Chapter 98

Opposing Viewpoints on Youth Social Media Banning in the U.S. for the Combatance of Extremist Recruiting:
Constitutionality and Societal Implications

Lindsay A. West
Pennsylvania State University, USA

Richard V. Martin
Pennsylvania State University, USA

Courtney Perkins
Pennsylvania State University, USA

Jennifer M. Quatel
Pennsylvania State University, USA

Gavin Macgregor-Skinner
Penn State Hershey Medical Center, USA

ABSTRACT

Today, terrorist groups are recruiting, inspiring, and guiding global strategies not just by Internet operations, but through an organized, steady infusion of propaganda videos and call-to-action messages. Most worrisome: increasing evidence that the youth population represents a particularly susceptible cohort, being drawn into the ranks of terrorist organizations operating worldwide. In response, this article will address the pros and cons of social media banning, its effects on constitutional rights, and its effectiveness towards decreasing radicalization and recruitment. The research presented here aims to further the field of Homeland Security and to encourage debates on how to decrease terrorism and youth recruitment and whether banning social media would assist the Department of Homeland Security's mission. In conclusion, this article explores both sides of the spectrum while offering insight for scholars, organizations, and practitioners regarding the attainability of social media banning in the United States.

INTRODUCTION

In 1931, General MacArthur—understanding that changes in methods and weapons held the potential to alter the nature of conflict—could not have even imagined the many forms of warfare that would be utilized a decade later in World War II. Just as machineguns, tanks, and aircraft have changed the nature of conflicts throughout history, so did the telegraph, radio, television, and eventually the Internet…creating advances in the information world, such as social and new media, which may prove as profound as any of these inventions (Mayfield III, 2008).

In spite of the transformative power social media strategies play in presenting new opportunities, historically spreading prodemocracy uprisings throughout the Middle East, and initiating several social media-led student protests in South America, Hong Kong, South Africa, and London, these technologies are simultaneously creating new concerns for security agencies dealing in the complex world of extremist ideology (Kunkle, 2012). Not only is the rapid spread of blogs, social networking sites, and media-sharing technology (such as YouTube), aided by the proliferation of mobile technology, changing the conditions in which the United States conducts military operations, but with the speed and transparency of information increasing dramatically, events which would previously have been kept secret are being spread around the world in minutes (Mayfield III, 2008).

Today, terrorist groups are recruiting, inspiring, and guiding global strategies through an organized, steady infusion of propaganda videos and call-to-action messages circulated via social media platforms: blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (Kunkle, 2012). In doing so, foreign jihadists have expanded their attack mechanisms through acquiring a hybrid, multimedia community participant strategy designed to circumvent far-reaching, multinational counterterrorism operations and transform citizen extremists into regional operatives and homegrown terrorists (Kunkle, 2012).

Presently, more than 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters from over 100 countries have succumbed to these radicalization efforts, joining the conflicts in Iraq and Syria or inciting acts of terror in their home countries (The United Nations, 2015). Most worrisome of this is that there is increasing evidence that the youth population represents a particularly susceptible cohort, being drawn into the ranks of terrorist organizations operating around the world (The Homeland Security Institute, 2009). In fact, by systematically marauding upon the vulnerabilities of the youth population in multiple contexts and offering a range of incentives—from financial support, to acceptance and social bonding, and to the promise of excitement—terrorist organizations portray their intentions in an attractive manner (The Homeland Security Institute, 2009).

One method considered for countering youth radicalization in the United States involves efforts to ban the use of social media for the population deemed most at risk. While several minimally democratic and non-democratic countries (Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, China, Vietnam, and North Korea) have implemented such policies, the question of its effectiveness and constitutionality for our Nation has surfaced (Liebelson, 2014). Accordingly, this paper seeks to explore this idea in depth: addressing the pros and cons of social media banning, its effects on constitutional rights, and its effectiveness towards decreasing radicalization and recruitment. The sections of this article will be as follows:

- The Process of Radicalization
- Why Youth Join Terrorist Cells: The Social Media Influence
- Opposing Viewpoints: Pro Banning and Con Banning
- Is Controlling the Internet Feasible in the United States?
- Alternative Solutions

Related Content

Privacy Aware Access Control: A Literature Survey and Novel Framework
Rekha Bhatiaand Manpreet Singh Gujral (2019). *Censorship, Surveillance, and Privacy: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 2028-2043).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/privacy-aware-access-control/213896

The Survey
 (2020). *Internet Censorship and Regulation Systems in Democracies: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 77-91).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-survey/254617

Cyberterrorism: Using the Internet as a Weapon of Destruction
Leevia Dillon (2019). *National Security: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice (pp. 206-230).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/cyberterrorism/220882

Privacy Concerns and Customers' Information-Sharing Intentions: The Role of Culture
Monica Grossoand Sandro Castaldo (2019). *Censorship, Surveillance, and Privacy: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 75-90).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/privacy-concerns-and-customers-information-sharing-intentions/213795

Types of Terrorism
Gus Martin (2017). *Developing Next-Generation Countermeasures for Homeland Security Threat Prevention (pp. 1-16).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/types-of-terrorism/164714