[Undercover] Jihadists Invite You to Be Friends on Facebook: the Challenge of Clandestine Cells
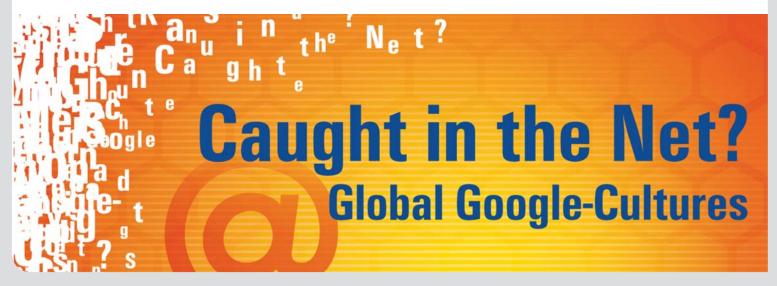
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Caught in the Net?
Global Google-Cultures

Social networking has been phenomenal in connecting people, communicating information and ideas, disseminating material, and mobilising publics. One only has to look at the Arab Spring to see how social media has been utilised to break information siege, organise efforts, and mobilise publics. Such potential has not escaped the minds of jihadists who are constantly looking for new ways to connect, communicate, and recruit. Facebook in particular has been a recurrent target for jihadist propagation and recruitment efforts. No wonder given its popularity and global reach. With operational blunders that saw the failure of their first endeavour late 2008, a year later jihadists learned their lesson and completely revised their 'Facebook invasion' strategy in a way that would overcome surveillance and detection. If successfully implemented, the meticulously thought Phase III of the Facebook invasion project would pose a serious challenge and threat to all. While Phase I saw the creation of an explicit and exclusive jihadist group widely celebrated and propagated and Phase II failed in mobilising supporters, Phase III plans a decentralised undercover operation to which we would be completely oblivious even if it was under our noses.

This article follows efforts made by jihadists to 'invade' Facebook, known as Al-Nusra Facebook invasion campaigns, with focus on Phase III of the project. While the article looks at one case study to underline the pros and cons of using Facebook to connect and recruit, talking about the implications of Phase III is completely hypothetical as the author cannot determine at this stage whether or not it has been implemented, underscoring the uncertainty and danger in such covert operations.

Al-Nusra Facebook Invasion Campaigns

The idea to 'invade' Facebook did not occur in a vacuum. It was a direct response to the unprecedented cyberattack against jihadist forums, namely the Al-Qaeda-affiliated ones, a day short of September 11, 2008.[1] Back then, the top three Al-Qaeda-affiliated forums[2] were simultaneously shut down and others, such as the (in)famous Al-Hesba, followed suit a few days later. This forced members to look for alternative platforms – ones that would be

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[1] See *Mina Al-Lami/Ben O'Loughlin*: Jihadists Try to Make Friends on Facebook, in: The Guardian, 12.01.2009; http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jan/12/facebook-jihadis [16.03.2012].
[2] *Al-Ikhlaas*, *Al-Firdaws*, and *Al-Buraq*, all three with some links to Al-Qaeda.

more resilient. While many ideas were suggested, and indeed successfully implemented,[3] the Facebook proposal stood out, both to jihadists and Western media. The proposal – posted on 9 December 2008 on Al-Faloja forum by a young and prominent member of jihadi forums under the title, *Invasion of Facebook: Theory & Practice*[4] – was a simple one, per-haps even naïve: to create a single jihadist group on Facebook. This group would host jihadist members, material, and discussions, and become a gateway to more radical sites. Moreover, it was hoped to be a window to their "enemies' publics" and "mainstream Muslims".[5] The three key advantages listed for Facebook were:

1. Its global reach, citing the successful Obama electoral campaign on the site in 2008;

2. Its mobilisation potential, citing the Egyptian *April 6 Youth Movement*[6] that used Facebook to organise an unprecedented and successful strike in Egypt on 6 April 2008;[7]

