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Geopolitics of Cyberspace and Expansion of Terrorism in the Central Asia

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Abstract: Terrorism, like any other phenomenon has enjoyed evolution during the course of history and it has become a paramount, influential factor in almost every aspect of national and international equations. Nowadays, terrorists, like any other activist group, use modern technologies in almost evert aspect of their strategies; thus, one should consider the role of these modern technologies that contribute to the furtherance of their malicious deeds. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the ways terrorists act through, and importantly, the tools and instruments they exploit in order to achieve their goals. Arguably, cyberspace and other related tools and materials have become, among other things, very prominent elements of terrorists' strategies. In this paper, hence, we are going to investigate the modern tactics of terrorists in exploiting the cyberspace and cyber-related tools through which, they try to achieve their goals.

Keywords: Terrorism, Online Extremism, Social Media, Central Asia, ISIS.

Previous Researches: Here in this research, we have provided and used a set of researches regarding the terrorism and cyber-instruments, statistical datasets about terrorist events and the flow of foreign fighters of each country toward the crisis zone, the impact of Media and Internet exploitations by the allegedly terrorist groups and their strategy in exploiting internet instruments, psychology and ideology of extremism, fundraising and other related subjects.
But what makes this research particularly different from these previous works is the stress that has been put on the paramount issue of the novel threats that the Media and Cyber-instruments pose on Central Asia region, and the lessons that must be learned in this regard as well. In the light of these findings, this paper suggests to be wary about similar prospects in our own predisposed region.

1 Introduction: What Is the Relation Between Geopolitics, Cyberspace and Terrorism?

With the advent and expansion of ICT and Cyberspace, some observers argued that Geography and Geopolitics have lost their critical value in international politics. Since Cyberspace traverse the borders freely, therefore renders borders, territory and government meaningless. But gradually, internet, social media and cyberspace role in territorial conflict loomed large and states came to understand and acknowledge the cyberspace as a realm to control, monitor and conquer. Nowadays they consider it as a territory in which the states' borders, sovereignty and regulations should be respected and any threat to their national security and interests is a crime and should be punished. Those who celebrated the exclusionary effects of Cyberspace on Geopolitics, neglected the fact the infrastructures, cables, networks, giant service-proving companies and institutions are geographically located in distinct territories. Besides, special actors, groups, networks and state-sponsored bodies are territory-based actors that re utilizing the Cyberspace in favor of some geopolitical, cultural and economic goals (Lashgari, 2016). Also, the targets, whether individuals, companies, organization or states, are territorially based in some geographical phenomenon called states. Therefore, it is ignorance and misunderstanding of the nature of Cyberspace to argue that the importance of Geopolitics in international politics is fading. One of the clear-crystal geopolitical effects of cyberspace can be traced back to terrorism, in different regions.

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"Cyber terror[1] is generally understood as unlawful attacks and threats of attacks against computers, networks, and the information stored therein, when committed to intimidate or coerce governments or their people in furtherance of political or social objectives" (Gadish, 2017).

Considering the above definition, regardless of the nature of these new terroristic acts in this novel era, every single step of which can be done or at least facilitated by cyberspace and cyber-related technologies; as Orna Gadish correctly says "[terrorists] turned the Internet into a facilitator of traditional forms of terror" (Gadish, 2017). They use E-mail, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, Instagram, YouTube, and any other platform that ordinary people use too. They also create websites, forums, and black markets in cyberspace. They commit hack, attack, recruitment, fundraising, and almost any kind of action possible in the cyberspace. So, arguably cyberspace, not only diminishes the role of geopolitics in the calculations of international politics, but also, is some respects strengthen it. This study aims to evaluate the role of Cyberspace in expansion of terrorism in the Central Asia, or how terrorist groups exploit the cyberspace in the region to promote their heinous act of terror.

2 Methodology

The nature of this research is descriptive and analytical one; thus, we are going to investigate what tactics terrorist groups use in line with their strategies. Using findings of the research literature that have been done by other researchers and scholars, we will investigate the research questions. In order to grasp a better understanding regarding the terrorists' tactics, first we should identify their general goals; apart from the brand or basic ideologies, what are their aims? First, we will have a glance at the recent history of terrorism in Central Asia:

3 Results and Discussion

Terrorist organizations like ISIS or even minor local groups use the ICTs[2] to communicate, recruit members, spread their propaganda, to be heard and increase the blast of their actions, create terror within target societies, raise capital and gain financial support, and etc (Fig.2). ISIS, for example, has been repeatedly described as the most adept terrorist group at using Internet and social media propaganda to recruit new members (Johnson, 2016).

