



# **The use of social media and ICT for GCED: Risks and Opportunities**

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# The challenge of social media

- All extremist groups are increasingly using social media for recruitment
- Social media as a weapon of war between factions: Israeli Defence Force (286,000 followers) versus Hamas (@AlqassamBrigade, now shut down)
- But changes the media coverage: is Israel losing the online information war? #GazaUnderAttack used in more than 4 million Twitter posts compared with 170,000 for #IsraelUnderFire
- Images of what Netanyahu calls 'telegenically dead Palestinians'

# Al Shabaab

- Started using Twitter in September 2011; uses microblogging as a framing tool, for intramovement coordination, information creation and verification; and ideological engagement. Has HSM Press Office
- Westgate Mall attack painted as response to greater suffering by those inside Somalia; warnings to Kenyan government and public; updates on the siege
- Almost every tweet in English; aims to shape worldwide debate
- ‘Clash paradigm’: Islam v West, Islam endangered
- Non-violent dialogue unfeasible: *‘you can’t negotiate under the muzzle of a gun; invasion nullifies every peace attempt’.*

# AS media arm video of fighters from across the world

AL-KATAIB FOUNDATION

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## MUJAHIDEEN MOMENTS 5



# Al Shabaab and education

Claims to have set up 3 universities, 550 madrassas and 150 primary schools

But bans residents from sending children to other schools, from using smartphones, watching television

Has been forcibly abducting children, but says to 'rehabilitate' them. Posted pictures of them in clean uniforms, holding the Qur'an

God is also online: *'The dead militants received prayers via tweets that Allah will accept their sacrifice and have mercy on their souls'*

# ISIS (Islamic State)



- Building on techniques learned from AQAP and Al Shabaab. Employs social media not just to spread messages and recruit followers but also to empower own supporters. Supporters can sign up for an App for Android through Google Play called ‘*Dawn of Glad Tidings*’ to get information
- Disseminates information almost exclusively on Twitter, multiple languages and platforms
- Hashtag campaigns skewing trending terms #AllEyesonISIS or #CalamityWillBefallUs, with suggested tweets as:

*-If the US bombs Iraq, every citizen is a legitimate target for us;*  
*-Every American doctor in any country will be slaughtered;*  
*Wherever our war goes, Jewish rabbis are humiliated*

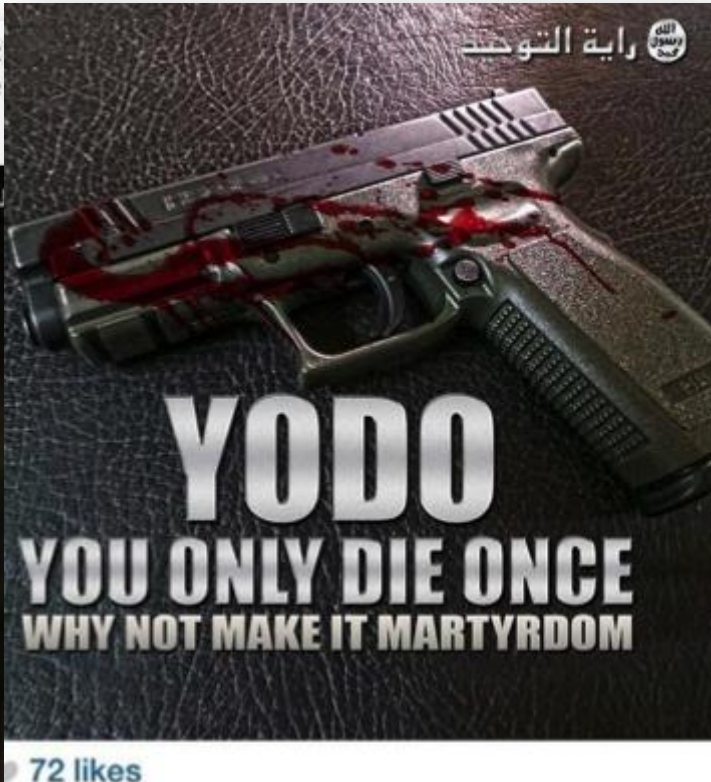
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# Social Media and Contemporary Violent Culture



...a purification no matter who you are or what  
...re, no good deeds are needed to come before  
...t nothing hold you back.







