

# [Challenges to fighting transnational terror networks](https://assignbuster.com/challenges-to-fighting-transnational-terror-networks/)

#### TraditionalState Power limitation in dealing with Transnational Terrors Networks: andthe role of Social Media

Governments have been phased with challenging situations when implementing effective counterinsurgency measures against rebel groups that override national boundaries; even despite superior power. For example, the Afghan government and U. S./NATO coalitions forces and their inability to defeat Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants, despite their joint and greater vitality (Salehyan, 2009). In the case of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, rebels we’re defying and trouncing government efforts through sanctuaries, surpassing borders, and that of government exercises too.  At the time, these groups we’re one of the first demonstrations of terror organizations that were not territorially bounded and the implications of such regional mobility.

In today’s 21 st century, borders have become even more porous. The current globalized world, has reached a new level of interconnectedness. Through technology, the media, and the effects of globalized markets, sovereign statehood, as we once knew it is transforming. The contemporary interconnectedness is dissolving the significance of borders and boundaries once established by theTreaty of Westphaliain 1648. Explicitly, such transformation from the dynamics of globalization has been the advancement of terrorism from a regional phenomenon into a global one.

Social Media, is one of the most critical dynamics of globalization that’s contributing to global terrorism. Traditional state power is limited in dealing with transnational terror networks that organize through social media. The United States, serves as an examples of such limitations with its rise of homegrown extremism despite the state’s strong traditional military, economical, and even political power. In a time-span of twelve years since the 9/11 attacks, there was a total of 60 Islamist-terror plots against the United States, and 49 of which were homegrown terror plots inspired through social networks (Bucci, 2013). Homeland security and the intelligence community are being presented with a modern challenge to counterterrorism.

Much like theimplications that were brought upon the Afghan government and the U. S./NATOcoalitions forces, from the trans-border Al Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries, social media isproviding a global nexus of sanctuariesfor terrorist networks.

Whereasin the past, these transborder dynamics were difficult to contain withinnational boundaries, terrorist have now gained the ability to organize inexternal sanctuaries with no attachment to a physical location (Salehyan, 2009). Social media, has become a fundamental role in terrorist operationalstrategy. It’s important to note the complexity of social media, as there arethousands of platforms and each caters to very different arrays of people. Forexample, Instagram caters to the kind of person who best expresses themselvesthrough photographs, versus Twitter accounts for people who communicate throughshort burst of information; each form of media, serves a purpose for audiencethat the other may not (Hale, 2017). These advancements have given terroristorganizations the ability to attack informally to a much larger audience, atany time or any given location.

Thus, the battle against terrorism is no longer a structured one that can bechallenged with military power (Ressler, 2006). Terrorist’s exploitation ofthese technologies into their organizations, is changing the nature of warfare. Markedly, the attacks in London and Sharm-el Sheikh in 2005, were discovered tohave been facilitated by training that was available electronically (Forest, 2007). What became one of Egypt’s most, deadliest terrorist attacks, inhistory, was completely conspired, trained, and even instructed through onlinesources.

Cyberterrorism, is changing the nature of combat, and as a result creating the need for a newtype of intelligence, in which traditional power will play a subordinate role. Military power will continue to be undermine through the use of ‘ internetsanctuaries’. Infiltration of these organizations will not prevail, in thetraditional and physical manner; cyber-infiltration is the contemporary powerneeded to monitor and diffuse terror-net hotspots.

Terrorist’sability to communicate instantly and across great distances is not the onlyimplication exposed. Its their ability to intelligently use these different socialplatforms to market their ideology, that has also changed the nature ofterrorism. The most notable success of this kind of ideological marketing, hasbeen the Islamic State (ISIS), in marketing its caliphate. Through its jihadistinflux of propaganda, the Islamic state, has conquered a territory no otherorganization has before, the world of social media. (Engel, 2015). Theterrorist organization has traces in almost every social network including Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, YouTube, as well as multiple presences in thedark web.

Theorganization’s ability to assess the differences between each platform, isevident in their intelligently distinctive approach in propagandas through thevarying platforms. Twitter in particular, has been used to drive communicationsby the jihadist organization. In 2014, there was a collection of 59 Twitteraccounts that linked to western-origin fighters known to now be in Syria(Klausen, 2014). The significance of the role of social media on terrorism, isdue to the fact that by previous nature, extremists have lacked wide supportfor their radical ideas, which forced these groups to need to provoke drasticacts to receive attention, and televised response. Terrorism through thisaspect was the weakest form of irregular campaigning.