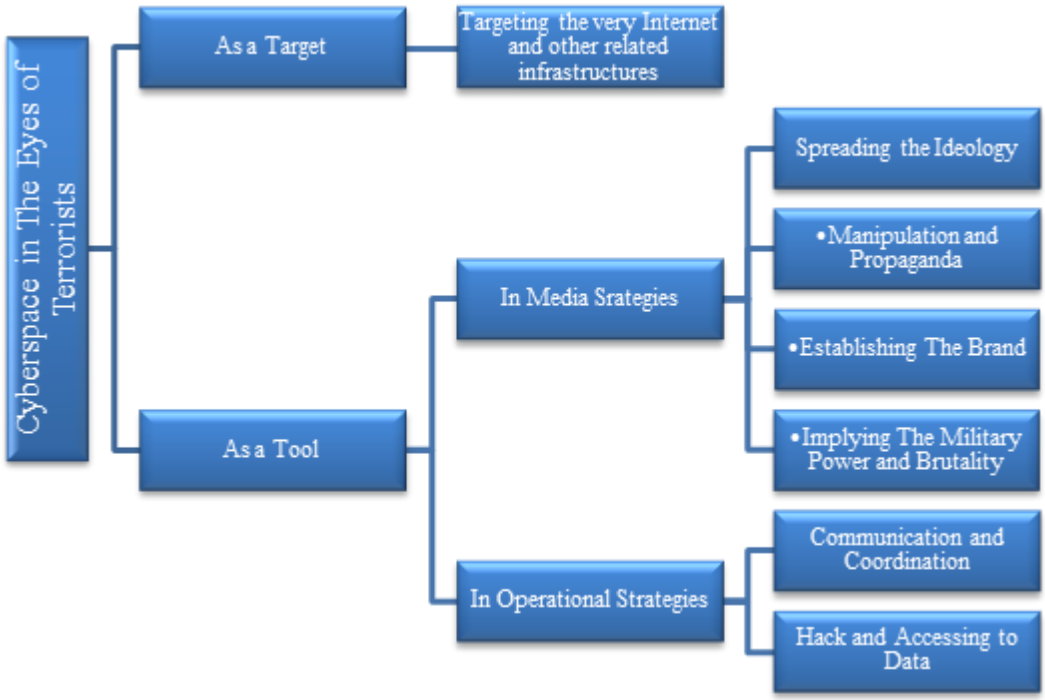


Fig.1: Cyberspace as tool or as target for Terrorists.

[1] The FBI describes cyber terror as “a criminal act perpetrated by using computers and telecommunication systems' capabilities, resulting in violence، destruction and/or disruption of services, in order to create and spread fear by causing confusion and uncertainty within a given population, with the goal of influencing governments or populations to conform to a particular political، social, or ideological agenda. (FBI, 2017)”

[2] Information and Communications Technology

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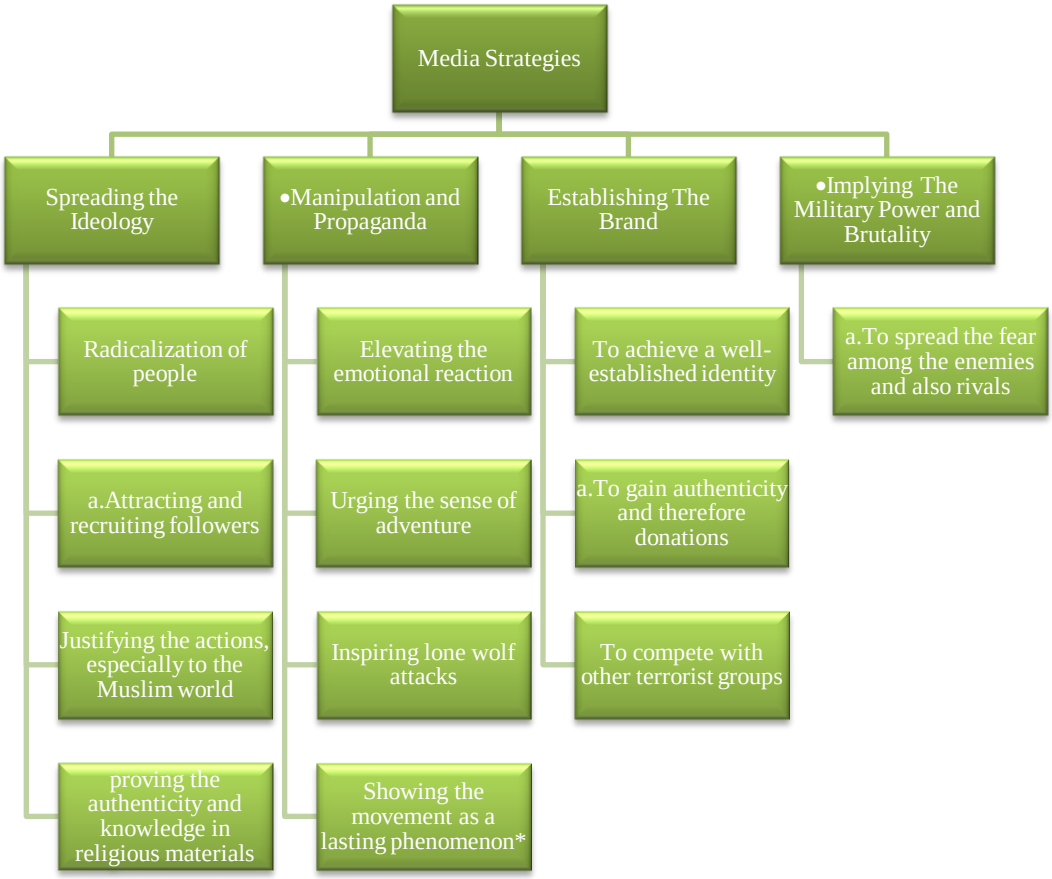


