. Online chatting applications like Telegram with an option for exchanging encrypted messages protect the secrecy of the terrorist organisations and serve as major medium to disseminate clandestine information.

A crucial aspect of the use of social media by the terror groups is the radicalisation of the urban educated youths with backgrounds in well-off families. The urban educated people are usually considered an enlightened community, especially in the developing countries. Such perception could be noticed when the

---

[58] Gadi Wolfsfeld, Elad Segev and Tamir Sheafer, "Social Media and the Arab Spring: Politics Comes First", *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2013, pp. 115-117.

rural and less-educated people, especially the youths, try to emulate the lifestyle of the urban people. When a youth from an urban educated background joins a terrorist organisation, it automatically creates a curiosity among others about the organisation and makes them interested in it; a behavior, demonstrated by the psychological theory of 'Cognitive Bias'[59]. Besides, there is a common perception that people living in poverty or with poor living conditions are more inclined to joining the terrorist organisations. The recruitment of the youth from well-off families into the militant organisations challenges this conventional notion. One such case is that of the Bangladeshi militant Nibras Islam, one of the perpetrators of the terrorist attack in the Bangladesh capital Dhaka in July 2016, who was an engineering student at the Monash University in Malaysia. The involvement of such an educated youth from a well-to-do family in a violent extremist attack shocked the entire country.[60] As a result, people become increasingly interested in such terrorist organisations and in some cases, go on to join them. Overall, such phenomenon raises the acceptance of the ideologies and causes of the militant groups.

5.   Global Counterterrorism Strategies: Strength and Loopholes

To combat the growing menace of global terrorism, several states have begun to formulate counterterrorism strategies based on their needs and requirements. Usually, the counterterrorism efforts could be divided into two categories, hard approach and soft approach. The hard approach refers to the activities of military and security personnel involving into direct combat with the terrorist groups. The soft approach, on the other hand, includes a broad range of efforts to deny the terrorist recruitment of individuals by instigating counter narratives, addressing the grievances of the marginalised communities and improving the overall situation of the society to eradicate its vulnerability to militancy.

Since the 9/11, the US has been considering the threat of terrorism with an immense gravity and striving to frame an effective national counterterrorism strategy. Since 2001, the White House has published three editions of its national counterterrorism strategy – in 2003, 2006 and 2011. The latest one, National Strategy for Counterterrorism 2013, is yet to be publicly available. Not surprisingly, all these counterterrorism strategies are mostly directed towards the recent surge of religious terrorism by Islamist violent extremist groups. A key element of the counterterrorism strategy of the US is the development of the vulnerable societies in the forms of poverty alleviation, upholding the democratic environment, eradicating inequality and women and youth empowerment. These efforts could contribute to preventing the radicalisation of the people. The strategy also calls for providing necessary training and equipment to the vulnerable states who are the biggest victims of global

---

[59] Cognitive bias is a psychological term that refers to the situation when an individual gives up rational thinking after being influenced by social influence, emotional and moral motivations.

[60] Siddharthya Roy, "A Year of Bangladesh's War on Terror", *The Diplomat,* 6 July 2017.

terrorism. A major change in the US strategy has been the promotion of and assistance in upholding good governance particularly in the terrorism affected countries. A notable instance is Afghanistan where the US is withdrawing its troops but continue to assist in the new governance system since the removal of the Taliban from power,[61] perhaps resulting from a lesson drawn from the experience during the Soviet-Afghan War.

One thing the strategy has tried to make clear is that "The US is not and never will be at war with Islam".[62] Such messages will leave a dent on the propaganda movements by the violent extremist groups and make them losing their acceptance. However, the strategy clearly lacks a comprehensive approach to deal with the growing radicalisation and propaganda efforts by the extremist groups through social media. There has been no mention about any proposed surveillance or counter propaganda efforts. The Obama administration had accepted the shortcomings of their counterterrorism efforts in dealing with the increasingly stronger propaganda movements and decided to expand the activities of Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications under the Department of State[63]. In recent years, the US counterterrorism operations have been demonstrating a pattern of aerial strikes and drone attacks in the militant held areas.[64] While these operations are indeed useful in eliminating some top militant commanders, the collateral damages caused by the aerial attacks in the form of scores of civilian casualties pretty much diminish the value of such operations. These civilian casualties are later used by the extremist groups in their propaganda drives which ultimately bolster their organisational strength.

