

**NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE FOR RESEARCH
IN VIOLENT ONLINE POLITICAL EXTREMISM**

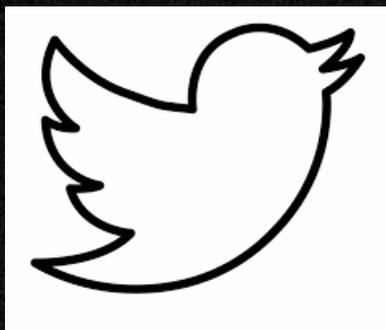


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Mapping the Contemporary Jihadi Online Ecology: The Case of Syria



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Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing Research

Maura Conway

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“Violent jihadism is an ideology to which a large number of widely dispersed groups subscribe. Today, most journalists, policy analysts, and researchers are focused on the online activity of just one group that subscribes to this ideology: IS; a host of other violent jihadi groups are active online, however, and thus also warrant attention”

pp.'s 84 - 85



“...a lot more comparative research needs to get underway within and across online platforms, particularly social media ...[I]t’s not just high profile social media platforms that are integral to violent extremist online networks, but a host of other file, text, and video upload sites are also crucial nodes as are a diversity of other”



Table 5. Top 10 other platforms (based on out-links from Twitter)

PRO-IS			OTHER JIHADIST		
PLATFORM	NUMBER	% OF ALL PRO-IS TWEETS	PLATFORM	NUMBER	% OF ALL OTHER JIHADIST TWEETS
1. YouTube	1,330	2.3%	1. YouTube	2,488	4.0%
2. Google Drive	792	1.4%	2. Facebook	1,294	2.1%
3. justpaste.it	472	0.82%	3. justpaste.it	479	0.77%
4. Google Photos	431	0.75%	4. Islamic prayers website	316	0.51%
5. sendvid.com	410	0.71%	5. Taliban news website	244	0.39%
6. archive.org	353	0.61%	6. Official Taliban website	228	0.37%
7. archive.is	243	0.42%	7. Taliban's official Urdu website	208	0.33%
8. Bahasa IS fan site	198	0.34%	8. Hizb ut-Tahrir website	189	0.30%
9. medium.com	155	0.27%	9. Telegram	111	0.18%
10. Unofficial Arabic IS news site	139	0.24%	10. Taliban's official English website	103	0.17%



New Research



This research seeks to do three things:

1. Go beyond IS → + HTS, Ahrar al-Sham
2. Beyond Twitter → Out-link analysis
3. Explore structures/workings of the Internet and their effects



Data



Accounts active on Twitter during some or all of 14-month period between 1 November 2017 and 26 March, 2018

Description of Final Dataset(s)

	IS	HTS	Ahrar
Number of Accounts	1,236	1,179	3,782
- of which manually confirmed	1,236	853	1,034
- of which Network members	-	326	2.748
Method of collection for manually-confirmed accounts			
- manual collection	33	410	295
- semi-automated collection	1,203	443	739



Major Findings: Disruption



Level of Disruption Per Group

	IS	HTS	Ahrar
Percentage of categorised accounts suspended during the study (%)	94%	23%	7%
Median age of un-suspended accounts (days)	351	369	752
Median age of suspended accounts (days)	18	72	360

- Different groups subject to very different levels of disruption → ‘Differential Disruption’
- Empowers some groups vs. others (e.g. IS vs. HTS)



Different Types of Accounts



- IS = throwaway accounts
- HTS = 'fan' or supporter accounts
- Ahrar = group's official accounts, accounts of their official representatives, semi-official accounts, and 'fan' or supporter accounts



Major Findings: Out-link Analysis



1. Social media dominant (66%) —
esp major companies →
YouTube, Facebook
2. Websites also important (17%)
3. Content upload sites also feature
(6%) — for IS (44%)



Findings: Out-link Analysis



- Top 30 out-linked to spaces account for c.80 of all out-links, but with very long tail
- YouTube prominent across the board, also other Google-owned spaces (Docs, Images, etc.)
- Most websites = traditional media's online offerings — probably even more than evidenced because a lot of content on e.g. Facebook could also be trad media content
- Content upload sites = leaf nodes → not (internally) social, not searchable, etc.



Conclusion



- Differential disruption = unintended consequences
- Ecology = branch of biology that deals with relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings
- Not just jihadi “social media ecology,” but “online ecology”



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5 November

*Engaging With Online Extremist
Material: Experimental Evidence*

Zoey Reeve, VOX-Pol Research Fellow,

12 November

*How Extreme is the European Far
Right?*

Reem Ahmed, IFSH, University of
Hamburg



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