3. Its resilience, arguing that authorities cannot close a famous site like Facebook as they do jihadist forums.

While the proposal, later known as Phase I, received some resistance from seemingly older members of the forum who were unfamiliar with Facebook and sceptical about the open and liberal space, the younger members, and indeed the majority, loved the idea and started propagating it. Very quickly a jihadist group was formed on Facebook called 'Knights of Al-Nusra Invasion' and to it were assigned seven commanders to run its seven 'brigades'. Each brigade and the commander and members assigned to it had a particular function, reflected in their titles, such as: Legitimation, Media & Graphic Design, Communiqués, Translations, etc. After much effort to launch the group, upload material, and get jihadist

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[3] See *Mina Al-Lami*: Whac-A-Mole: Losing an Anti-Terror Battle, in: LSE Research Magazine, No. 2, Autumn 2010, pp. 34-37; http://www2.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/LSEResearchMagazine/RM_2.aspx [16.03.2012]

[4] *Forum member* [anonymised]: Invasion of Facebook: Theory & Practice, in: Al-Faloja jihadist forum, 09.12.2008. [No active URL available as the website is now closed. Saved copy of webpage available with author.]

[5] Ibid.

[6] April 6 Youth Movement Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=9973986703 [16.03.2012].

[7] See *Hazem Zohny*: The April 6 Youth Movement, in: Al-Ahram Online Egyptian Press, 26.11.2010; http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/1/35/Egypt/The-April-Youth-Movement.aspx [16.03.2012].

forum members to subscribe and get involved, the group was wiped out with a single click in a week's time. The Western media hype surrounding its launch – which jihadists considered a big media victory – carried Fox News to "alert the company to the group's activities",[8] causing Facebook to immediately close the group.

Several mistakes led to the quick failure of the effort. First, the group was too obvious, making it easily detected (see Figure 1). Its name was jihadist, even clearly spelling out 'invasion' or 'incursion'. The slogan on its logo stated: 'Today your websites; tomorrow your lands O Crusaders'. Its members' pseudonyms and avatars, featuring key Al-Qaeda figures and the burning twin towers, among other images, had clear jihadist references. And the content – media productions and discussions – it hosted were also jihadist, including popular Al-Qaeda videos. Second, its exclusivity meant it only attracted sympathisers who already subscribed to the ideology, mainly the same members of the jihadist forums. This added no value in terms of winning new supporters. The group, similar to jihadist forums, merely served as an echo chamber that preached to the choir. Third, and finally, the group was too centralised. It was a single group with central command, making its shutdown possible with a single click.

The ease with which the group was closed demoralised many of its once zealous jihadist supporters. Failure of the effort indicated to them that Facebook was not jihad-friendly. However, the Facebook invasion project would not die out but transform into more sophisticated strategies, making use of previous shortcomings.

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[8] "Jihadist Group Trying to 'Invade' Facebook Gets Shut Down", in: Fox News, 19.12.2008; http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,470385,00.html [16.03.2012].

Figure 1: Avatar and member profile of Knights of Al-Nusra Invasion, first[9] Facebook Jihadist group[10]

Sporadic Facebook-Jihad Efforts

The failure of Phase I of Al-Nusra, the name under which the Facebook 'invasions' came to be known, carried its founders to revise the 'invasion' plan and come up with more strategic ideas. Phase II of Al-Nusra was launched mid-February 2009.[11] This time they announced that Facebook jihad would be more of an individual effort than a group one, making use of what was already available on the ground (on Facebook). Briefly, the plan was for members to infiltrate existing Facebook groups, rather than create their own, and inundate them with jihadist material and links to jihadist websites and forums. This was hoped to make the endeavour easier to achieve and less vulnerable. If a jihadist had his account closed or was banned from a group, he could simply open a new account or re-join the group under a different name. However, the content and contributions the strategy proposed remained highly jihadist, including postings like "manuals for the making and use of explosives" and

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[9] The no. 2 in the group avatar refers to the overall effort to retaliate for the closure of jihadist sites in 2008, known as 'Al-Nusra'. Nusra 2 was the Facebook phase, and this here was the first one, indicated throughout this article as 'Phase I' for ease of reference and to separate it from following phases/strategies.

