Innocence Lost: An Analysis of Terrorist Cyber Operations Targeting American Youth

by

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Abstract

Terrorists and military faction leaders have utilized the ability to promulgate change through the use of social engineering and mass media outlets to further advance agendas and causes. Since the introduction of the Internet and networking, these individuals have utilized the ability to connect to massive amounts of people. With the use of online radicalization and the ability to train recruits without the hassle of international boundaries, jihadists quickly mastered a new version of psychological operations. The jihadist cyber influence resulted in the deaths of the victims of the Fort Hood shootings (Shane & Dao, 2009). The jihadist rhetoric influenced the attempted bombings of military recruiting stations (Kohlmann, 2011). The addition of online radicalization influenced the seduction of young women into joining ISIS (Saltman & Smith, 2015).

The threat to U.S. citizens and their children has become an ever-growing concern as opposition is targeting youth in support of their campaign. Currently, the avenues of recourse consist of legislation, laws and education. The importance of utilizing these tools remains paramount, as many youth have unfettered access to the Internet with no oversight. The results show a persistent problem, albeit minor in the U.S., but growing in other Western countries. The exacerbation of the lack of legislation and security controls to regulate the ability of these individuals to influence the American people, allow jihadists to remain a threat worthy adversary. Keywords: Cybersecurity, Cynthia Gonnella, Al Qaeda, children, Constitution, factions, jihadist, laws, legislation, social media, terrorist, ISIS, and virtual relationships.
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Innocence Lost

An Analysis of Terrorist Cyber Operations Targeting American Youth

The number of domestic terror incidents and the birth of homegrown terrorism has seen a drastic increase since the September 11, 2001 bombings. Toni Johnson, author of “Threat of Homegrown Islamic Terrorism” and is a staff writer and editor for the Council on Foreign Relations, stated that, “Counterterrorism experts point to online social media sites and charismatic English-speaking preachers, such Anwar al-Awlaki, as a boon for terrorist groups looking to spread their ideology in the United States” (Johnson, 2011, p. 8).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the relationship between cyber warfare and the impact and vulnerabilities affecting American teenagers and children who have untethered access to the Internet. This paper will answer how jihadists are using the Internet to establish virtual relationships, illustrate the results of how the exposure to jihadist belief system radicalized Americans, and examine possible methodologies to stop jihadists from using the Internet to spread terrorist messages.

The Internet has become the breeding ground for social media and providing an ease of access for these terrorist factions to support and spread their ideology and rhetoric to the American people. The ability to communicate with America’s youth has increased with the introduction of chat rooms, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, messaging applications (KiK, WhatsApp, and Line, to name a few.) Additionally, these applications do not log entries through normal cell phone providers, such as text messaging and records of calls.

It is through these methods, that past terrorists and terrorist factions today are able to specifically target the U.S. youth population, and begin to instill some of the ideals of jihadist actions that are not common known to youth. This begins to allow the youth to question policies
and modern belief structures at an early age, without fully having the maturity or comprehension to understand the ramifications of choosing jihad against their fellow citizens.

This not only occurs in the youth, but it has been seen in the adult population in high profile cases, where rational adults started to question their own belief and value system, that comprises their “moral compass.” Individuals choose to bear arms against fellow citizens, due to the constant bombardment of terrorist rhetoric, while not fully understanding that this is a tactic used by opposition and can be located specifically in publications such as the famous “Al Qaeda Training Doctrine.” There are numerous cases, incidents, reports and research showing the direct influence that jihadist rhetoric has in the transformation of individuals. The case involving Nadal Hasan is a direct reflection of this. The Virginia-born Muslim was an active duty, commissioned, board certified military psychiatrist, who indulged in a jihadist rampage and shot and killed thirteen soldiers and wounded thirty others in November 2009 at Fort Hood Army base (Johnson, 2011).

Hasan studied Awlaki's lectures and responded with exactly twenty-one emails questioning the validity of what Islamic law (Sharia law) about Muslim-American soldiers killing their colleagues, and Awlaki, a known terrorist supporter responded. According to Johnson, Hasan believed it was unjust for Muslim-American soldiers to fight against indigenous Muslims in the Middle East, and began his rampage when he received orders to deploy to that area (Johnson, 2011). The lectures Hasan studied from Awlaki stemmed from the Internet and were readily available. If a decorated military soldier, trained over years, to carry out orders in support of the U.S. government in defense of the United States, converted and murder innocent soldiers from Internet lectures, imagine the influence of youth to do the same domestically.
Additionally, Hasan was a trained psychiatrist, who had in-depth knowledge of social engineering practices and psychological manipulation.

Another example that shows the influence of the Internet is the Pakistan Five. Five U.S. citizens contacted terrorists through YouTube, traveled to Pakistan to a position in efforts to fight U.S. troops in Afghanistan with a local jihadist faction, and arrested in Pakistan (Johnson, 2011). They were all of different Middle Eastern descent who were local Americans and practiced at the same Virginian mosque, and were each sentenced to 10 years in prison.

In both of these cases, the Internet can be the catalyst for change in the suspect’s behaviors. The “masterminds” did not directly influence the individuals for support or action. Social media sites, such as YouTube, allowed the information placement and a readily available viewing platform.

One of the common threads in youth is that a majority in their teenage years desiring to aspire to become part of something that is bigger than themselves. This shows in such actions as the rise in military recruiting and something as simple as fraternities and sororities. It allows the youth to become part of an organization or “family” that construes as loving and exhibits a sense of fellowship. The targets of America’s youth are the misanthrope outcasts, from the overweight and ridiculed young male to the misunderstood and rejected young female that is longing for a sense of belonging.

*New York Times* Reporters Scott Shane, reporting from Baltimore, and Ben Hubbard, reporting from Baghdad, published an article in August 2014, which highlighted stark conclusions drawn from statistical data. As of the date of the article, the ISIS rebellion had drawn over 2,000 Westerners, with at least 100 of them being American (Shane and Hubbard, 2014). ISIS carefully tailored its recruiting pitch, to ensure that the messages sent to Muslims in the
West were different than the ones that resided in the East, however, the common thread that ran with both, were that they presented unimaginable power as a caliphate (Shane and Hubbard, 2014). Most are still a part of ISIS to this day:

ISIS is online jihad 3.0. Dozens of Twitter accounts spread its message, and it has posted some major speeches in seven languages. Its videos borrow from Madison Avenue and Hollywood, from combat video games and cable television dramas, and its sensational dispatches echoes and amplifies on social media. When its accounts are blocked, new ones appear immediately. It also uses services like “JustPaste” to publish battle summaries, “SoundCloud” to release audio reports, Instagram to share images and WhatsApp to spread graphics and videos. (Shane and Hubbard, 2014, p. 2, para. 8)

Additionally, numerous videos populate on social media outlets that encourage the youth to engage in jihad and to fight for the “true meaning of Islam.” Some of the more infamous videos that have surfaced show Canadian Andre Poulin, who was enticing North American Muslims to fight for ISIS, using promises of safety and power to lure these Muslims into listening to the rhetoric. He stated, “You’d be very well taken care of here, your families would live here in safety, just like how it is back home, we have expanses of territory here in Syria” (Shane and Hubbard, 2014, p. 3, para. 4).

According to Shane and Hubbard (2015), some other media influenced events included a British fighter Brother Abu Bara al-Hindi, who used guilt and religious sacrifice to lure Westerners. Hindi had them question if supporters were strong enough to sacrifice for Islamic deity Allah. Hindi used tactics such as pushing Westerners to give up a “fat job, big car and family,” with the addition of manipulating supporter emotions by sympathizing, due to his life in the West, claiming that the prophet Muhammad stated that the cure for depression was jihad
(Shane and Hubbard, 2014). Lastly, communication received from ISIS on Ask.fm, who were fighting the British, replying to their new followers on how to traverse to their location and essentials they needed to bring, with follow on communication asking them to transmit their messages through a web-messaging app called “Kik.”