The European Union (EU) has also formulated a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy based on four pillars - Prevent, Protect, Pursue and Respond.[65] 'Prevent' emphasises on the tools and mechanisms to counter radicalisation and prevent the people from joining the extremist groups. 'Protect' calls for measures to boost up the institutional and infrastructural capabilities to ensure security from attacks. 'Pursue' deals with issues like intelligence and information sharing as well as border control to pursue the perpetrators. 'Respond' demonstrates the measures and policies to tackle the aftermath of a terrorist attack. Like the US, the counterterrorism strategy of EU also stresses the need for good governance, human rights, economic prosperity and intercultural dialogue to stop the radicalisation process. The most significant aspect of the EU counterterrorism strategy is the accentuation of cooperation among the member states of EU in the form of intelligence sharing, sharing of best practices as well as capacity building. The EU also appears to be a bit cautious about the radicalisation process going on the Internet. In 2015, the EU

---

[61] The White House, *National Security Strategy*, Washington DC, 2015, p. 9.
[62] The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, Washington DC, 2011, p. 17.
[63] Eric Schmitt, "US Intensifies Effort to Blunt ISIS' Message", *The New York Times*, 16 February 2015.
[64] Rosa Brooks, "US Counterterrorism Strategy Is the Definition of Insanity", *Foreign Policy*, 24 June 2015.
[65] Council of the European Union, *The European Union Counter-terrorism Strategy*, Brussels, 2005, p. 3.

Internet Referral Unit was established by the Europol.[66] The unit has identified 3,200 contents across 45 different platforms in the Internet, of which about 91 per cent have been removed.[67] There is, however, a lot to be done, especially given the fact that several European youths are still joining militant groups like ISIS, being radicalised through the Internet.

The counterterrorism strategies of entities other than the US and EU are largely kept classified and not available publicly, which makes it difficult to analyse their effectiveness or weaknesses. However, through observing the actions of these countries, some elements of their strategies could be discerned. Because of its recent rise as an emerging super power, China's counterterrorism strategy deserves a special scrutiny, which is based on the perceived 'Three Evils' – terrorism, separatism and religious fundamentalism.[68] China's counterterrorism efforts are mostly concentrated in the province of Xinjiang, witnessing a separatist movement by the ethnic Uyghur Muslims. The violent extremist groups operating in the region, most notably the Turkistan Islamic Party, also known as East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), are allegedly linked with Al Qaeda in the forms of training and funding of operations.[69] China's counterterrorism strategy has combined the characteristics of both 'hard' and 'soft approaches',[70] evident in the frequent crackdowns on the militant groups along with efforts to ensure economic development. An important element of China's counterterrorism strategy seems to be the censorship of cultural and media agencies, dedicated to blocking anti-state contents, as seen in the government approaches.[71] The strategy also includes strict surveillance which has been manifested in the recent government policy of instructing the Muslim residents of Xinjiang to install a spyware in their mobile phones.[72] These censorships and heavy surveillance could prove to be effective in keeping the propaganda materials of the terrorist organisations at bay. However, excessive censorships also violate the right to freedom of expression of the people while heavy surveillance will curb on their privacy. This situation could further alienate the Uyghur Muslims from the society, leading to the growing grievances and their eventual participation in violent extremist activities.