[10] Images taken from Fox News Article, "Jihadist Group Trying to 'Invade' Facebook Gets Shut Down", 19.12.2008; http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,470385,00.html [16.03.2012].

[11] *Forum Member* [anonymised]: Launch of Phase II of Al-Nusra operation (Volcanoes of Rage), in: Al-Faloja jihadist forum, 11.02.2009. [No active URL available as the website is now closed. Saved copy of webpage available with author.]

"material that incite the slaughter of Americans and Jews anywhere".[12] The strategy aimed to spread jihadist productions and propaganda across Facebook groups, be a gateway to radical sites, and 'befriend' those interested in jihad. However, their failure in the first round disenchanted members who did not rise to the call to invade this time. Additionally, the resurfacing of some of their closed jihadist forums, such as *Al-Faloja* and *Shumookh*, and launch of new ones[13] made the project less urgent. Finally, the idea of a leaderless 'incursion' – in which members are requested to do their own media jihad efforts on Facebook independently – seemed less attractive than a group where members could show off their extremism and impress each other as well as their leadership.

In mid-2010 there was another independent effort to have a jihadist presence on Facebook. Setting a precedent in jihadist media, the Mujahideen Electronic Network (MEN),[14] a jihadist forum that had the biggest English-language section, launched its very own Facebook page (see Figure 2). This made it "the first major al Qaeda-affiliated website to launch Facebook pages".[15] In a sense, its endeavour was similar to those of big media corporations, such as the BBC, CNN, and Al-Jazeera that have platforms on Facebook where they advertise their news and productions and interact with their audiences. Also unprecedented in jihadist media was MEN's provision of direct links on its forum (not FB page) to popular social media sites. These links would allow its jihadist members to share (like, post, tweet, blog, etc.) material they came across on the forum. Links included, among others, Facebook, Twitter, del.icio.us, Google, MySpace, Digg Digg and StumbleUpon.[16] This was a more daring move that indicated its proponents, who did not seem bothered about security restrictions, saw that jihadist media had the same right to new media tools and the right to be heard and read by people that mainstream media enjoyed. In a sense, jihadist media was competing with mainstream media like never before.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] See *Al-Lami*, 2010, p. 36.

[14] The forum suffered several blackouts and was finally closed in February 2011.

[15] *Brachman, Jarret*: Al Qaeda Wants to Be Friends, in: Foreign Policy, 12.10.2010.

[16] Al-Mujahideen Electronic Network, accessed on 24.01.2011. [No active URL available as the website is now closed. Saved copy of webpage available with author.]

Figure 2: Al-Mojahideen Electronic Network Facebook page on 28 January 2011[17]

Again, this success was short-lived owing to the same reason that saw the failure of the first Facebook effort. A jihadist group or page that openly said it was jihadist would not be tolerated.[18] The page was closed, as was the jihadist forum that made such a daring move.

Hence, when a new Facebook invasion strategy/phase was declared late 2010, one could easily imagine what its main feature was: covertness.

Invasion by Stealth: Phase III of Al-Nusra Campaign

In September 2010 several jihadist forums hosted a very detailed jihadist manifesto on the 'invasion' of Facebook titled, 'How to Do Jihad on Facebook', written by one of the most active and credible members of jihadist forums.[19] This was considered Phase III of the Al-Nusra invasion project and built on the strategy of its predecessor, Phase II. Al-Nusra III saw detailed planning of all steps of the 'invasion', consideration of previous shortcomings, and recognition of the communication and networking potential the platform offers. If implemented carefully, Phase III would truly pose a challenge for all and become a breakthrough in jihadist communication and recruitment. This was no longer an open

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[17] Image saved by author from Al-Mojahideen Electronic Network page on Facebook on 28 January 2011.

