Transformation of Spirit of Terrorism: Weaponisation of Media in Hands of Daesh/ISIS

Mārtiņš Daugulis

Rīga Stradiņš University, Faculty of European Studies, Political Science Department, Latvia

Introduction. With the development of social media, and availability of informational exchange, the issue of weaponisation of media is becoming even more intense. The theory of social media weaponisation is still in development, while empirical results of particular phenomena are already clearly visible – Daesh/ISIS recruitment, networking and campaigns are mainly implemented through social platforms. Due to the tragic terror acts in Paris at end of 2015, Daesh is on top of terrorism analysis. But the question still remains whether social media is in the core of Daesh's success.

Aim, Material and Methods. The aim of article is to compare Daesh/ISIS with other terrorist groups (Boko Haram, Al Qaeda) to unveil importance of weaponisation of social media. Materials used for article are theories on social media weaponisation and empirical data – media items used by terroristic organisations. The applied method is content and discourse analysis. Tasks of the article are: 1. Comparison and analysis of scientific literature considering weaponisation of social media and media per se. 2. Analysis of items of media examples from various terrorist organisations. 3. Evaluation of Daesh/ISIS weaponisation strategy

Results. According to Cavelty Dunn (Dunn, 2014) the Persian Gulf War of 1991 was the first cyber-war or information war, when physical force alone was not sufficient, but information dominance had to be achieved in order to win the conflict. However, the role of information warfare began to change around the mid-1990s, when the activities began to be understood as actions targeting the entire information infrastructure of an adversary – political, economic, and military, throughout the continuum of operations from peace to war. NATO's 1999 intervention in Yugoslavia was the first conflict characterised as "the first war on the Internet" and "the first war fought in cyberspace" where the use of the full spectrum of information warfare (propaganda and disinformation through the media as well as cyber attacks) was a key element of combat. With the growing significance of Internet-based communication and social media in nearly all areas of life and using the experiences of the Arab Spring, the role of social media in warfare, its potential application as a weapon is being extensively discussed. Mode of operation of terrorist organisations are bringing the weaponisation to the next level: DAESH/Isis is building success story of deadly effectiveness, faking reality and at the same time building internet community which helps to maintain, sustain and "back-up" organisation.

Conclusions. In his monograph about the Internet media weaponisation, Thomas Elkjer Nissen states that contemporary wars are "more about the control over populations, decision-making and the political space than they are about a geographical area", and today's wars are more about identities and identity claims, including terrorism. The struggle for influencing public opinion takes place in the information environment, to which also social network media belong. Therefore, psychological warfare, including cyber elements, deception operations and, of course, the strategic use of social network media plays an increasing role. "Social network media seems to have become the weapon of choice" (Elkjer Nissen, 2015), but for Daesh/ISIS this is the first choice among the others. And because of this choice, Daesh/ISIS is taking the upper hand to other terrorist organisations. Which opens the question on fighting the Daesh/ISIS on land as important as on-line.

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