Fig.2: Media Strategies of Terrorist groups and their respective aims (*Showing the kids and children to imply that there will be new generations to come).

4 Recruitment

One of the main factors that any kind of organization needs for its development and progress is manpower – whether regarding the number of employees, or out of need for efficiency of them. They need soldiers[1] for battle, suicide agents for their operations, service forces to take care of routine needs, and experts to carry out hacks, produce professional visual contents, spread the propaganda, and more importantly plan the macro strategies of the whole organization.

For example, regarding the ISIS; they call themselves a caliphate (some sort of a government) which has a complete organizational chart – they have a leader, war minister, economic counselors, strategic advisors, media department, and etc. Therefore, in order to make the entire system running, they need all sorts of manpower on the hand. With a simple glimpse at the figures provided by some related institutes we will notice that over 30.000 foreign fighters from more than 80 countries have traveled to Syria and Iraq to fight along with their fellows (The Soufan Group, 2015)[2]. For the ISIS, Central Asian foreign fighters serve as the main body of the bulk of soldiers due their physical characteristics. (Klausen, 2015).

Before the creation and expansion of social media platforms, terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Taliban were not able to use mainstream medias like Television; but, with the advent and expansion of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, they

[1] Foreign Fighter: this term refers to "individuals driven mainly by ideology, religion, and/or kinship who leave their country of origin, or their country of habitual residence, to join a party engaged in an armed conflict" (Heinsch, 2016).

[2] Tunisia has the highest number of ISIS foreign fighters (6,000), followed by Saudi Arabia (2,500), Russia (2,400), Turkey (2,100), and Jordan (2,000). Among countries in Western Europe, France has the highest number of ISIS foreign fighters (1,700), followed by Germany (760)، the United Kingdom (760), and Belgium (470). Cambodia, Moldova, Romania, and South Africa have only one ISIS foreign fighter each. According to unofficial data, there are 600 ISIS foreign fighters from Libya، followed by 500 from Kyrgyzstan, and 360 from Turkmenistan. Kuwait and Somalia have 70 ISIS fighters each, followed by Serbia with 60, and Afghanistan, Georgia, and Trinidad and Tobago with 50 each. (The Soufan Group, 2015).

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could disseminate their propaganda independently. The major wave of this phenomenon started from 2011. Some Central Asian terrorist groups like KTJ and KIB[1] have their own media divisions – 'Jannat Oshiqlari[2]' and 'Al-Bukhari Media' respectively – to disseminate extremist content throughout the online world. In 2018 alone, these two groups released over 100 audio statements and videos on their Uzbek language blogging websites. The groups' supporters have re-distributed these contents to other platforms namely YouTube, Facebook, VK, Odnoklassniki and Telegram.

In the case of ISIS, this group is actually competing with other groups over recruiting members. ISIS started to use the updated version of the very method that has been used by Taliban. ISIS established its own media wing, *al-Hayat Media Center* (video content), *alFurqan* (news content) and *al-Bayan* (radio content) (Zelin, 2015), through which they started to produce materials in local languages – mostly in Arabic, but also in Western or Central Asian languages – producing different contents for different audiences. ISIS has also developed an application for smartphones named the *Dawn of Glad Tidings* (Liang, 2015). Apart from these factors, they also tap on the ideological factor, which is the most important part of their call for recruiting foreign fighters – those who return the call would actually fulfill their religious duty and will enjoy their prosperity in heaven, and those who do not, will fail in their religious obligations.