[18] One of the forum's supervisors wrote in January 2011 that Facebook had not only closed its page but suspended all its accounts, "which indicates the strength of our jihadi message". [No active URL but saved page available with author.]

[19] *Forum member* [anonymised]: How to Do Jihad on Facebook, in: Al-Mujahideen Electronic Forum, Sept. 2010. [No active URL available as the website is now closed. Saved copy of webpage available with author.]

invasion, but one by stealth: an undercover operation that was hoped to overcome surveillance and detection. To highlight the importance of this strategy, it remained on the sticky section[20] of Al-Mujahideen Electronic Network well into January 2011 (the forum was suspended in February 2011), which is quite uncommon even for top-rated material.

This third proposal was a big departure from the first. Phase I was a direct response to the media attack on jihadist sites late 2008. Back then the jihadist Facebook group was hoped to serve as an alternative platform where jihadists could simply regroup and hold their material should their main sites be closed. They were operating in unchartered waters where the majority, as their postings suggested, had no clue about Facebook. Phase III was more sophisticated, ambitious, and sought to make ultimate use of the communication tools for which the social networking site is so famous.

Unlike Phase I – that attracted only jihadists, and perhaps security agents, to its group – Phase III targeted a completely different crowd and sought to broaden the scope of its audience. Its media aimed to target Western publics who were hoped to put pressure on their governments to pull out of Muslim countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, through witnessing 'their losses' in jihadist media productions. Its target recruits were the pools of 'mainstream Muslims' present on Facebook. While Phase I had similar ambitions in terms of audience, its flawed operational strategy went against it. Phase III recognises a common error in jihadist online efforts which it says often alienates mainstream Muslims, "as if jihad is the cause and concern of an elite group of Muslims, and not Muslims as a whole".[21]

According to the Phase III strategy, there would no longer be a jihadist group or groups but undercover jihadists and small clandestine cells. The strategy called on all loyal jihadists to register on Facebook and take a month's time to familiarise themselves with it before embarking on any networking and recruitment effort. Before or within this period, jihadists are strongly advised to master two skills:

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[20] Where statements by key Al-Qaeda figures and outstanding contributions would remain for days or months, depending on their relevance, highlighted at the top of the discussion board to underscore their importance and to allow them more viewership or readership.
[21] *Forum member* [anonymised]: How to Do Jihad on Facebook, 2010.

1. The art of recruitment and persuasion. Recommended was "a careful and repeated reading of Abu Omar al-Qaedi's book, *The Art of Recruitment"*.[22]

2. Internet security to overcome surveillance and detection. Cited here was the (in)famous *Abu Zubaida Security Encyclopedia*.[23]

Armed with recruitment skills and cautious of their online security, the 'thousands' of jihadists, which the strategy assumed it was addressing, are to set out to Facebook where they will initially scout for potential groups to join, rather than create. This was to be a stage of reconnaissance. Target groups where potential Muslim recruits were to be found are those formed around a Muslim theme or political topic, "such as Gaza, the Muslim Brotherhood, Political Islam, Salafism, etc. or even broader themes such as politics and culture".[24] After becoming a member and immersing himself in these groups (as many as one can join), the undercover jihadist is to 'befriend' members of these groups, focusing on those with Islamist leanings. The article suggests some signs to look for to identify such people, like their Islamic avatars, nature of their discussions and postings, regular citation of Quranic verses and Hadith, membership in Islamic groups, etc. The strategy sets a target of

> "60-70 'friends' to add on Facebook per day, bringing the number to a minimum of 1800 'friends' per month, which is a reasonable start for a small group. Yes, small, because many Facebook groups have over 100,000 members…Remember brother, the more friends you have, the bigger the group you later create is likely to become as you'll be able to invite these friends to join your new group".[25]

Anticipating his readers' bewilderment about the possibility of 'befriending' so many random strangers on Facebook, the author clarifies, "because my brothers, social networking […] is the premise of Facebook".[26] After having been on Facebook for some time and having been a member of many groups and having made enough 'friends', the next step is for the jihadist to start his own clandestine Facebook group and invite his non-jihadist 'friends' to join. When choosing a name for his group, the jihadist is to strictly avoid jihadist names in order not to give away the group and its purpose. They should opt for names that will attract or be