From these instances, a domino effect occurred with these videos and how the jihadist word spread through social media with no repercussions in place to penalize those residing in the United States for supporting or spreading the terrorist rhetoric to America’s youth. There is no current legislation regarding the viewing or possession of jihadist videos, nor is there federal censorship on the posting of such videos on social media. Due to the lack of oversight of the media outlets used, the influence of these videos shown in modern day acts of homegrown terrorism, with ramifications that resonate in society today.

Shane and Hubbard (2014) also explained that Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, the use of propaganda, and the spread of terrorist word were rampant. In most militant operations, there is usually a common thread of strength in numbers and this is one of the goals of ISIS and other terrorist groups in form of recruitment. It increased population, but more so, to increase population in hard to reach areas that provide the tactical advantage (Shane and Hubbard, 2014).

In times of war, there are usually low levels of children combatants, nor are Americans willing to look at children as possible terrorists. Due to years of social conditioning and the belief that all children are inherently innocent, corruption by Middle Eastern terrorist doctrine, proclaiming for them to take up jihad, is an unfathomable thought. However recently, the rise in youth becoming more aware about world affairs, and thirsting for knowledge has become a dangerous weapon without the proper guidance or elaboration on ideals presented by all parties
albeit positive or negative. It is more probable for an adult to evaluate all sides of a political argument, while a youth may not have the education to understand the multi-faceted sides of the argument and can possibly defer to making an emotional decision, vice an evidence-based one.

The problem is the regulation of this media, and how to control the flow of information viewed on the U.S. Internet server companies and whether imposing any formal statutes on possession and viewing deemed as communism or an infringement on civil liberties and constitutional rights. Whether it is a matter of parental regulation, government oversight, or better education, this material should be regulated and unlawful use punishable by federal statutes.

**Literature Review**

**Creation of Virtual Relationships with Jihadists**

Hanna Rogan is a researcher and Ph.D. candidate from the University of Oslo who wrote a Master's thesis on al-Qaida's media strategy and is currently working on jihadism in North Africa. In Rogan’s 2006 report on Jihadism Online, various uses of the Internet examined in relation to jihadism and the methodologies used by jihadists to foster cyberspace as a weapon:

The spreading of propaganda and ideology on the Internet creates a common base for the jihadists and represents a sort of one-way communication. However, in order to preserve the infrastructure of the loosely knit global jihadism movement of today, additional online contact, for communication and the creation of relations, is certainly required and indeed carried out by the jihadists through the Internet. (2006, p. 25, para. 3)

Rogan (2006) further stated that publishing jihadist material on the Internet was more fiscally conducive to jihadist operations and allowed jihadists to recruit in larger numbers. According to Rogan, Internet distribution allowed for a mass pouring of information to large
sources albeit, the novice or experts in the field of jihadism. It created a basis of knowledge and possibly recruited new supporters of the jihadist ideology. The information on the Internet spread to more supporters and trickled to new ideologists, and recruits (Rogan, 2006).

Rogan referenced an online article, “The University of Jihad,” that called for more people to participate in the “Caliphate’s cause.” The article discussed a month long campaign that occurred in November 2005, on the web forum “Al-Hesbah” that offered members to swear their loyalty online. The leaders referenced that loyalty be sworn to Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, Mullah Muhammad Omar, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The campaign called for the enlargement of the army in Afghanistan and Iraq, in addition to creating a standby army, listed specifically on a waiting list on the Internet (Rogan, 2006).

The announcement referenced the use and volume of action that had taken place on the Internet, and after two weeks of voting, accumulated 173 votes in favor of supporting terrorist rhetoric, as shown in Figure 1. The following is an excerpt pulled directly from the voting site:

This is the Internet, which Allah employs in the service of jihad and the mujahedeen and that has become [used] in their interest, so that half of the mujahedeen battle is [fought] on the Internet sites. (Rogan, 2006, p. 29, para. 1)

![Figure 1](image.png)

*Figure 1. This figure illustrates the online jihad campaign from web forum “Al-Hesbah” (Rogan, 2006).*

Dr. Shima Keene is an internationally recognized expert in the field of economic crime, national and international security. Dr. Keene holds a Ph.D in International Criminal Law and is an advisor to various UK and US government defense and law enforcement departments. Dr. Keene has served in the UK military and as a Special Advisor to the Ministry of Defense, with
focus on counter terrorism; counter insurgency operations; cybercrime and fraud and asymmetric warfare.

Keene authored *Terrorism and the internet: a double-edged sword* and compared the use of the Internet and its recruitment capabilities to that of a corporation, with no distance and geographical boundaries. Due to the vast array of possibilities that exist in the ability to network and communicate through the Internet, companies were able to recruit employees globally with nothing short of qualifications, hardware and a functioning Internet connection (Keene, 2011).

The opposite side of the spectrum in the ability to recruit is that jihadists, terrorist factions, and extremists can also reap the benefits. The Internet is a tool used by terrorists to achieve their short, medium, and long-term strategic and operational objectives. Terrorists have adapted to the use of the Internet to employ the use for radicalization, recruitment and planning to include raising funds for continuation of operations (Keene, 2011).

**Recruitment.** The distribution to mass media and international agencies in the form of images and video clips used as empowerment, fostered radicalization of the user and can ultimately end in the recruitment of the user into a terrorist organization, jihadist faction, or extremist group (Keene, 2011). Keene further states that this same process also created sympathizers with the induction of digital media that helps foster the escalation to terrorism; and evidence presented to suggest that Internet chat rooms are becoming the new virtual meeting places to sympathizers and passive supporters to meet anonymously. This allows engagement in the dissemination of further terroristic idealism, thus allowing others to participate in the terrorist’s cause, ultimately reaching their targeted goal of recruitment (Keene, 2011).

Additionally, the invention and optimization of new software allowed terrorists to communicate more freely with intended targets of opportunity. The global reach that the Internet
provides, allows the free flow of ideals with physical location not hindering transmission. Keene alludes to how one application of this software has furthered the spread of jihadism and terrorist messages.

The Internet provides a truly global reach in that a terrorist recruiter is able to communicate with potential recruits irrespective of location. In addition, technology strengthens this global reach by technology, in that the challenge of languages are overcome through modern web browsers. Current technology allowed JavaScript functions and Internet servers to know which language is set as the default for a particular client's computer. Hence, a browser set to use English as the default language redirects to a site optimized for publicity aimed at Western audiences. This allowed audience and language specific recruiting, enabling the web to serve as a recruiter of talent for a terrorist cause (Keene, 2011, p. 7, para. 2).

The recruitment technique is attractive to younger viewers of media due to the simplistic ideology because youth does not have the benefit of rounded education that enables teenagers and younger to listen and understand the jihadist argument from all angles (Keene, 2011). This fosters susceptibility to indoctrination into the rhetoric, the Internet furthers this problem by exploiting, and sensationalizing conceived injustices of the jihadists, while search engines and Internet chat rooms illuminate and identify vulnerable targets and manipulate young minds to believe jihadist’s causes are justified (Keene, 2011). The purpose is not to empower the individual to search for conclusions or question current state of affairs, but rather to absorb the target into the jihadist’s network to serve other purposes in support of jihadist campaign (Keene, 2011).

Psychology. Neil Smelser is a University Professor Emeritus of Sociology and former director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. Smelser
authored the book *The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions* in which the psychological and social attributes of terrorism and methodologies used define possible theories for the selection of targets. Terrorists target a distinctive personality type when recruiting potential candidates for inclusion, which consist of a revolutionary personality that reflects hostilities towards authorities (Smelser, 2007).

Smelser states that major players in a terrorist organization are usually deeply traumatized individuals as children. The victims are prone to suffer chronic physical, emotional, and mental abuse and suffer emotional humiliation. These individuals age with a deep mistrusting of others and do not handle peace and passivity in a healthy manner. Additionally, a fostered fear is the violation of the terrorist’s psychological boundaries will occur again. The reaction to this perceived violation is for the terrorist to “kill off” any persona of himself or herself that is weak and inferior. The most common way change of this persona occurs is to turn pacifism into activism (Smelser, 2007).