Parallel with the Al-Hayat, a whole number of terrorists, mostly female ones, are sitting at back offices, tweeting and retweeting, posting in Instagram and Facebook, and Telegram channels and groups; all furthering the vast propaganda of ISIS to impress the feelings of those predisposed individuals. It is reported that in 2015 alone, Twitter has banned over 25,000 ISIS sympathizer accounts – they actually twitted over 17,000,000 posts and retweeted over 10,000,000 times (Alfifi, Kaghazgaran, Caverlee, & Morstatter, 2018). There are others at the field, posting disgusting scenes of battle, comparing it with the experience of a video game like Call of Duty, to affect the vulnerable young generation in West.

Of course, the tradition methods of recruitment – like recruitment cells in mosques and religious places – are still viable, but not efficient as online methods. The point is that, through online propaganda, these terrorist groups can address hundreds of millions of online users on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, through fake accounts and probably without getting caught; therefore, its (1) cheaper, (2) easier, (3) better for hiding their identity, (4) easy access to a whole large community of users, (5) no need for physical presence and accessible almost anywhere on the planet, (6) easier and also a lot safer to communicate through mobile app messengers[3].

5 Radicalization

Stated by a handful of researchers [(Akiner, 2016) (Kabiri, 2017) (Syria Calling: Radicalisation in Central Asia, 2015) (Lemon, 2015) (Maggiolini & Varvelli, 2016)] the main drivers of radicalization of people in Central Asian states are poverty, unemployment, crackdown of the political opposition, widespread corruption, lack of political and religious freedom, lack of hope for prosperous future, and lack of faith in democratic mechanisms for resolving issues (Fig4); there are also other factors like ethnic and ideological discrimination and conflicts like Osh oblast in Southern Kirghizstan or the influence of Salafi and Takfiri ideologies and brotherhood networks. Terrorist organizations like ISIS or even minor local groups try to tap on these issues to radicalize people and recruit them in their groups to achieve their malicious goals, which altogether bring some significant implications for these regions and expand the terrorism.

As it was told earlier, ISIS has been repeatedly described as the most adept terrorist group at using Internet and social media propaganda to recruit new members (JOHNSON, 2016). Consequently, their actions result in radicalization of people, expansion of terror through the region, insecurity, increase of organized crimes, increase of military presence of foreign actors, and cause significant security problems, namely the emergence of dangerous phenomena like lone wolves and the returnees (those foreign fighters who return from crisis zones).

Due to the nature of the region, there haven't been done much of academic or reliable detailed studies in regard with radicalization subject (Gavrilis, 2016). But EU has conducted a study/survey in regard with social media usage patterns and religious materials on online platforms. According to this study (Rahmatov & Bolotova, 2019), the overall pattern of social media usage (Fig 4, 5) indicates that in three of five Central Asian countries, "YouTube and Instagram were found to be the most popular, VKontakte, Facebook, and Odnoklassniki of medium popularity, and Twitter was the least popular … The Kazakhstanis were clearly the most active online social networkers whereas the Tajikistanis were the least active … in Kyrgyzstan, the rural respondents show a lower percentage of YouTube usage, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan women show a higher percentage of Instagram usage; and in all countries, the younger age groups report greater usage of all social media". In regard with messenger services, WhatsApp is the dominant platform.

[1] Katibat Al Tawhid Wal Jihad (KTJ) - Katibat Imam al Bukhari (KIB)
[2] Lovers of Paradise
[3] Another important point is that the very declaration of the Caliphate itself has boosted the flow of foreign fighters towards ISIS.