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

of interest to Muslims in general, such as "the Palestinian cause or the Gaza massacre".[27] The following step is determining the content to be hosted on these groups. Some of the main recommendations made are material supporting the legitimation of jihad by prominent ancient and contemporary Muslim scholars, links to videos showing massacres in Gaza and sufferings of Muslims, words in favour of the 'mujahideen' and Bin Laden and his group by credible Muslim figures, sophisticated jihadist media productions, etc. In other words, material that is commonplace on Muslim sites and cannot directly incriminate a group. When a new jihadist media production is out, members of the group are to receive messages informing them of this new production and links to it, but in a covert and attractive way, such as: "the full content of the important message broadcast earlier by Al-Jazeera".[28] Any material of an overt jihadist nature is not to be posted on the group platform itself but sent, in later stages, to the members' inboxes to minimise visibility of jihadist material on the platform.

To promote one's group and attract more members, the group creator is advised to advertise it on as many mainstream groups as possible. Attraction could be achieved through choosing catchy names and avatars for the group. Moreover, jihadists' participations in the non-jihadist Facebook groups in which they are members could end with links to their own clandestine groups. By clicking this link, interested or curious members will be taken and introduced to your group, says the strategy.

Key to attracting and winning over members is jihadists' conduct online. Unlike their strict, unaccommodating, and mostly aggressive attitudes on their websites – which the strategy acknowledges and criticises – modesty, tolerance, and politeness are strongly recommended at all times. The idea, says the author, is to "open up to mainstream Muslims and convey our voices and productions to them, and not scare them away".[29] This is an important and savvy recommendation as the strategy recognises that Facebook is a diverse and liberal platform that is not suitable for jihadists' common extremism and bigotry.

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

Once potential recruits take the bait after having forged trust with their undercover jihadi 'friend', they will gradually be led to more radical sites, material and connections. A gradual transition is what the strategy stresses.

Within their groups, jihadists are advised against exuberance in their efforts to spread material in order not to be too obvious on the one hand, and because, its author says, it is counterproductive. Less is more. "Overflowing your followers with material and communication will bore them and undermine the importance of any new release".[30]

Adopting aggressive marketing techniques, the strategy warns jihadists against complacency in setting up shop on Facebook and waiting for potential recruits to visit. Group creators are to continue to scout for potential members and invite them, similar to a salesman who knocks on doors to sell people his products. Facebook provides an excellent opportunity for reconnaissance that Phase III recommends utilising.

Perseverance is important for the success of this endeavour. If your group is closed – advises the strategy – simply create a new one and re-invite the 'friends' you have made and members of your previous group (through their email addresses which members are told to save upon 'befriending' someone). If there are hundreds, perhaps even thousands of these clandestine cells, "we" – says the strategy – will be invincible as "they cannot detect and close them all".[31]

To overcome detection, members who carry out these instructions and create their groups must do so in ultimate discretion. They are never to announce the names of their groups on jihadist sites as 'they are all monitored', nor even to disclose them to their fellow jihadists. Hence, the undercover jihadist group and its name will be known only to its creator who has the responsibility to convey 'the voice of the mujahideen' and eventually bring in fresh recruits to jihadist forums.

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

This phase is a highly individualistic one. Such individualism is hoped to increase the number of cells and therefore the scope of the operation across Facebook. Rather than have hundreds of jihadists join one or two jihadist groups, in Phase III each jihadist will start his own group. This measure will also minimise chances of detection and thwarting of the operation as a whole. Even if one or many cells are detected and closed, the others will continue to operate unhindered, aided by the fact that cells are unaware of each other. The discretion of this undertaking has emboldened its proponents to post it openly on jihadist sites. The individualism and secrecy of the effort renders it invincible, even if the plan is read and exposed by non-jihadists.