The social origins and reasoning for recruitment vary among terrorists. Smelser discusses this concept beginning with the 9/11 attacks and shows that the hijackers originated from different backgrounds with a few of them having to understand the English language and 11 of the 12 “muscle” hijackers that were used to keep the passengers controlled, were of Saudi Arabian descent. Most of the hijackers were young, with ages ranging from 20 to 28 years old, unmarried, unemployed, and most did not even complete a high school education (Smelser, 2007).

Dr. Joshi, Endowed Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences at the Children’s National Medical Center and Professor of Psychiatry, Behavioral Sciences & Pediatrics at The George Washington University School of Medicine, and Dr. Deborah O’Donnell, Associate
Professor of Psychology, St. Mary’s College of Maryland. Dr. Joshi and Dr. O’Donnell stated in their book *Consequences of Child Exposure to War and Terrorism*:

Teenagers have developed the ability to think abstractly. With this capacity for abstract thought comes an increased focus on religion, morality, and ethics, which can influence a teenager’s understanding of, and response to, acts of war and terrorism. More than at any other stage of development, a youngster in the preteen and teenage years is likely to keep his or her feelings about the trauma inside, making him/her more prone to developing depressed feelings. A teenager may begin to withdraw from family and friends. On the other hand, a teenager may minimize concerns following a trauma in an attempt to appear as if “everything is okay.” (2003, p. 278, para. 1)

Joshi and O’Donnell further showed that in such instances, a teenager might increase his or her activity level and involvement with others as a means of managing inner fear and anxiety. Irritability and defiance becomes a direct result of a wish for revenge and action-oriented responses to trauma. Additionally, teenagers who feel particularly alienated or distanced from society due to these trauma-related processes entice terrorist organizations for recruitment due to their ability to be influenced (Joshi & O’Donnell, 2003, p. 278, para. 1-2).

**Social Media.** Dr. Gabriel Weimann is a Full Professor of Communication at the Department of Communication at Haifa University, Israel. His research interests include the study of media effects, new media technologies and its social impact, persuasion and influence, modern terrorism and the mass media and authored Weimann’s most recent book, *Terrorism in Cyberspace: The Next Generation*.

Weimann states in his article titled “Terror on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube,” that popular social networking websites are being used to attract potential members and followers,
while specifically targeting youth for propaganda, incitement and recruitment purposes (Weimann, 2010). The younger demographics are drawn to social sites such as Facebook, Myspace, Second Life, and their Arabic counterparts and specifically, the predominate Western online communities and their sympathizers use online social hubs such as Facebook, Myspace, Second Life, and their Arabic equivalents more frequently (Weimann, 2010). Counter-terrorism expert Anthony Bergin said that terrorists used these youth-dominated websites as recruitment tools, “in the same way a pedophile might look at those sites to potentially groom would-be victims” (Weimann, 2010).

Weimann references all forms of social media in his article to show that there is no differential between any of networking sites. He believed that social networking sites allow terroristic propaganda to influence an impressionable age bracket who will empathize with their cause. The terrorists target users in interest groups that are susceptible to manipulation. The virtual relationships established once a rapport opens and in time, exchange of in-depth personal information, such as photos and personal information. Terrorists apply a narrowcasting and social engineering philosophy to the social networking sites by altering all demographical information to tailor fit each social (Weimann, 2010, p. 49, para. 2).

YouTube came online in February 2005 and contains the world’s largest selection of online videos. Due to the mass amount of media that YouTube garnished, terrorist groups realized the potential of this media platform and used the service for the dissemination of propaganda and radicalization videos, which are available to anyone with an Internet connection (Weimann, 2010). Convicted terrorist, Younis Tsouli, praised the productiveness of YouTube by stating, “A lot of the funding that the brothers are getting is coming because of the videos.
Imagine how many have gone after seeing the videos. Imagine how many have become martyrs” (Weimann, 2010, p. 51, para. 4).

Weimann further explains that on 25 November 2008, a suggestion posted on Al-Faloja, a password protected jihadist forum suggested a “YouTube Invasion” to support jihadist media. The forum provided a synopsis of the YouTube site, its founding, notes, and debated for YouTube to be an alternative to television media for jihadists to reach people on a massive scale. The video also gave instructions on cutting the video into 10-minute segments, as per YouTube requirements, and upload them sequentially. A jihadist posted on Al-Faloja:

“I ask you, by Allah, as soon as you read this subject, to start recording on YouTube, and cutting, uploading and posting clips on the jihadist, Islamic, and general forums to shame the Crusaders by publishing videos showing their losses, which they hid for a long time” (Weimann, 2010, p. 52, para. 1).

As the most popular and used social networking site, Facebook has seen a major rise in recent years with an estimated 222 million users worldwide and a 66 percent membership increase within the Middle East and a 23 percent increase in Asia (Weimann, 2010). Terrorists noticed the uprising trend and began posting profiles, where some had declared support for paramilitary and nationalist groups identified as terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Turkish Revolutionary People’s Liberation Army (Weimann, 2010).

The terrorist groups that encompass these profiles are open to the public and allow free access for citizens to read the information, view discussion boards, watch propaganda videos, and linked to where others can join the group (Weimann, 2010). Jihadists have also discovered that Facebook can potentially incur downfall and issued the following warning in English in a Jihadi forum:
Do not make a network in Facebook...Then Kuffar will know every friend you have or had in the past. They will know location, how you look, what you like, they will know everything! Join Facebook if you want and use it to keep in touch with friends and brothers far away but not as a network. (Weimann, 2010, p. 49, para. 3)

Weimann summarizes his article by stating that the global community created by social networks and interactive forums has advanced cultural awareness and fostered peaceful efforts, but has advanced terrorists’ goals and shared extremist messages to global media. Terrorists have used these online communities to their advantage and promoted global paranoia and dissemination of messages with sympathizers, and ultimately created more terrorists. A person in the United States can complete a terrorist training course at home (Weimann, 2010, p. 53, para. 1).

Effects of Radicalization of Americans

Brian Michael Jenkins, Senior Adviser to the President of the RAND Corporation is the author of the paper *Would-Be Warriors: Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization in the United States Since September 11, 2001* and *Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies: Radicalization and Recruitment to Jihadist Terrorism in the United States Since 9/11*. In *Stray Dogs*, Jenkins discussed the radicalization of Americans and how homegrown terrorists were not “stray wolves” depicted, but “stray dogs” rejected by society. These “stray dogs,” joined from the Internet, according to a Middle Eastern security official, where most terrorist organizations conducted 99% of operations (Jenkins, 2011).

Jenkins went on to point out that in 2009 and 2010 the first terrorist attacks, with fatalities, occurred in the United States since 9/11. Lethal amateurs, acting alone, were the ones who planned, or carried out both of their attacks. Some of these amateurs such as Antonio
Martinez, who located and obtained ingredients to manufacture an IED, federal authorities apprehended before implementation. Nadal Hasan was a shooter who murdered 13 service men and women at Fort Hood, Texas, and without the benefit of spending any time abroad, obtained the methodology and motivation from online sources. Jenkins demonstrated in Figure 2 the increase in domestic terrorism cases from 9/11/2001 through 2010 (Jenkins, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Cases</th>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
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*Figure 2. Cases of Homegrown Terrorism in the U.S. since 9/11 (Jenkins, 2011).*

Jenkins continued to elaborate on the expansion of jihadist factions across the Internet since 9/11. The jihadists reconfigured their methods and constructed a new means of operational communication within cyber space. The jihadist campaign continued with the purpose of exploitation dissemination of the jihadist methods distributed on a global scale. Before 2001, only small amounts of jihadist websites were readily available. After 2001, there are reportedly thousands of websites available, with the actual English language websites increasing to the hundreds, which allowed the jihadist message to be readily available to the Western audiences (Jenkins, 2011).