Among the African countries, Nigeria is one of the most severely affected states by terrorist activities. The most prominent violent extremist group operating

---

[66] European Police Office, a law enforcement agency of the EU.
[67] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament,* Brussels, p. 7.
[68] Chien Peng Chung, "Confronting terrorism and other evils in China : all quiet on the western front?" *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly,* Vol. 4, No. 2, 2006, pp. 77-78.
[69] Phillip B. K. Potter, "Terrorism in China: Growing Threats with Global Implications", *Strategic Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 7, No. 4, 2013, pp. 71-74.
[70] Michael Clarke, "China, Xinjiang and the internationalisation of the Uyghur issue", *Global Change, Peace & Security,* Vol. 22, No. 2, 2010, pp. 220-221.
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] Yi Shu Ng, "China is force-installing spyware onto Muslim citizens' phones, to monitor them", *Mashable*, 21 July 2017, available at http://mashable.com/2017/07/21/china-spyware-xinjiang/#Pn2_0cirzOqn, accessed on 01 August 2017.

in the country is Boko Haram, an ISIS-affiliated organisation[73], notoriously known for its brutalities and widespread terrorist networks throughout Nigeria and in the neighbouring countries.[74] Nigeria's National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) was first formulated in 2014 under the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan and have released one revised edition ever since.[75] The NACTEST, on paper, does talk about soft approaches like counter radicalisation efforts to prevent the individuals from joining the terrorist groups, in the form of one of the five work streams of the strategy called 'Forestall'. However, the ground realities suggest the government is more inclined towards the hard approach as seen in the massive military deployment in the affected regions as well as the austere security measures against the civilians.[76] A major deficit of the NACTEST is that it fails to illustrate any proper guideline on the capacity building of the government institutions and the military, especially when the Nigerian military has been receiving widespread criticisms because of its alleged corruptions in the procurement of military equipment to combat the ongoing insurgencies.[77]

Some policy formulations over counterterrorism have also been conducted by the United Nations (UN). In 2001, the UN formed the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and in 2005, the member states of the General Assembly[78] adopted the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy which is reviewed in every two years. The strategy is based on four pillars stated as:[79]

1. Addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism;

2. Preventing and combatting terrorism;

3. Building Member States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and

4. Ensuring the respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for countering terrorism.

The article 12 under pillar II specially talks about the online activities by the extremist groups and calls for cooperation on international and regional level to

---

[73] "IS welcomes Boko Haram allegiance: tape", *Yahoo News,* 12 March 2015, available at https://www.yahoo.com/news/accepts-allegiance-nigeria-jihadists-boko-haram-201513146.html, accessed on 03 July 2017.
[74] Eugene Eji, "Rethinking Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Strategy", *The International Journal of Intelligence, Security, and Public Affairs,* Vol. 18, No. 3, 2016, pp. 201-203.
[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 204-208.
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] *Ibid.,* p. 61.
[78] The General Assembly is one of the six principal organs of the UN where all the member states of the UN are included.
[79] "United Nations Action To Counter Terrorism", available at http://www.un.org/en/counterterrorism/, accessed on 10 December 2016.

combat it.[80] The strategy, however, exhibits some major weaknesses; a notable one is the lack of any clear definition for terms like terrorism, extremism or radicalisation, following the trend in other counterterrorism strategies.

6.   Way Forward

The countries and organisations like UN are yet to create a universal definition of radicalisation. The absence of such definition is a major obstacle in bringing in the recruiters and motivators of violent extremism to the court. To formulate effective laws, acts or conventions, there is no alternative to a proper definition of the crime. As it can be seen, the terror groups are increasingly becoming transnational. Universality of these definitions will make it easier for countries to cooperate in the judicial processes.

A major deficiency in the different counterterrorism strategies is the lack of proper and specific solution to counter the radicalisation process through Internet, especially the social media. Though not mentioned in the official strategies, countries do indulge in surveillance of the cyberspace and often takedown suspicious contents. The US, for example, have urged some internet companies to takedown contents by Anwar Al Awlaki, which have allegedly radicalised a large number of extremists to carry out violent acts.[81] Though surveillance over the Internet is indeed necessary to ensure national and global security, the relevant agencies must also be careful that they do not violate the right to freedom of expression. Such violations could, in return, instigate new grievances among the youth and make them vulnerable to radicalisation. Proper space must be created to ensure the expression of opinions from all sorts of people, even for the sympathisers or supporters of extremist groups. Such a space will create an environment of constructive debates where people could counter the arguments of the extremists. In this way, the extremists will be bound to leave the path of violence. Besides, the freedom of press and media is also an essential component to build a pluralistic society. Extensive censorship of media causes the people to rely on alternative sources of news out of curiosity which often comes from questionable sources and contain misinformed views. Such alternative sources could also include contents produced by the terrorist organisations which would ultimately radicalise the individuals to hold violent extremist views.