Realising the importance of Facebook as a key communication and networking tool, the author ends by noting, "if successful, our FB invasion project will be a huge leap forward in jihadist media and communication, work dynamics, global reach, communication speed, and sustainability. Bear in mind that with this project you shall be the founders of a new era of jihadist media and communication".[32]

Is Facebook Jihad-Friendly?

Before evaluating whether or not Facebook is a potential platform for jihadist propaganda and recruitment, the article will look at a case study where the social networking site both enabled and hindered the recruitment of a would-be bomber.

Antonio Martinez was an average 21-year-old US citizen and resident of Baltimore, Maryland. He converted to Islam at some point in 2010 and called himself Muhammad Hussain. It is not clear how and when Martinez came to adopt radical Islamist views but what is clear is that Facebook was the start of his downfall. In October that year Martinez's postings and expressed views on Facebook drew the attention of US federal authorities causing them to hatch a plot to uncover his intentions and the lengths to which he was really willing to go in pursuit of his jihad fantasies. On his Facebook page, which authorities say "tipped them off to Martinez's radicalism", he describes himself as "a yung brotha from

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[32] Ibid.

the wrong side of the tracks who embraced Islam".[33] In a Facebook posting on 14 October, according to an FBI affidavit, Martinez wrote how "it was his dream to be among the ranks of the mujahideen" and that "all he thinks about is jihad".[34]

Owing to his Facebook postings, in October an FBI informant struck up a 'friendship' on Facebook with Martinez who told him he wanted to "go to Pakistan or Afghanistan" to do jihad.[35] As the plan changed to wage jihad in the US, Martinez was introduced to an undercover FBI agent posing as "an Afghan brother"[36] who could help. On 8 December 2010 Martinez was supplied with a fake bomb-laden vehicle which he proceeded to detonate at a military recruitment centre in Catonsville, Baltimore. Accordingly, he was arrested and charged with attempted murder of federal personnel using weapons of mass destruction, a charge which could carry a life term sentence.

The case of Martinez shows how diverse and rather liberal a platform Facebook is, a trait which terrorism expert Dr. Thomas Hegghammer argues makes Facebook lend itself poorly to jihadist propaganda.[37] Because it hosts people from various backgrounds and of various beliefs and convictions, extreme viewpoints can easily stand out. Just as jihadists and other groups find Facebook an excellent opportunity to communicate and recruit, informants and security agents find it an ideal platform to gather intelligence and identify real or wannabe jihadists. Martinez's comments are commonplace even on moderate Islamic forums and yet they caught the attention of authorities who were alerted to them by a Facebook user who thought them "provocative".[38] Had these comments been made not even on a jihadist forum but a mainstream Muslim one, they most probably would not have stood out nor been reported; otherwise, there would be endless posts to report and people to follow. This is why Facebook may not be an ideal playground for people who are *openly* radical. Also,

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[33] *Gay, Mara*: Who Is Accused Baltimore Terrorist Antonio Martinez?, in: AOL News, 09.12.2010; http://www.aolnews.com/2010/12/09/who-is-accused-baltimore-terrorist-antonio-martinez [16.03.2012].

[34] *Drogin, Bob/Serrano, Richard*: Baltimore Man Arrested in Foiled Terrorism Plot, in: Los Angeles Times, 09.12.2010; http://articles.latimes.com/2010/dec/09/nation/la-na-bomb-plot-arrest-20101209 [16.03.2012].

[35] "Baltimore Bomb Plot Suspect Indicted", in: CNN, 21.12.2010; http://edition.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/12/21/maryland.bomb.suspect/index.html [16.03.2012].

[36] Ibid.

[37] Thomas *Hegghammer cited in Murad Batal al-Shishani*: Taking al-Qaeda's Jihad to Facebook, in: Terrorism Monitor, No. 5, Vol. 8, 2010, pp. 3-4, p. 3; http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM_008_5_01.pdf [16.03.2012].