**Nidal Hasan.** James Dao is the deputy editor on the national desk of *The New York Times*, helped oversee coverage of veterans, and editor of The Times’ military affairs blog, *At*
War. Between 2009 and 2013, Dao was a national correspondent covering military and veterans’ affairs, the lives of deployed troops, military culture and won numerous awards that included an Emmy, Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Award, and honors from the Association of Military Reporters and Editors. Scott Shane and James Dao wrote an article concerning the Fort Hood Shootings for the *New York Times*.

Nidal Hasan was a 39-year-old psychiatrist who served on Fort Hood, Texas and on November 5, 2009, Hasan took two handguns and opened fire at a deployment processing facility on Fort Hood Army Base, where he killed 13 people and wounded many others. Experts believe that this may be the new form of growing terrorism, self-radicalization. Self-radicalization is paramount to the use of the Internet and is not subject to boundaries or borders, allowing the jihadists to reach targets without impudence (Shane & Dao, 2009).

Shane and Dao continued to elaborate to the motives of Nidal Hasan by complementing his self-radicalization with depression and narcissism to create a volatile concoction that led to the mass shootings. Shane interviewed a Georgetown University professor, Bruce Hoffman, who specializes in terrorism, who stated that self-radicalization cases had appeared to have a maturing rate in 2008, with a continuous uptrend. Additionally, spurring war and hate messages generated by terrorists and published on the Internet fostered the self-radicalization trend. Most cases noted have no direct ties to foreign terrorists, but rather the culmination of rhetoric that entices the individual (Shane & Dao, 2009).

During the investigation, investigators found connections to a radical cleric in Yemen, Anwar al-Awlaki. Authorities found a dozen or more messages that concerned questions about the interpretation of Islamic law and the culpability of killing innocents (Shane & Dao 2009). Law enforcement officials detailed that the messages showed that Hasan had knowledge of
Awlaki’s teachings and sermons that were on the Internet and supported violent jihad war. Awlaki was an Imam who taught three of the 9/11 hijackers in two separate mosques and implicated in several homegrown terrorism plots, including bombings of several government buildings in North America and attacks on military installations (Shane & Dao, 2009).

According to Shane and Dao, a plausible explanation and theory to his actions could be those uncovered by Hasan while drafting work for his residency program at Walter Reed Medical Center. During Hasan’s tenure, he was very vocal and forthcoming with his disagreement with the war in the Middle East and the moral challenges that faced Muslim soldiers in reference to contradicting military orders and the teaching of the Koran. Hasan drafted a PowerPoint and argued the religious contradiction, even referencing the case of Sgt. Hasan Akbar who killed two soldiers in Kuwait and injured 14 more by firing his weapon on them and tossing grenades into fellow soldier’s tents (Shane & Dao, 2009).

**Antonio Martinez.** Evan Kohlmann is a founder of Flashpoint Global Partners, a security-consulting firm in New York. Kohlmann owns one of the largest open source media databases concerning Al-Qaida, jihadists and other terrorist factions. As an expert witness, Kohlmann testified twenty-one times in judicial proceedings. Kohlmann also served as a consultant on terrorism for the U.S. Department of Justice, Department of Defense, and the FBI. Kohlmann holds a graduate degree in law, worked as a research assistant in the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, and holds a certificate for Islamic studies at the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

Kohlmann stated in *The Antisocial Network: Countering the Use of Online Social Networking Technologies by Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, a testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, that in December 2010, Antonio Martinez attempted to
detonate, what he believed, was an explosive device at a military recruiting station in Catonsville, Maryland and subsequently arrested. Martinez also posted on his Facebook account to stop the oppression of Muslims and that he hated anyone who opposed Allah. Additionally, a confidential source came forward announcing concern for the hateful postings (Kohlmann, 2011).

Due to the increased amount of postings, Charles Kurzman, a Professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and co-director of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, stated that Martinez drew additional concern, with more Facebook postings, which caused numerous informants to come forward with additional information. The content of Martinez’s posts were becoming more violent (Kurzman, 2011). It was on October 10, 2010, that a confidential informant began communicating with Martinez, on behalf of the FBI (Kohlmann, 2011).

According to the FBI affidavit, the confidential informant stated that Martinez desired to go to Pakistan or Afghanistan and join the army of the mujahedeen, and to do this he was willing to specifically show his dedication by murdering armed forces personnel. Additionally, during the conversations with the informant, Martinez discussed it was his dream to be among the ranks of the mujahedeen and to wage a jihad war. The affidavit also mentioned that Martinez did not accept the numerous chances to back away from the operation by both the informant and the undercover FBI agents, but rather tried to influence his “conspirators” further. Martinez’s arrest occurred, only after he attempted to detonate the fake bomb, purchased from an undercover FBI agent (FBI, 2010).

Tricia Bishop is the deputy editorial page editor for the *Baltimore Sun* and covered federal court news prior to her election to the editorial board. In Bishop’s article, *Would-be*
Catonsville bomber sentenced to 25 years in prison, she reported on Martinez, two years after his sentencing. Bishop reports that Martinez, allegedly has denounced terrorism and jihadism (Bishop, 2012).

Federal prosecutors believe this is a ruse, specifically because evidence drawn from Martinez’s cell still shows jihadist writings that contradict Martinez’s claim and after translation, still called for the “elimination of the Muslim oppressors.” Martinez associated with a group of other individuals from Maryland who used cyber space to spread the jihadist word that educated terrorist beliefs, and recruited others who are trying to participate in the “holy war.” Additionally, at the time of Bishop’s report, federal authorities arrested a former Army private from Laurel, Maryland who helped fund a foreign terrorist faction after influenced to join radical Islam from a website (Bishop, 2012).

Recruitment of Women. Lee Ferran is an investigative reporter for ABC News and Randy Kreider is the Associate Producer of the Investigative Unit of ABC News. In an article titled, “Selling the ‘Fantasy’: Why Young Western Women Would Join ISIS,” both interview Dr. Mia Bloom, Professor at the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies at University of Massachusetts and Katherine Brown, a lecturer in Defense Studies at King’s College London. Brown states that the majority of Western women joined ISIS due to the belief that the women are trying to create a utopian society and foster a sense of sisterhood (Ferran & Kreider, 2015).

Jayne Huckerby, Director of the Duke International Human Rights Clinic, reported to Ferran and Kreider that the women recruited shared solidarity and inequality personality traits (Ferran & Kreider, 2015). Additionally, these same women exhibited a desire for adventure and romance, which was found in serving ISIS and contribute to the ISIS state building and
development of a country where their religion could be practiced (Ferran & Kreider, 2015).

Huckerby also stated that the women considered themselves a vital part of the recruitment drive for ISIS and the ability to generate further propaganda and media attention for the faction (Ferran & Kreider, 2015).

Brown stated that ISIS portrays a rose colored, romantic view of the lifestyle. The pedestal that ISIS runs their platform on is the notion of a “good life” that is contrived from Islamic studies and Sharia Law, which is an ancient law based on religious regulations derived from the Koran. ISIS also capitalized on the perceived discrimination and stereotypes that Western civilizations have placed on Muslims. This perception gave ISIS the capability to market a sense of community, acceptance, and a life of purpose for Western Muslim women who felt discriminated against (Ferran & Kreider, 2015).

Bloom stated that a mixture of fiction and a sense of empowerment are what lure women with a belief of an exciting life intertwined with a sense of meaning and purpose. Additionally, the male members of ISIS are lures to coerce women online into marriage. The members manipulate women online, enticing them to travel to the Middle East, while the actual purpose is the use of women as a reward to jihad fighters. Their attractiveness, willingness to marry, and ability to have children evaluates their level as a reward (Ferran & Kreider, 2015).