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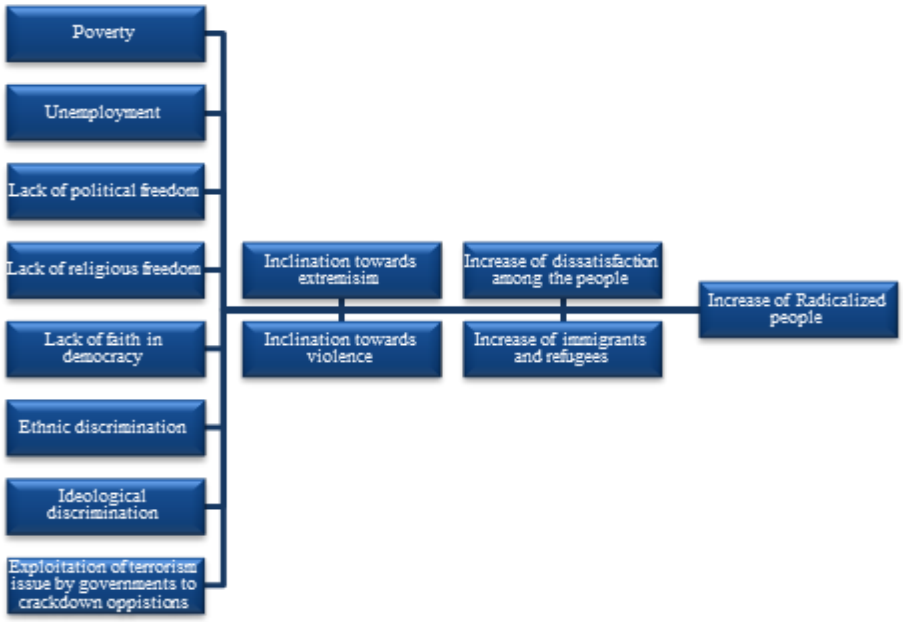


Fig. 3: Main drivers of radicalization in Central Asia. The increase of radicalized people results in the increase of terrorism instances and consequent problems of which.

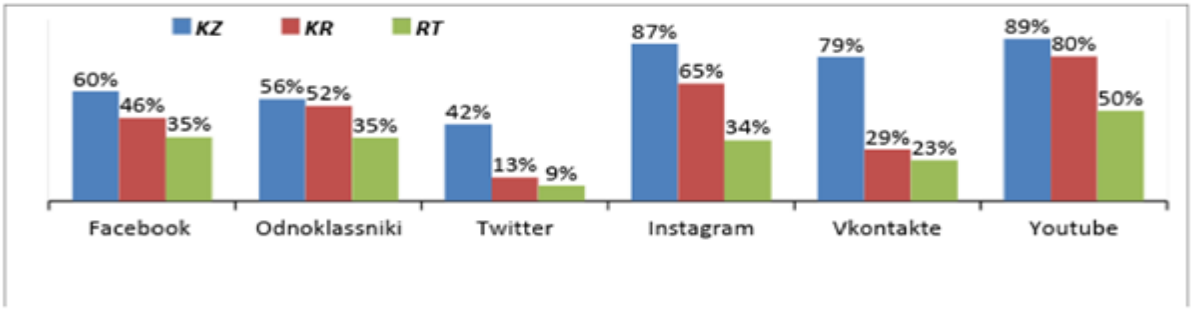


Fig. 4: Social Network Usage in three[1] of five Central Asian countries (Rahmatov & Bolotova, 2019).

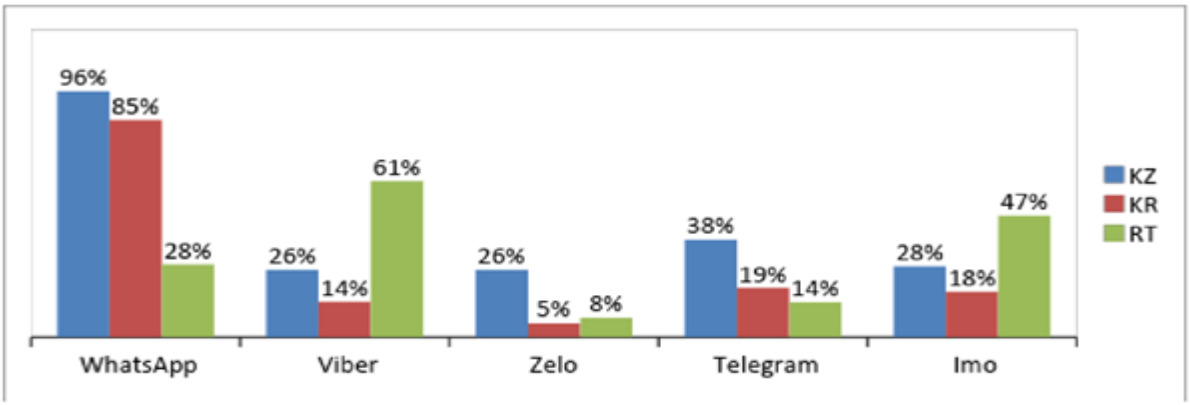


Fig. 5: Messenger Services Usage in three[1] of five Central Asian countries (Rahmatov & Bolotova, 2019).