[38] *Drogin/Serrano*, 09.12.2010.

security agents were able to 'befriend', gain trust, and recruit a potential terrorist through the social networking site, which indicates how easy it is for agents to infiltrate the platform.

This is all good except the same can be reversed: these same reconnaissance, communication, and recruitment opportunities can be utilised by jihadists. They too can easily look for, gain trust and recruit potential targets based on the same signs someone like Martinez showed. The ease at gaining Martinez's trust so quickly and recruiting him to carry out what he believed was a huge terrorist operation is quite chilling. Had a true 'mujahid' brother from Afghanistan reached him before the Feds did, the results would have been disastrous. The signs Martinez showed are precisely those identified by Phase III. His avatar, postings and expressed views on Facebook indicated at least some radical inclination. People like him who are young, naïve, impulsive, ready to trust and easy to influence and with little knowledge of the underpinnings of Islam, have always been ideal targets for recruitment. The danger in having active jihadist cells on Facebook comes from the fact that on such a platform, where 'befriending' total strangers is common if not the norm, jihadists can easily identify and approach soft targets. Once trust is gained, a recruiter can lead his 'friend' on Facebook to more radical sites, material, and connections. One only has to consider the Martinez case to realise how easy and quick such a process can sometimes be. Again, anonymity is a double-edged sword. Just as an undercover jihadist can pose as a benevolent concerned Muslim brother on Facebook, an undercover intelligence agent can be a young naïve Muslim yearning for jihad.

Infiltration will always be a problem for jihadists and is one of the main reasons behind the constant black-outs and closures their forums suffer. Hence, infiltration of their Facebook groups will be a challenge for them, says Professor Marc Lynch of George Washington University.[39] "How do you get your people in, and keep intelligence agents out?".[40] Another commonly voiced disadvantage is that these groups will be at the mercy of Facebook administration who could easily pull the plug on them as they see fit. When asked what measures were taken to counter jihadist presence on Facebook, its spokesman Andrew Noyes told Fox News that

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[39] See Marc Lynch cited in *Noah Shachtman*: Online Jihadists Plan for 'Invading Facebook', in: Wired Magazine, 18.12.2008; http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/12/online-jihadist/ [16.03.2012].
[40] Ibid.

"groups that threaten violence towards people are taken down, as are groups that express hatred towards individuals and those sponsored by recognized terrorist organizations. In addition to using the State and Treasury Department lists, and the fact that our SRR prohibits anyone on those terrorist lists from using our service, we are also proactive in screening for those names and organizations."[41]

While such measures to filter out terrorist activity by relying on names of terrorist individuals and organisations worked in Phase I and other overtly jihadist invasion efforts, they would be far less effective in Phase III where covertness is hoped to overcome such detection measures.

Conclusion

Despite being an unfriendly platform for jihadists given its openness and diversity, surveillance potential and central control by the Facebook team itself; Facebook has far too much to offer jihadists to keep them away. For a group whose propaganda and communication exist mainly on and through the Internet, Facebook offers unmatchable opportunities for communication, networking, and recruitment. Rather than waiting and hoping for Muslims to stumble upon a jihadist production or jihadist website online; Facebook promises instant dissemination to thousands of 'friends' with a single click. It is perhaps the best window to the outside world they can hope to get to intimidate their enemies and win Muslim support.

If implemented, Phase III of the jihadist Facebook invasion project will pose a great challenge for the platform and security personnel alike and be able to overcome most of their security measures. Decentralisation and covertness of the proposed operation safeguards it against overall detection and failure. The strategy might be well underway or even in its advanced stages for all we know. If jihadists will be moderate on Facebook for the sake of resilience and recruitment, how will intelligence personnel be able to tell them apart from non-jihadist Muslims who express views that are unfavourable to the West? And will this make innocent Muslims targets for surveillance?

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[41] *Noyes, Andrew* cited in *Jana Winter*: Al Qaeda Looks to Make New 'Friends' on Facebook, in: Fox News, 09.12.2010; http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2010/12/09/facebook-friends-terror [16.03.2012].

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