Dr. Erin Marie Saltman is a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) coordinating project development on Women and Extremism (WaE) and advises multiple international governments including North America on online extremism issues an internet radicalization. Melanie Smith holds a M.A. in Geopolitics, Territory & Security from King’s College London and is a research associate working on ISD’s WaE program. Both women researched an authored *Till Martyrdom Do Us Part’ Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon.*
Saltman and Smith define that there are several push and pull factors that ultimately cause women to seek out jihadism and migrate towards ISIS. The push factors include feeling socially or culturally isolated. The feeling of not belonging in a western culture. Feeling that the Muslim community is demeaned and a perceived lack of international response to the problem (Saltman & Smith, 2015).

The authors also state the pull factors are that women believe in the idealistic goals of Islam and a sense of religious duty that accompanies the religion. The ability to build a final and ultimate utopian state with the “Caliphate,” is the ultimate goal. Lastly, the women believe they will have the sense of unity and sisterhood, along with the romanticism of the journey to become a jihadist’s wife (Saltman & Smith, 2015).


According to Goldman, in April 2014, Shannon Conley’s arrest at the Denver, Colorado airport came after federal authorities suspected her of aiding ISIS from her home in Colorado. Conley was 19 years old at the time and charged with conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization. Department of Justice stated that Conley was engaged to a member of ISIS that she had previously met on the Internet. She subsequently trained to become a jihad fighter while in the U.S., however, Conley’s plans did not come to fruition as the arrest came as she was boarding her flight to Turkey (Goldman, 2015).
Michael Roberts is a senior reporter for Westword, a greater Denver area newspaper who wrote a story on Conley. Within the article on Shannon Conley, Roberts published her testimony, which Conley demonstrates an inability to conform to any religion, “converting” several times until settling into Islam. In her testimony, Conley stated that while having a crisis of faith she stumbled across a Muslim television show that covered Islamophobia. After viewing the video, Conley stated that she did not remember anything about the video, nor had enough information on the subject, but determined that jihad and conversion to Islam were the answer, based on a “feeling” (Roberts, 2014).

**Preventative Measures to Radicalization**

Benjamin R. Davis is a Juris Doctorate Candidate, at the Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, and works in the U.S. Department of Treasury in the Office of Terrorism & Financial Intelligence. Davis stated that in the modern age, terrorists’ access is broader than conventional weaponry and have taken to the Internet to train and recruit new terrorists with little chance of the engaged activities being exposed. In 2006, terrorist and jihadist groups were actively using the Internet and running an estimated 4,500 terrorism related websites (Davis, 2006).

Davis further explained that a jihadist, who uses the Internet, could set up a website, or email due to the inexpensive process. The disclosure rate is minimal and numerous accounts can be set up for mass communication within a very short time frame. For a jihadist to set up a website an Internet Service Provider (ISP) will provide access for compensation and the client’s information is posted on the WhoIS registry website. Usually, a jihadist will provide false information when purchasing service from an ISP, with some noted names as “Bill Clinton,” “God,” and “Mickey Mouse” (Davis, 2006).
Domestic Surveillance. A speech by the Deputy Director of the FBI, Robert Mueller, at a Preparedness Conference in Washington D.C. in 2010, discussed the issue of infringement of civil liberties versus public safety. Mueller states that there is confliction and tension between protecting national security and preserving our inherent constitutional rights. Mueller agrees that the public has a right to privacy, however, the public also has a right to use mass transit facilities safely and that there is not a confliction, but an issue with finding a balance between the two (Mueller, 2010).

Mueller further stated that safeguarding civil liberties and leaving the U.S. open to terrorist attacks would ultimately result in futility. Additionally, the same result occurs, if the U.S. sacrifices constitutional rights to defend against the threat of terrorist attacks. In trying to recover or view electronic evidence, Mueller stated that private communication companies are not able to provide the intercept evidence needed, even when supplied with a court order. Lastly, most of these providers do not have the intercept capabilities built into their operating systems, and with current equipment, cannot provide timely reporting (Mueller, 2010).

The Department of Justice (DOJ) describes The USA Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) as a tool that Congress used by taking set legal regulations and updating them to ensure the safety and liberty of U.S. citizens from the threat of a terroristic global threat. The DOJ website lists the updated provisions to the Patriot Act, which help facilitate law enforcement and counter terrorism operations. The Patriot Act (in a broad scope) enabled easier and greater information sharing between federal agencies, increased penalties for terrorists and support of terrorists, while allowing investigators to use the same tools that were already employed against organized crime against the radical jihadists (Department of Justice, 2016).
The DOJ discusses that the ability granted to conduct roving wiretaps within the Patriot Act by stating that previously electronic wiretaps were only permissible for some of the non-terror related crimes, and after the Patriot Act, investigators had use of these abilities to investigate a broad spectrum of terrorism. Additionally, the Patriot Act allows investigators to delay the time of notification to a suspect of execution of a search warrant. The delay allows investigators to have that ability to identify associates that suspected terrorists are communicating with and allow for multiple arrests simultaneously (Department of Justice, 2016).

The roving wiretaps and electronic surveillance, as a whole, functioned for decades against drug crimes and racketeering. As terrorists evolve, so do the communication techniques used to sustain anonymity and secrecy. The roving wiretaps, once authorized by a federal judge, apply to a person, not just their means of communication. An example would be that the authorized wiretap would extend to all of John Doe’s devices and websites, rather than just John Doe’s phone. This is extremely helpful, as Internet activity usage works on a multiple array of devices (Department of Justice, 2016).

According to the Department of Justice and Studies from Appalachian State University, The Patriot Act Website proclaims that the Act has already assisted in copious amounts of judicial and administrative proceedings against terrorists. The Patriot Act has disrupted over 150 terrorist cells, brought criminal charges to over 400 suspected terrorists, and convicted over 200 personnel. The Patriot Act has also eliminated two-thirds of Al-Qaeda’s command personnel, removed over 500 people linked to 9/11, and positively identified and tacked suspected terrorists in the U.S. (Appalachian State University, 2016).
**Treason.** According to Cornell University of Law, The United States Constitution states that a person has met the requirements of treason under Article III, Section 3 if they have levied war against the U.S. or adhered to its enemies by providing aid and comfort. Aid and comfort means any act that produces a betrayal of allegiance to the U.S., which can be furnishing enemies with such items as arms, ammunition, and information. Treason applies only during the time of war and persons who only take a peripheral role in a conspiracy to levy war are still subject to treason if the resulting action is an armed rebellion against the U.S. (Cornell University of Law, 2016).

The crime of treason requires a traitorous intent. Additionally, the suspect of treason does not have to be a U.S. citizen to commit this act. The person can owe temporary allegiance, be a legal alien, and does not necessarily have to occur on U.S. soil. Treason is punishable by death or a minimum penalty of five years in prison and a $10,000 fine (Cornell University of Law, 2016).

Tom Rogan is a professional writer with a background in law. Rogan has written for The Huffington Post, USA Today, The Christian Science Monitor, CNN, and Fox News. Rogan is a graduate from King's College, London, SOAS and The College of Law, London. Rogan also holds the Tony Blankley Chair at the Steamboat Institute. In an article for the National Review, Rogan discusses the possibilities of charging homegrown terrorist supporters with treason (Rogan, 2014).

Rogan states that hundreds of citizens from the U.K., 100 Canadians, 50 Australians, and 15 Americans defected to serve the ISIS. ISIS propaganda allows Westerners who do not believe in democratic society to support the terrorist campaign and in the same breath, convert from a disgruntled mindset into one of violent extremism. Lord Haw-Haw, a Nazi propagandist, was the
last person charged with treason under U.K. law in 1946. Adam Gadahn was the most recent U.S. citizen charged with treason for joining Al-Qaeda in 2006 (Rogan, 2014).

Rogan further states that some U.S. citizens view treason laws as authoritarian final solutions; however, terrorists groups believe that the West is susceptible to internal conflict by their respective citizens, due to this lack of control. This theory allows terrorists to convince youth to aspire to a life of greater meaning and spotlight the terrorist membership so that their causes broadcast beyond international borders (Rogan, 2014).