## To beat ISIS explore the contradictions?

- For every tweet about welfare there are corresponding images of mass executions, crucifixions and beheadings.
- Longstanding policy of extortion
- Fissures over uncompromising vision and imposition of Sharia. (Was command in Iraq for FGM a hoax?)
- Ultimate dislodging should exploit divisions, but also mitigate the grievances of diverse Sunni groups
- ISIS now fighting the Taliban!

# How powerful is social media?

- Bypasses traditional mass media system
- Can engage with political elite; strengthens transparency, shifts power relations, loosens grip of the elite
- Can directly engage conflict affected parties on the ground
- Thought becomes a tweet or Facebook post with far-reaching audience; empowers the individual
- Can blog anonymously to explore taboo subjects; take and post picture of injustice and violence; difficult to take down
- Can use 'edutainment' to engage youth and instil core values; youth then take it deeper
- Democratic potential, adaptable, non-hierarchical

- Sharing and collaborative knowledge building; brings students together across divides; digital diplomacy and reconciliation; positive dialogue about religion
- Builds virtual communities in countries where in a minority, or in diasporas
- Generates inclusive set of codes of internet behaviour , as in the '*We Are All Khaled Said*' page
- Provides access to civic knowledge from outside a closed country
- Can invoke imagined peace communities
- Ideal for humour and satire, can transcend boundaries (2 things that motivate people the most are comedy and anger)

# “Generation TXT” Manila 2001





# Social Media in Tahrir



# But Issues

- Who controls? Can advance vested interests of various cultural actors, as well as existing power elites
- There is digital inequality like any other inequality
- Has negative as well as positive effects on peace, can polarise groups
- Can be dangerous, with bloggers arrested etc
- Speed of communication can be a problem; images and stories found to be false, but too late
- Use of English can be improving for students but also used by terrorist groups
- Problem of leadership, organisational structure and sustainability

# Smart Mob Not Always a Wise Mob



# Can students change their own education?

In Egypt, Linda Herrera found that students carried the spirit of revolution back to their schools and universities, with Facebook campaigns to expose corrupt teachers, demands for curriculum reform. Yet did not have an effect on annual exams. One compulsory question was:

*'Write a letter to the Supreme Council to the Armed Forces thanking them for supporting the revolution. Thank SCAF also for their steadfastness in protecting the nation from all the agents despite being opposed and insulted'*

But someone made a scan and posted it on Facebook, generated a debate about SCAF and pros and cons of further revolt.....



# Tasks for education

1. Not being swayed by dodgy propaganda.

Vanderhoven et al (2014) identify 3 categories of risk:

*Content* risk (hate messages and false information);

*Contact* risks (cyber bullying) ;

*Commercial* risks (data going to 3<sup>rd</sup> companies).

But they do not mention *radicalisation!* (Children good at accessing and finding things on internet, not as good at avoiding some of the risks.)

2. Actively challenging violent and hate messages

3. Being aware of grooming for extremism

4. Forming social movements for peace.

## Initiatives for schools to challenge extremism

Collaboration between Centre for Child Protection at Univ. of Kent and Kent police has produced a simulation of social networking like Facebook which features an isolated student, Zak, who is being targeted by extremists. Pupils are presented with various scenarios, asked to make judgments about whether he is at risk. Uses a social media timeline, which young people familiar with. Everything clickable to reveal more depth. By clicking on an event in the time line, students able to grade them as 'signs of influence' or 'signs of evidence' or as red herrings.

# Visual fireworks compared to making frag grenades...



# Encouraging positive use of social media by (young) people

- Protest against injustice; demonstrations; instant messaging for collective action; smart mobs
- Crowdsourcing, citizen research
- Counter-messaging, challenging media accounts
- Creating alternatives to hate and hate speech



# Challenges: Terrorism, Media and Communicating Messages



# Can you create (powerful) alternative symbols??

Hate logo databank



# Global Networked Citizen

- Can see through attempted manipulation by media and use of social media
- Can create own networks of influence
- Does not see the world in black and white but in complexity
- Adaptable to change
- Can use media for democratic change faster than traditional methods
- Can resist oppression



STOP OR I'LL TWEET!..

IRAN

MATT HANDELMAN  
NEWSDAY