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In regard with religious contents, respondents' answers in these three countries show that: "The highest percentage of respondents interested in such information was in Kyrgyzstan, at 58.6%, followed by the slightly lower percentage in Tajikistan, at almost 50%. However, the much smaller percentage – just over 19% - stating an interest in religious information in Kazakhstan is the most interesting. This interest is compounded by the fact that, conversely, almost 75% of respondents in Kazakhstan claimed that they were not interested in religious information" (Rahmatov & Bolotova, 2019). It also revealed that the main source for religious information in respective countries is Internet[1]. For example, in regard with listening to clerics' and preachers' speeches, their answers are interesting (Table 1).

Table 1 :"Do you regularly listen to preachers?" (Rahmatov & Bolotova, 2019).

	RK	KR	RT
Yes, online	9.5%	31.7%	12.6%
Yes, in places of worship	20.0%	22.8%	28.5%
No	65.9%	34.1%	56.2%
Cannot answer	4.6%	12.5%	1.6%
Other	0.3%	1.6%	0.7%
Yes, on DVD	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%

Here on Table 2 we have some statistics regarding the number of foreign fighters from each country, provided by the Soufan Group.

Table 2: Ranking of ISIS Foreign Fighters by Country Based on Official Count (The Soufan Group, 2015) (Benmelech & Klor, 2016).

		Count				*Count*	
	Country	Official	Non-Official		Country	Official	Non-Official
1.	Tunisia	6,000	7,000	26.	Spain	133	250
2.	Saudi Arabia	2,500	.	27.	Canada	130	.
3.	Russia	2,400	.	28.	Denmark	125	125
4.	Turkey	2,100	.	29.	Australia	120	255
5.	Jordan	2,000	2,500	30.	Azerbaijan	104	216
6.	France	1,700	2,500	31.	Malaysia	100	.
7.	Morocco	1,200	1,500	32.	Philippines	100	.
8.	Lebanon	900	.	33.	Albania	90	150
9.	Germany	760	.	34.	Italy	87	.
10.	United Kingdom	760	.	35.	Norway	81	60
11.	Indonesia	700	500	36.	Finland	70	85
12.	Egypt	600	1,000	37.	Pakistan	70	330
13.	Belgium	470	470	38.	Sudan	70	100
14.	Tajikistan	386	.	39.	Switzerland	57	.
15.	Bosnia	330	217	40.	Israel	50	.
16.	Austria	300	233	41.	Ireland	30	30
17.	China	300	.	42.	India	23	45
18.	Kazakhstan	300	.	43.	New Zealand	7	6
19.	Sweden	300	300	44.	Brazil	3	.
20.	Kosovo	232	.	45.	Madagascar	3	.
21.	Netherlands	220	210	46.	Singapore	2	.
22.	Maldives	200	60	47.	Cambodia	1	.
23.	Algeria	170	225	48.	Moldova	1	.
24.	United States	150	250	49.	Romania	1	.
25.	Macedonia	146	100	50.	South Africa	1	.

[1] Kazakhstan (30.7%) and Kyrgyzstan (48.6%), Kazakhstan with considerably smaller number due to least interest in religious materials.

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Table 3: Ranking of ISIS Foreign Fighters by Country without Official Count (The Soufan Group, 2015) (Benmelech & Klor, 2016).

	Country	Non-Official Count
1.	Libya	600
2.	Kyrgyzstan	500
3.	Turkmenistan	360
4.	Kuwait	70
5.	Somalia	70
6.	Serbia	60
7.	Afghanistan	50
8.	Georgia	50
9.	Trinidad and Tobago	50
10.	Montenegro	30
11.	Argentina	23
12.	United Arab Emirates	15
13.	Portugal	12
14.	Qatar	10
15.	Japan	9

6 Communications

Obviously, online communication is one the main aspects of modern human life. But like any other modern technology, it has its own privileges and risks at the same time. Needless to say, terrorists use online communication platforms in order to stay connected, plan their evil deeds, manage their attacks, and disseminate their propaganda.

They use *encrypted messaging platforms* like TOR[1] to communicate safely over the internet. In some cases, they develop their own customized online messaging platforms – like *Mujahedeen Secrets*, *Tashfeer al-Jawwal*, *Amn al-Mujahed*, or *Amaq* (Gadish, 2017) – using the very western hosts and servers, without them knowing that they are functioning just under their own surveillance. After 9/11 attacks, it was revealed that Taliban members were communicating through emails, but not by sending emails to one another, but cleverly, they wrote their message and upload their content without sending it; the email would be saved as a draft. All the people in the circle had the credentials and access to the same email and they just opened it and check the drafted email. Therefore, no agency would notice and track them.