Rogan believes that treason trials could help governments and societies reverse the trend of homegrown terrorism evidenced in Western countries. The purpose would create a societal causal effect and provide resistance to terrorists. The trials would reestablish citizen responsibility and display intolerance for treason, and national betrayal. Lastly, it would lessen the acceptance of propaganda and weaken the ability of terrorists to empower and disillusion U.S. citizens (Rogan, 2014).

**Education.** Margarita Bizina graduated from Norwich University with a M.A. in Diplomacy, she also holds a B.A. with Honours with Distinction in Political Studies and International Relations from Bishop’s University with a concentration in Political Science and International Relations. She additionally wrote a thesis on *The Political Economy of Terrorism in Relation to the Evolution of International Law*. She also co-authored an article in Global Security Studies on the radicalization of youth. Dr. David Gray is the Associate Professor for Homeland Security for Campbell University. Gray teaches National and International Security, Homeland Security, Intelligence, Terrorism, and Insurgency.

Bizina and Gray state that there is a need for intelligence officers and training in cultural intricacies and awareness to have the ability to identify the early signs of youth radicalization.
and the beginnings of homegrown terrorism. Social workers and police need to have education on the immigrant population, to understand the culture and respective traditions and behaviors that accompany said culture. Additionally, the social integration of youth, combined with counter ideologies to extremist beliefs will provide a non-extremist education of Muslim religion and a collective identity would spread throughout the community (Bizina & Gray, 2014).

Bizina and Gray further stated that education on debunking the radical myths of the Islamic religion will help in decreasing radicalization and will further assist in helping local Muslims not feel discriminated or alienated. Educational support for the local communities provide a sense of unity and cohesion for new immigrants, which can lessen social factors that pull new immigrants toward radicalization. A program that is implemented in the U.K. is called “Prevent” and is a counter-radicalization program that stop youth from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremists, by providing government funding to Islamic organizations that oppose violence and are partnered with the government (Bizina & Gray, 2014).

According to Bizina and Gray, local community involvement is crucial in ensuring the development of youth. Additionally, it is important to educate local law enforcement about the financial demographic of the targeted areas, as the lower income class can be more susceptible to terrorist influence, with online portrayals of a “better life.” Lastly, the community can act as a warning and reporting system to law enforcement and social support agencies, by providing an upstream of information and diverting online propaganda from youth. With education, and consensual communication with law enforcement, the communities can internally help deal with crisis, grievances, dispute negative Muslim media reporting, and decrease Islamophobia (Bizina & Gray, 2014).
Lorenzo Vidino is a Peace Scholar with the United States Institute of Peace. Additionally, Vidino is a TAPIR fellow at the RAND Corporation and holds fellowships at numerous universities to include Harvard University, the Kennedy School of Government, and the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Vidino is the author of *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, published by Columbia University Press.

Vidino states that there are two forms of radicalization, cognitive and violent. Cognitive radicalization occurs when a person adopts values and ideas that are against societal rules and is on the opposite end of mainstream order and denies the legitimacy of social order. Cognitive radicalization ends with the desire to replace current belief structures with that of a new belief system. Violent radicalization takes this theory a step further and imbuing violence to further the views from the cognitive radicalism (Vidino, 2010).

Vidino further stated that policymakers require education on the radicalization process. The complexity of the radicalization process should not discourage lawmakers from taking action, but rather intervene with the non-violent Muslim community for support. With authorities educated in the personal, ideological and structural factors that guide youth to radicalization, measures that are more congruent develop to facilitate a flexible approach to the problem (Vidino, 2010).

Vidino challenged the idea that socioeconomic factors play any role in the conversion of youth to a jihadist ideology. This evidence is mainly in the U.S. where converted jihadists have had little to no economic problems. Lower economic producing societies such as the Middle East and Africa have joined terrorist factions for economic gain. Even with a lower economic class experienced by some in the West, the radicalization occurs with the presence of an ideology built on the foundation of religious overtones (Vidino, 2010).
The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and their National Security Criminal Investigations Division worked to develop a comprehensive attack to youth radicalization and educate parents, teachers, law enforcement, and social workers in a publication titled *Youth Online And At Risk: Radicalization Facilitated by the Internet*. Within the publication, RCMP gives methods to help combat online radicalization of youth. The main theme that presented is communication and education.

RCMP stated that opening a dialogue between parents and children, with honest and frank discussion about the violence and ideologies posted on the different social media sites is a first crucial step. The discussion should center on what is and is not appropriate for viewing by children of that respective age. Martyrdom is debunked, the “glory” removed from the act, and realities introduced to ensure youth have an appropriate understanding of the aftermath. Additionally, the conversations conform to the child’s respective age, similar to the way jihadists use social media to tailor recruiting pitches (RCMP, 2011).

RCMP also listed physical controls that help monitor youth’s access to online radicalization material. Software controls can block pre-determined web addresses, keywords, social media, and monitor youth’s online activities. Monitoring downloads can be beneficial, since files are exchanged by peer networks and can contain jihadist related online games, videos and other multimedia files. Keep the computer in an open area with online activities exposable, without the perception of violating privacy of the youth. Lastly, discuss probable scenarios as to what to do if the youth find online jihadist material and subsequent actions taken (RCMP, 2011).

Lastly, RCMP stated that an effective way of communicating to youth about online radicalization is to research and use other social networking sites to contradict what radical sites are posting. The development of multimedia and dissemination of Internet messages can reach
the youth in the same fashion as the jihadist messages. Additionally, research and promotion of websites that promote anti-radicalization such as www.staysafeonline.org, sponsored by the U.S. National Cyber Security Alliance and www.getnetwise.org will provide an alternative resource for youth to use, aside from the immediate family (RCMP, 2010).

**Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the relationship between cyber warfare and the impact and vulnerabilities affecting American teenagers and children who have untethered access to the Internet. This paper will answer how jihadists are using the Internet to establish virtual relationships, illustrate the results of how the exposure to jihadist belief system radicalized Americans, and examine possible methodologies to stop jihadists from using the Internet to spread terrorist messages.

In the age of technology, the battlefield for recruitment for hearts and minds have spread from the age of pamphlet dropping and bribes to the daunting scape of the Internet. Jihadists and terrorist factions are using the Internet to expand their enterprise to a larger audience in more countries, with the ability to remain anonymous and transcend international boundaries. From 2002 to 2012, the number of jihadist sites have more than tripled in numbers. This activity is evidence to the fact that the terrorist model of recruiting and spread of rhetoric is successful.

Jihadists are additionally “pulsing” the Internet and society to determine the extent to which their message is spread and the agreeance of society. This allows jihadists to tailor the message to each specific society and make minor adjustments. As referenced in Figure 1, jihadists use online polls to determine how much support is located in a given area and can concentrate efforts there. The support also allows terrorists to establish the “online army” which can continue digital efforts while operational efforts continue on-ground execution.
The Internet also provided the ability for jihadists to network not only with potential recruits and investors into their cause, but also with each other. This provides for faster communication for covert operations and can allow jihadists to carry out simultaneous attacks with real-time communication until the time of event. The radicalization process that occurs through the Internet can speed up the time of conversion and allows for sympathizers to transition from passive support to active terrorism. This is due to the one way conversation that is established with a support base and the ability to delve into social engineering and the creation of the relationships to foster the conversion (Rogan, 2006).

The introduction of new web applications allowed terrorists to upload video clips and audio recordings to the Internet for mass viewing. The spreading of web content facilitated the radicalization process, garnering new sympathizers to the jihadist’s cause. This occurs due to the lack of education that is prevalent with youth sympathizers, but additionally, allows the influenced rhetoric to be easily accessible to the youth, with no counter education to combat the messages portrayed. Along with the introduction of new software, multilingual conversions add the ability for terrorists to communicate with different nationalities without the restrictions of dialect or grammar hindering the process.

