Chapter 1
Social Media Activism From an Information Warfare and Security Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The use of social media in advocacy, and particularly transnational advocacy, raises concerns of privacy and security for those conducting the advocacy and their contacts on social media. This chapter presents high-level summaries of cases of social media in advocacy and activism from the perspectives of information warfare and information security. From an analysis of these, the impact and relationships of social media in transnational advocacy and information security is discussed. Whilst online advocacy can be considered to be a form of information warfare aligned to a Cyber Macht theory, it can be argued that social media advocacy negatively impacts information security as it encourages various actors to actively attempt to breach security.

INTRODUCTION

Social media's primary purpose is that of information sharing, be it amongst friends, family, or colleagues. However, the prevalence that social media has gained in contemporary society raises a number of concerns related to privacy and information security at personal, organizational and national levels. A number of cases exist which show that social media is actively being aligned to military operations as a ‘force multiplier’, indicating its use in information operations and information
warfare. When considering advocacy and transnational advocacy, the use of social
media immediately begins to raise the concern over information security for both
the advocates, the targets, and others who get swept up in the online dialogue, and
often the physical consequences that follow.

This chapter is an opinion piece based on previous research by the author and
news reports of more recent cases; the fact that the incidents occurred is the relevant
aspect to this chapter. The incidents are analysed based on the information security
and information warfare models, from which key relationships between social media
advocacy and information security can be inferred. The next section provides an
overview of information security and information warfare with particular reference
to the models against which the incidents are analysed. A number of cases involving
social media advocacy and information security are then outlined, followed by a
discussion on the impact transnational social media advocacy has had on information
security.

**INFORMATION SECURITY AND INFORMATION WARFARE: AN OVERVIEW**

Information security is the preservation of the confidentiality, integrity and availability
of information and the relevant systems. Essentially this means that information
can only be accessed by those who have authorization to do so, there needs to be
accuracy and assurance only authorized persons can modify it, and it needs to be
available when the authorized persons require it. Another important concept is that
of non-repudiation, which is a form of attribution in that someone cannot deny their
involvement or action, akin to a signature on a piece of paper.

Information operations and information warfare are military activities to provide
information superiority over an adversary, including deception, psychological
operations, intelligence and counter-intelligence. Of these activities, cyber-warfare
has become predominant in the media due to the threat of online attacks. Cyber-
security and information security are often used synonymously, although they are
not identical. Information security is concerned with information in all its forms; a
relevant concept of information warfare is that it operates in the physical, virtual and
cognitive domains. Cyber-security, however, is concerned primarily with activities
occurring on networks, and according to the ISO/IEC 27032 Cybersecurity standard,
it is a subset of information security.

When discussing cyber-warfare and cyber-security, Duggan (2016) contrasts
the US approach which is based on structure Jominian and Clausewitzian military
theory versus the Chinese approach based on Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*. Duggan (2016)
attributes the apparent challenges experienced by the US due to the structured nature
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