Terrorists and criminals also use Instant Messaging Apps like Telegram, Wicker, Surespot, Signal, and Threema, and WhatsApp; along with secure connection channels through underground forums.

In the case of ISIS, their sympathizers started the so called "Virtual Caliphate" at Twitter and Facebook (Greenberg, 2016); but with the increase of restrictions and anti-extremism policies, they migrated to Telegram, which seems to be more applicable to them (Bloom, Tiflati, & Horgan, 2017). Telegram has an end-to-end encryption protocol which guarantees its secure message transition; it also has a special feature called "Secret Chat" which provides the *Self-destruction* feature for the sender, wiping out every shred of evidence and clue and apparently even logs. For example, in case of the Westminster attack which was carried out by Khalid Masood in March 2017, police has asked WhatsApp to deliver the last hour logs of the perpetrator to investigate whether he was a lone-wolf or he had orders from a terrorist group; such logs do not necessarily exist in Telegram. "After the attacks in Brussels and Paris, it became clear that the perpetrators had communicated with each other using Telegram private messages to coordinate their plans" (Bloom, Tiflati, & Horgan, 2017).

According to Laith al Khouri and Alex Kassire, authors of Tech for Jihad, "Telegram has become ISIS's preferred mode of communication over other social media platforms" (Bloom, Tiflati, & Horgan, 2017)[2].

Apart from Telegram, other messaging apps also had a paramount role in recruitment, communication, coordination, and execution of attacks. For example, in the 2015 San Bernardino, California, terror attack (killing 14 people, and seriously

[1] TOR is free software that enables anonymous communication, protecting users' online activities from surveillance. Concealing users' identity, location، traffic, and content— Tor makes it almost impossible to monitor the content or identity of the users behind it (Gadish, 2017).

[2] They conclude: "the media has tended to sensationalize jihadists' rapid adoption and strategic use of social media. Despite perpetual news coverage on the issue, the general public remains relatively uninformed about the complex ways in which many jihadists maintain robust yet secretive online presences." (Alkhouri, 2019).

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injuring 22 others) the perpetrator had used an Apple 5C iPhone, equipped with strong encryption and advanced security features; consequently, FBI requested *Apple* to extract all the data on his phone, but the former has refused to do so, due to security and privacy protocols of the company. Finally, some expert hackers who were employed by the FBI hacked the phone and extracted the requested data (Gadish, 2017).

There are many instances of the role of *Instant Messaging Platforms* in communication, coordination, and execution of attacks; quoting every single one of them would not be neither necessary, nor helpful within the scope of this research. What is clear, is the fact that *Social Media* and *Instant Messaging Platforms* have significantly facilitated the process for terrorists, and undoubtedly complicated and twisted the situation for law enforcement and security agencies.

7 Financial Efforts

Needless to say, if one wants to be influential and successful in any field of work, having considerable money resources would be inevitable. Terrorists, too, are not excluded from this rule. Hiring professional people, supplying weapons and equipment, advertising (propaganda), developing websites and apps, producing visual contents, education and teaching[1], and almost exactly any kind of action needs money.

Terrorist groups and organizations try to advertise themselves and gain more followers; among these followers are some resourceful individuals who are willing to fundraise for such actions due to multiple reasons[2]. These reasons could be ideological, political, or even economical; for instance, some who may benefit from rising prices of a specific currency or commodity may pay such groups to cause purposeful, coordinated sabotage in a specific facility at a particular country. They cannot commit such acts directly due to various reasons, therefore, they secretly pay them so these groups act as their proxies. These hidden actors may be even states[3], sponsoring such acts to cause chaos in targeted location. Obviously enough, terrorist groups are the best candidates for such scenarios.

Among the terrorist organizations also, is some kind of competition. They need to maintain their position, and meanwhile claim for upper hand. Thus, they permanently need money resources. Apart from private donors, there are also some other options which these malicious actors seek to gain financial resources. For instance, after the occupation of Syria and Iraq, ISIS took control over the oil fields and started to extract and sell oil in black market. Of course, they couldn't sell at competitive prices, but considering the statistics, ISIS was the biggest terrorist oil smuggler and also the richest terrorist organization throughout the history (AL-BAYATI, 2017).

Other resources are slave markets in which they trade mostly sex-slaves – those women and children who are not of any use would be sold in these markets; antique black market; kidnaping for ransom; drug and human trafficking; collecting money in various ways from companies and business markets and seizing state properties under their dominance[4]; confiscation those people's properties and imposing tax on every possible entities which are located in their area of dominance; and etc.