A key to reach success in counterterrorism is the good relations between law enforcement agencies and the civilians. Trust on the law enforcement agencies is crucial in countering the radicalisation process. However, considering some recent events, it could be seen that the law enforcement agencies are dramatically losing their acceptance. In the US for example, the allegations of racial prejudice against the police have dented their image to a great extent. Such mistrust on the police could be one of the reasons behind the radicalisation of Afro-American youths in the US. In many developing countries, the law enforcement agencies are often used

---

[80] "UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy", available at https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy, accessed on 10 December 2016.

[81] Scott Shane, "Internet Firms Urged to Limit Work of Anwar al-Awlaki", *The New York Times*, 18 December 2015.

by the governments against the political opponents of the ruling parties. Such acts are also detrimental to the image of the law enforcement agencies which ultimately diminish the trust over the agencies. The counterterrorism strategies must include some effective provisions for enhancing the trust and relations between the law enforcement agencies and the civilians. The strategies should also embody elements of proper guidelines to ensure effective capacity building of the security agencies, especially in the developing countries. Such guidelines must have provisions for necessary modernisation of the forces as well as transparency and accountability in this effort to prevent misuse of the disbursed funds.

Effective intelligence sharing is also a vital element in the counterterrorism efforts. However, there is a lack of effective cooperation among the states as far as intelligence sharing is concerned. The US involves itself in extensive intelligence sharing with several countries but refrain from such cooperation with countries like Iran.[82] Given Iran's geopolitical location, intelligence sharing with this country will provide some useful information regarding the extremist groups based in the Middle East. The EU is also mainly concerned with intelligence sharing among its member states and the US. Such constraints in intelligence sharing stem from the fear of possible dissemination of information critical to their national interests. Countries must get rid of such mistrust and should cooperate in extensive intelligence sharing for effective counterterrorism operations.

7.   Conclusion

The use of social media in the radicalisation process challenges the traditional notion that recruits of the extremist groups mainly belong to poor and less educated backgrounds. On the other hand, social media has left the extremist groups with bigger outreach and larger acceptance. The threat of global terrorism has become such a big challenge that it requires an equally strenuous effort. The counterterrorism strategies adopted by different countries in the world, indeed, have some useful suggestions and recommendations that could help to mitigate the spread of terrorism. But the existence of some key weaknesses is also a matter of great concern. Moreover, the modern terror organisations continue to change their strategies time to time to be adaptive to new challenges posed by the global counterterrorism forces. The current situation requires an innovative and prudent strategy to face the challenges of global terrorism.

---

[82] Derek S. Reveron, "Counterterrorism and Intelligence Cooperation", *Journal of Global Change and Governance,* Vol. 1, No. 3, 2008, pp. 9-10.

There are numerous counterterrorism operations being carried out in different parts of the world, involving heavily armed counterterrorism forces. But the policymakers must understand the fact that only the 'hard approach' is not going to help them. Effective measures to stop the radicalisation process must be implemented to kill the root cause of the threat. The counterterrorism efforts must remain a step ahead of the extremist groups to be adaptive to their changing tactics. The radicalisation through social media is one such case of the changing tactics but will not be limited to that. The policymakers must be innovative in predicting the future scenario and formulating the ways to deal with it. While in many cases, there is no alternative to military actions in the counterterrorism operations, the strategy to such operations must ensure the minimum possible collateral damage. Such strategy should not only look for immediate results but must also stay careful about long term consequences.