Asa result of this new facilitation of transnational communication through socialnetworks, terrorist have gained the ability to reach new targets forrecruitment and expansion. The increasingly worldwide perception of Muslimoppressions, is providing organizations like the Islamic State, with directopportunities of spreading their radical beliefs to the exterior countries, speciallyin the west. Targeting these sympathizers, whom feel alienated in westernsocieties, by portraying ISIS territory in a very pleasant and welcoming communityof the “ Muslim brotherhood.” Infusing their social-media dominance to theirrecruiting techniques, the organization has been successful in spreading awestern encouragement to migrate to Syria. Roughly, 4, 000 foreigners of ISIS’fighting force have come from western countries (Engel, 2015). Recruiters aretargeting minorities and recent Muslim converts, through chatting apps likeKIK, to advise these potentials on routes to Syria through Turkey, and evenoffer recruitment arrangements.  With therecent Muslim travel bans by the United States, extremist are further provokingvulnerability for sympathizers, and providing terrorist with support ofcaliphate radicalization.

However, although technology has improved the ability for terrorist to work together, and reach a new audience, technology can’t change the character of theterrorist message or the nature of struggle (Baylis, 2011). That is, regardlessof the new methods, there are still patterns and trends in these organizations’characteristics that are not altering.

The identification of such characteristics for potential perpetrators is of critical importance for the prevention and deterrence of the contemporary nature of terrorism (Dolnik, 2007). Profiling the organization’s activities and modifications, gives exhibition to the group’s ‘ modus operandi;’ that is a particular way or method of doing something, that’s characteristically well-established (Dolnik, 2007). There seems to be a direct correlation between the variables in these organizations’ modus operandi, with their group dynamics, including their structure and ultimately their durability. It has been approximated that only one out of ten organizations survive the first year of operations (Dolnik, 2007). Through Dolnik’s research, in critical elements ofpredictive threat assessmentfrom terrorist violence, he identifies the interrelationship between a groups’ level of technological innovation and its life-span length.  Considering the importance for these organizations to adopt and habituate to technological advances, for their durability, this detail provides contingency for state intervention in a sui generis power that surpasses the traditional limitations.

Inspite of the terrorist use of social networks for extremist movements, thepublication of their actions and their digital footprint leaves behindopportunity to profile and determine these terror organization’s modusoperandi. Understanding these extremists’ ideologies and strategies is critical, because, its these ideologies that are ultimately the driving force behindthese networks. Knowing what drives them, is knowing how to destruct them. TheBritish intelligence agency, MI5 provides an example of such counterinsurgency successin the 1930’s, using the same methods of data fusion to defeat Soviet communistrecruitment in Britain. Using a Domestic Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) combinedwith defensive counterintelligence ops (such as surveillance), the agency wascapable of comprehending the underground network, identifying the structure, and its methods for activities.  Throughthis knowledge of how the network was operating, MI5 was able to infiltrate bystrategically setting themselves up for recruitment, and ultimately defeatingthem. The same strategy for data fusion is need to triumph on the war ofcyberterrorism.

Acquiringnew techniques that optimize the ability for information systems, to acquireand measure sets of key information within social networks; is the type of dataadvancement needed to deal with insurgencies that organize themselves throughsocial medias. Already established (SNA) Social Network Analysis, study’s therelations, ties, patterns, and communications within social groups(Ortiz-Arroyo, 2009). But the success of defeating these terroristorganizations will come almost directly from the knowledge of its structure, and that will include identifying the sets of key players and their relationswithin social networks. Discovering such sets of players is based on entropymeasures, which uses a ‘ Galois Lattices’ mathematical approach of  nodes (or actors) and edges (or sets oflinks) to create a map of interaction between the two (Ortiz-Arroyo, 2009). Incorporating these technique of computer analysis into encryptions withfunctionality measures of centrality, which measure certain assumptions aboutthe flow of information in networks, will provide states with greater advantagein defensive counterintelligence. Particularly, in combating and defusingterrorist radical messages in the domestic sector.

State power in combating terror networks is contingent upon adapting to the modern conflicts of terrorism. While the strategy used by the MI5, for data fusion is still valuable, new implications of encryption are needed for the current information revolution. The post 9/11 terror attacks in the United States, was the event that led to the commencement of Intelligence reforms. The Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004, paved the way for important network structure analysis and surveillance systems. However, through reversal of the surveillance act by, domestic counterintelligence has been in great disadvantage to the modern terrorist adversaries.

Themodern era of terrorism through networks, provides challenges to traditionalcounterinsurgent techniques. By increasing the role of the private sector inespionage, and surveillance, States can surpass the limitations being presentand avoid the critics of policy that occurred during the 2004 Intelligencereforms. The private sectors, can also assist with using social media to thestates’ advantage, by educating the targets whom by the trends can be depicted, and educating the on the risks associated with extremist and social medias.

Thesedomestic limitations are of advantage for adversaries, like ISIS, that canutilize these domestic implications against the state. Improving technologymonitoring and analysis, is imperative to overcome the traditional limitationsof state power in combating transnational terrorist networks that organizethrough social networks.

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