Due to the lack of education in international affairs, the ability to influence youth online remains the easiest and most cost effective way for a jihadist to recruit. Most of the 9/11 terrorists hailed from different backgrounds and did not have the benefit of a formal high school education, lending proof to this fact (Smelser, 2007). The Internet provides the ability for jihadists to link social media websites to commonly used chat applications that can persuade youth to view the jihadist’s perception on their perceived injustices. This form of coercion pushes the youth to formulate conclusions without the benefit of all evidence presented. The
targeted audience would additionally include youth that encompass attributes favorable to methodologies of terrorism.

The attributes that are favorable to terrorism include those that have experienced emotional, mental and physical abuse or public humiliation. The break of social boundaries experienced by these victims, would lead credence to the suspicion that the same violation would or could occur again. The demonstration of this perceived “weakness” would entice the youth to assume a new persona, possibly that of a jihadist, to demonstrate strength and independence, while diminishing any inferior parts of themselves.

Jihadists prey on abused teenage youth, as they think abstractly and have an intensified and religious focus on morality. Additionally, youth becomes adept at coping with trauma and will withdraw from a family unit and seek empowerment from other sources. Influenced teenagers will seek to increase involvement with activity that “supports” them and when met with resistance will exhibit irritability and defiance. In regards to online, jihadist-recruited youth, the “support” located is on the social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

Research shows there is no discrimination between which type of social media site is used. Jihadists have favored YouTube, as it allows the uploading of videos that will specifically target youth with jihadism inspiring videos and allow conversation to open, which begins the first step of radicalization. Convicted terrorists have even proclaimed that jihadist groups are receiving financial support due to the YouTube videos. Using social media, jihadists can tailor make propaganda videos to fit any demographic targeted. The employment of this narrowcasting philosophy that ensures a success rate, regardless if it is a minimal or maximal impact.

Jihadists are coordinating invasions of websites, such as a “YouTube Invasion” that directed all jihadists to post videos supporting their cause. Additionally, only 10-minute
increment videos uploaded, as to not call attention from YouTube web supervisors. Jihadists believe using these media outlets can reach more people than using television alone. The managers of jihadism recruiting determined that Facebook is not an acceptable site for operations and instructed their members not to use it for operations, but is acceptable for maintaining social networking between friends and family.

Some of the profiles developed on Facebook are of notable terrorist organizations and are free to the public to view. Within these profiles, viewing of propaganda videos, and reading of literature supports the respective cause of each group. These profiles are spreading the jihadist word and furthering online radicalization. These messages spread paranoia and empathize with active sympathizers, which accelerate the conversion process and increase jihadist numbers.

The radicalization process that occurs in the youth carries forward into adulthood. The theory that radicalization has to occur in youth to be effective is one that has been disputed by numerous homegrown terrorist attacks. The number of homegrown terrorist cases more than tripled from 2002 until 2010. One of the common themes persisting through the attacks is that the homegrown terrorists do not associate in large groups and usually operate alone, with little to no actual connection to a large-scale faction.

It is probable that the need for actual physical interdiction by radical jihadists and their intended recruitment targets minimizes by the introduction and growth of social media. Due to the massive expansion of information and the ability to easily and anonymously access or post information on the Internet, terrorists can conduct propaganda campaigns with little to no risk to themselves. After 2001, the expansion of jihadist websites exploded onto the Internet. This has run concurrent with the increase in homegrown terrorist attacks in Western countries.
The introduction of software that allowed terrorist messages to convert to English dialect, could substantially increase the amount of attention receptive to it. The totality of the Western jihadist rhetoric that contributes to the radicalization process and the results can influence youth and adult alike. In the case of Nidal Hasan and the Fort Hood shootings, the culmination of jihadist messages came from Anwar al-Awlaki and convinced a decorated military officer to bear arms against his fellow soldiers.

The power of these messages presented themselves in the Fort Hood case, as this was not a youth, but an educated adult, recognized as an expert in the field of mental health and provided psychiatric services to other service members. Additionally, Hasan who suffered from depression and narcissism fit the profile of the demographic wanted for potential target for recruitment. Hasan researched Awlaki’s messages and attempted to contact him with moral questions concerning the death of fellow soldiers. The research discovered no evidence of Awlaki’s responses; however, the recorded rhetoric that Hasan viewed likely pushed him to commit the murders at Fort Hood. The trend of social and emotional disorder, coupled with public jihadist videos probably led to the notorious acts at Fort Hood and added more evidence to the optimal demographic theory of recruited homegrown terrorists.

Hasan was not the first to turn against fellow soldiers as a former Army soldier, Hasan Akbar, had killed soldiers in Kuwait under similar circumstances. The common thread between the two men, they were both were Muslim, served in the Army during time of war, and both adults. Had Awlaki communicated with Hasan, the attacks at Fort Hood or Kuwait could have produced more fatalities. In both cases, there showed a lack of formal education in Islamic studies to illuminate the difference between the terrorist rhetoric teachings and the peaceful and intrinsic teachings.
The effects of viewing and listening to online jihadist rhetoric has long-term effects. In the case of Antonio Martinez, the youth who attempted to detonate an explosive device at a military recruiting station in Catonsville, Maryland, the effects of the videos were still altering his perception two years later from his confinement facility. Martinez told friends over social media that he desired to be part of the mujahedeen and professed his willingness to kill armed forces personnel to prove his loyalty to Islam. Using social media, he attracted the attention of the FBI and concerned citizens that reported his hateful postings. The positive aspect that developed is the Internet provided the threat notification in addition to the cause of the threat. After two years of incarceration, prosecutors believe Martinez was still waging a jihad war, due to information retrieved from his cell. With the consequences of his action presented to him with the loss of personal freedoms, Martinez still believes in the rhetoric obtained from the Internet.

The online propaganda focuses towards males but also entices females as well to join the jihadist’s cause. The advocating of ISIS brides has made mainstream popularity in the Western media. Jihadists use a different type of methodology to coerce Western females to travel internationally and support the “Caliphate.” Using online coercion and social engineering, jihadists focus their attention toward creating a virtual illusion for women. Using the Internet, jihadist recruiters establish a sense of purpose and create desire for potential female recruits.

The mystique created with online communications allows jihadists to research and narrow their scope to women who are socially isolated and encompass inadequate personality traits. The lifestyle portrayed by recruiters coincides with the target’s aspirations, and the belief that there is utopian state and an ultimate place of sisterhood within Islam. This allows jihadists to prey on the insecurities of women and essentially lure and transform them into a reward for soldiers.
The research shows a correlation that is similar to the recruitment of other male youth and adult members. This is the demographic of an emotional or personality disorder that stems from a form of emotional trauma or a person subjected to a form of abuse or maltreatment. The push and pull factors that cause women to join terrorist groups coincide with a form of isolation. The proposed recruits mitigate isolation by retreating to online communications to have a sense of belonging to a group or cause and feeling the ability to be a part of something larger than they are as individuals.

Once a social hierarchy and acceptance is established, the introduction of theology and radical Islam introduce the deity that gives the female recruit a higher power to believe in and justify actions for the “Caliphate.” The Conley case evidenced this, where Shannon Conley exhibited some of the traits listed. Conley had a crisis of faith, did not fully understand Islam readings from multiple perspectives, and found herself influenced by media that discussed Islamophobia. Additionally, she was 19 years old at the time of arrest and based her actions on feelings, rather than information.

**Recommendations**

Current efforts to prevent the radicalization of youth are present in the form of education, legislature and laws. A proactive response to this problem seems to generate awareness about the issue rather than a reactive response. The ability to stamp out online youth radicalization begins with parents and ends with policymakers. As parents, counselors, and teachers provide education, legislative body enacts, and law enforcement enforces the laws to criminalize these videos and this behavior.
Legislative. The Patriot Act, albeit controversial, allowed the government to have a tool that allowed a broader scope of investigation into terrorists’ use of media. This new legislation also allowed for better facilitation of information between federal agencies, with intent to decrease investigation time and prove a more proactive response to terrorism. This legislation allows federal authorities to provide digital investigatory capabilities to identify terrorists, to include recruiters, before execution of operational commitments.