BIISS Publications

- **BIISS Journal (Quarterly)**
- **Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey (Quarterly)**
- **BIISS Papers (Monograph Series)**

The Assam Tangle : Outlook for the Future (1984)

The Crisis in Lebanon: Multi-dimensional Aspects and Outlook for the Future (1985)

India's Policy Fundamentals, Neighbours and Post-Indira Developments (1985)

Strategic Aspects of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations (1986)

Indo-Bangladesh Common Rivers and Water Diplomacy (1986)

Gulf War : The Issues Revisited (1987)

The SAARC in Progress : A Hesitant Course of South Asian Transition (1988)

Post-Brezhnev Soviet Policy Towards the Third World (1988)

Changing Faces of Socialism (1989)

Sino-Indian Quest for Rapprochement: Implications for South Asia (1989)

Intifada : The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle (1990)

Bangladesh : Towards National Consensus (in Bangla, 1990)

Environmental Challenges to Bangladesh (1991)

The Gulf War and the New World Order : Implication for the Third World (1992)

Challenges of Governance in India : Fundamentals under Threat (1995)

Bangladesh in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1998)

Nuclearisation of South Asia : Challenges and Options for Bangladesh (1998)

The Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinian Statehood (2000)

Pakistan and Bangladesh : From Conflict to Cooperation (2003)

Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Bangladesh : A Case for People's Management (2003)

WTO Dispute Settlement System and Developing Countries: A Neorealist Critique (2004)

State Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention : Does One Negate the Other? (2006)

Unipolarity and Weak States: The Case of Bangladesh (2009)

Japan's Strategic Rise (2010)

BIISS Publications

- **Books**

  South Asian Regional Cooperation: A Socio–economic Approach to Peace and Stability

  Nation Building in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Prospect

  The Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace

  The Security of Small States

  ASEAN Experiences of Regional and Inter-regional Cooperation: Relevance for SAARC

  Development, Politics and Security: Third World Context

  Bangladesh and SAARC: Issues, Perspectives and Outlook

  Bangladesh: Society, Polity and Economy

  South Asia's Security: Primacy of Internal Dimension

  Chandabaji Versus Entrepreneurship: Youth Force in Bangladesh

  Development Cooperation at the Dawn of the Twenty First Century: Bangladesh-German Partnership in Perspective

  Conflict Management and Sub-regional Co-operation in ASEAN: Relevance of SAARC

  National Security of Bangladesh in the 21st Century

  Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh

  Regional Co-operation in South Asia: New Dimensions and Perspectives

  Confidence Building Measures and Security Cooperation in South Asia: Challenges in the New Century

  Bangladesh-Southeast Asia Relations: Some Insights

  Security in the Twenty First Century: A Bangladesh Perspective

  25 Years of BIISS: An Anthology

  Politics and Security in South Asia: Salience of Religion and Culture

  Small States and Regional Stability in South Asia

  Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia

  Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective

  Towards BIMSTEC-Japan Comprehensive Economic Cooperation: Bangladesh Perspective

  Democracy, Governance and Security Reforms: Bangladesh Context

  Whither National Security Bangladesh 2007

  National Security Bangladesh 2008

  Human Security Approach to Counter Extremism in South Asia: Relevance of Japanese Culture

  National Security Bangladesh 2009

  Energy Security in South Asia Plus: Relevance of Japanese Experience

  South Asia Human Security Series:

  Nepali State, Society and Human Security: An Infinite Discourse

  Evolving Security Discourse in Sri Lanka: From National Security to Human Security

  Violence, Terrorism and Human Security in South Asia

  Women and Human Security in South Asia: The Cases of Bangladesh and Pakistan

  Human Security in India: Health, Shelter and Marginalisation

  Pakistan: Haunting Shadows of Human Security

  Human Security in India: Discourse, Practices and Policy Implications

  Human Security Index for South Asia: Exploring Relevant Issues

  Ethnicity and Human Security in Bangladesh and Pakistan