8 Accessing the Data

For many terrorists, the first target in this regard would be accessing to the data. Through data-mining, they try to access the resources of their interest, which may be sensitive high-ranking official data of governments, manuals of creating mass destruction weapons, IDs or official servers in order to create fake IDs, banking credentials in order to steal money, or even to hack systems and steal, alter, or even delete sensitive data.

Yet, another important consequence of such breaking can be a kind of physical destruction (that is mostly the main intent of traditional terrorists) through manipulation of infrastructure systems[5]. For example, a sabotage in railroad or subway or even in navigation systems; or like the accused case of US presidency elections in 2016.

[1] Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld pointed out, “There is a lot of money going into these so-called madrasa (religious schools) and they aren’t training people in mathematics … they are training people to kill. In spite of U.S. requests to the Saudi government to stop funding terrorist organizations and madrasas that breed hate, the Saudis have taken only baby steps in that direction.” (Ehrenfeld, 2003)

[2] In late 2010, the Guardian newspaper published a leaked cable in which former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote, “Donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide.” (AL-BAYATI, 2017)

[3] Rachel Ehrenfeld, Director of the American Center for Democracy and an expert on terrorism and corruption related topics, said state sponsorship continues to be one of the major forces sustaining terror organizations (Ehrenfeld, 2003).

[4] ISIS got around $500 million from the Central Bank in Mosul (AL-BAYATI, 2017).

[5] Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems

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9 Conclusions

Cyberspace is a two-edged knife; it has changed the changed the world we knew and brought considerable side effects. As it has facilitated our daily lives, it also has helped wrongdoers – especially terrorists – in their malicious plans, and given the evidences at the hand, it seems that they have succeeded in their strategies. As it was indicated through the paper, there are irrefutable evidences of the role of Internet in recruitment of foreign fighters, fundraising, hacking, communication, coordination of attacks, and almost every possible aspect of terrorism. The increase in online radicalization of young Tajiks, migration of entire families to caliphate territories, the flow of Central Asians toward crisis zones, their key roles in high-ranking organizational positions of terrorist groups, their active presence as perpetrators in terrorist attacks, and showing up as Lone Wolves are decisive pieces of evidence, showing the role of cyberspace in modern trends of terrorism.

One cannot completely deny the psychological influence of online propaganda and extreme contents which are being uploaded and disseminated by the terrorists through the cyberspace. However, there are skeptical views regarding the degrees of such influence, and whether it can motivate individuals to commit horrifying actions or not. We ourselves have experienced the power of such phenomenon long before the advent of social media; according to Laqueur, "audio-cassettes of [Imam] Khomeini smuggled into Iran during his exile in Najaf and subsequently Paris significantly impacted the Iranian revolution" (Laqueur, The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction, 2000).

From the writer's point of view, given the significant instances of "Lone Wolf attacks" which are carried out by individuals who have no direct contact with terrorist cells, no record of visiting crisis zones, no previous militia or combat trainings, no knowledge about guns or explosives, and yet committing such horrifying acts just due to inspirations of a magazine[1] or contents of a Telegram channel, such extreme skeptical views are redundant. Lone wolves are the clear evidence of the impact of online propaganda.

As it was told before, this research is descriptive in nature; of course, the reason *why* it can influence individuals is beyond the scope of this paper, and such explanatory approach requires psychological evaluation of those who experienced this phenomenon and have been exposed to online extremist propaganda – whether predisposed ones, or those who had nothing to do with extremist beliefs. In order to grasp a better understanding of the situation we face, psychologists, sociologists, and other researchers in related fields must carry out interdisciplinary studies and comparative analyses in different groups, religions, and different countries.

Considering the fact that cyberspace is a virtual, borderless place which recognizes no jurisdiction or sovereign territory, one should be cognizant and cautious regarding the hazards of this phenomenon. Central Asia and to some extent Caucasus (mostly North Caucasus) are among the main exporters of foreign fighters; this shows the latent potential in this region, which alerts us to be cautious of the dangers that extremism poses in these specific regions. But again, given the borderless nature of cyberspace, during the past decade we are witnessing a considerable increase of terror sings in West, too. The concurrence of such considerable increase of inclination towards extremism in different parts of the globe along with the ever-growing presence of online social medias is not a simple coincidence.

For Central Asian governments, the best approach would be to accept the fact at the first place, and to release reliable statistics and reports. If they want to cure the disease, first they should accept the fact that there is a disease, admitting that some serious measures should be taken.

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