The ability to use roving wiretaps allows authorities to investigate a terrorist threat, when there is probable cause presented online. This allows for the reduction of needless investigations by identifying the difference between a troubled youth posting rhetoric with no intentions of operational execution and a credible source such as Conley and Martinez who trained for the support of jihadism. Additionally, the ability to delay the execution of a search warrant, when utilized under the Patriot Act, allows investigators the opportunity to gather information before it is deleted or altered. In cases of recruitment and radicalization, this investigative technique assists investigators to identify potential targets, and have direct access to recruiters and recruitment websites before their deletion or relocation.

The Patriot Act is directly responsible for the disruption of over 150 terrorist cells and hundreds of investigations and deportations of other suspected terrorists. Within the judicial and administrative proceedings of “homegrown” terrorists, only a handful of times in both the U.S. and U.K. has the charge of treason levied against suspected perpetrators. The main statutes that exist to charge someone with treason reside with the intent of the individual. They have to do one of the following: provide aid and comfort, produce any act that is a betrayal to the U.S., or have traitorous intent. According to historical data, there is no record of any citizen or legal alien of the U.S. charged with treason for supporting the recruitment and facilitation of recruits via the
Internet, or the administration of a jihadist website. Treason is punishable by execution of a minimum penalty of 5 years in prison and a $10,000 fine.

The ability to bring this charge to “homegrown” terrorists, and facilitators of jihadist media on American soil might have an awakening effect for youth that are mesmerized by jihadist rhetoric. This could provide incentive for the youth to view all sides of an ideal before making a decision on supporting it and the manner in which supported, peacefully or violently. Terrorists are aware that the view of the use of treason, by some citizens, is that of an authoritarian nature and due to this, jihadists are able to manipulate the Internet and use this scare tactic to influence youth by presenting the government as a religious, diverse oppressive organization. Using the treason charge to regulate this type of jihadist rhetoric media can help re-establish societal responsibility and demonstrate the proactive stance that the U.S. will not tolerate national betrayal.

The use of treason to help censor and monitor the control of jihadist rhetoric information over the Internet within U.S. boundaries is a high priority topic of debate over the violation of civil liberties. To achieve an optimal security presence, regulated checks and balances can allow for the surveillance of suspected terrorist transmissions and ensure the preservation of constitutional rights. Terrorists’ successful recruiting depends on the conflict of civil liberties versus the protection of national security. The goal to cause oppression to Westerners can be achieved by the infringement of freedom of speech (jihadist rhetoric), which is viewed as a trampling of Constitutional rights. The reverse side of this argument is limited to no monitoring, which, allows for jihadists and other terrorist factions to easily and safely communicate and influence U.S. citizens, to include youth, inciting heinous crimes against their own country.
Education. The precursors and signs to radicalization of youth are not widely known to law enforcement officers and social workers. Education on current immigrant population and customs in addition to the warning signs could potentially allow for intervention before the radicalization process becomes violent. Additionally, this would allow authorities to notify and inform parents, in the absence of their awareness. The introduction of education, both online and in traditional form on the counter ideologies of radical Islam would allow youth an educated view of the religion and increase a collective peaceful identity.

An approach used by Canada is to fund peaceful Islamic organizations that are opposed to violence and help educate youth on the intricacies of the religion. This would help alleviate fears of Western oppression and debunk the myths of radical jihadism. This would allow the Islamic community to sponsor public events that can help educate the population on the peaceful aspects of Islam and differentiate Muslims from radical jihadists. The secondary goal of a movement like Canada’s is the reduction of Muslim stereotypes that reinforces the differences celebrated within different communities, yet one society.

Using the Internet to pump factual information to combat the jihadist propaganda can be the quickest way to reach youth. In the terms of combatting online radicalization, the fight needs to occur online and on the same battleground, as would a traditional war. Cyberspace is the online battleground and the interjection of peaceful Islamic information not only causes an upstream of positive information to combat radical ideologies but also gives the youth options, rather than an altered, idealistic, and violent view of Islam with the ultimate goal residing in the destruction of Western society.

The policymakers and lawmakers need to be educated on the radicalization process, as much as the rest of society. With the additional information at their disposal, informed decisions
from all levels, with the additional support of the Muslim community decide the direction communities take to thwart online radicalization. Additionally, pamphlets and papers generated and distributed to both parents and children explain the dangers of online radicalization. This philosophy and tactic gained much success in the Canadian region with the RCMP and targeted toward classes that exhibited the socioeconomic factors congruent with online radicalization.

The education needs to begin, if possible, with parents and child in a safe setting. The discussion concerning current state of affairs, discrimination of religions, and the bravado and machismo that shows in the jihadist videos presents in a manner that the youth can process. These conversations tailor to the child’s respective age, which allows the youth to grasp more of the truthful concepts of Islam and the dangers of online radicalization, without attempting to coerce the youth into coinciding with the parent’s beliefs. The idea of being a martyr and the “glory” that attaches to suicide bombers and terrorists become moot points in the youth’s decision, when presented with the horrific aftermath. Lastly, parents can also purchase software controls that allow them to monitor the youth’s activities online, and can block websites with pre-determined words and restrict the ability for peer-to-peer sharing.

**Future Research Recommendations**

The research conducted shows a viable link between the use of social media and radicalization of youth and adults alike. Further qualitative and quantitative research conducted can show the most popular form of online radicalization such as videos, audio recordings, readings, and blogs. The ability to know the most widely used platform, such as YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, Kik, WhatsApp, and others of that nature would help authorities and parents to narrow their scope of investigation and oversight. With the amount of messaging
applications and different types of peer-to-peer file sharing, the broad scope is too large and a scalpel needed to conduct a detailed analysis on the influence of jihadists using these tools.

Supporting research into the social influence of these applications can help to determine the other causal effects of extended and unsupervised communications, apart from the jihadist influence. Sociological research can link personality disorders, emotional trauma, psychological trauma and childhood abuse to establish patterns of predominance. These predominant social factors sought, are the ones that cause the transition to immersed online communications, and then the conversion to radical Islam.

The identification of those social factors help develop warning signs to identify early detection for online radicalization. Child psychology research and the effects of jihadist videos annotated at different ages can establish the significance of effect that the videos has on different age groups. Additionally, the research would entail the different age groups with different ethnicities, religions and socioeconomic factors to help pinpoint the group that is at most risk for being susceptible to online radicalization.

Additionally, the investigation of any proposed bills or legislation to stop the viewing or publication of jihadist videos would help accelerate the process of development of proposed plans. An in-depth analysis of all U.S. cases involving treason can determine if there are common threads from past cases that can apply to modern day homegrown terrorism. A Constitutional legal analysis of the Treason statutes and the application to recruitment personnel, who foster online radicalization, could possibly provide a legal recourse and establish ramifications for suspects.

International data research needs to show the collective recruitment of youth from predominantly Western cultures. This information is valuable when looking at the collective
problem of online radicalization as a whole. This allows researchers to have accurate percentages when determining the flux of radicalization and providing evidence for the concentration of increased online anti-rhetoric material. Lastly, quantitative research into the numbers of American citizens who believe the current tools in place, such as The Patriot Act, and other online monitoring tools are effective in contrast to the belief that the use of these tools are violation of privacy against the American people.
Conclusion

The problem of online radicalization of America’s youth is a qualitative, not a quantitative problem. There is history to suggest that youth are susceptible to online radicalization and given certain factors, will succumb to the pressures and social engineering applied by terrorist actors. Currently, there are no set laws in place to combat the possession or distribution of jihadist rhetoric media. The responsibility of the posted videos lies with the web hosting and the ability to criminalize and censor the jihadist videos combats the perceived violation of civil liberties. To prevent further online radicalization and instances of homegrown terrorism, American people need further education on the subject, such as Canada’s “Prevent” program, and the willingness to accept a version of online monitoring without compromising privacy rights or Constitutional statutes.
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