INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS EMERGED FROM SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENON

Bogdan-Ion CÎRSTEA[*]

Abstract

Real-time communication, as an effect of large scale usage of computers along with easier access to a very fast evolving technology, led to the evolution of common threats to the national security of a state and the expansion of new ones. Extremist organizations seized the opportunity and developed new methods of spreading the propaganda. In this way, their goals are much easier to achieve, generating insecurity to any state, organization or community.

The emergence of social media simplified the methods of social connection between individuals. The members of extremist groups took advantage of this opportunity, which allows them to communicate and plan future actions much easier than before, adding consistency, expansion and coercion to their groups.

More than that, social media even marked the organization of modern terrorist groups, organized in separate cells which can be easily merged to achieve a goal. Different terrorist cells can communicate in order to exchange their practices and experiences, to get in contact with one another and to recruit new members. In this way, many common strategies appear, much better planned and with a greater force of action. Intelligence services' work to prevent threats to national security generated by extremist and terrorist groups is much harder given the context, because their reactions must be quick, well dimensioned and efficient in order to counteract these groups' actions.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the important role that social media can have in broadcasting extremist protests, adding coercion to extremist groups and rapidity to protest expansion through on-line propaganda. I will also explain how terrorist organizations use social media to connect anonymously, how members spread their ideas to recruit people in a faster way than in the past and also how they plan terrorist attacks much easier. An

[*] National Administration of Penitentiaries, bogdan.cirstea.92@gmail.com

intelligence service can mine social media and use data to counteract risks and threats to national or regional security, generated by the actions of extremist and terrorist groups, such as protests, terrorist attacks and extremist propaganda used to recruit adepts and to advertise.

Keywords*: Intelligence analysis, social media, national security, opportunities*

Introduction

The first decade of the 20st century marked major changes in computer technology evolution. This evolution emerged much faster than in other domains, because a period of a few years can bring significant changes. In the last years, technologic advances, as a consequence of research, substantially permitted the development of possibilities regarding gathering data from open sources. People communities around the world have bought cheap technology and now they are connected to internet. Communication systems were integrated to computers and the interaction method became simpler. The exchange of information has happened in real time and the quantity of data registered an exponential growth.

Real-time communication around the Globe and a cheaper technology bought by people from different communities, with internet access, caused the emergence of new risks and threats to a state's national security. The plans of terrorist groups can be easier achieved and the impact on the society is bigger and much probable, causing insecurity to any state or structure of major importance to the state. The internet offered the possibility of creating blogs, debate forums or internet pages where specific themes are discussed. In this way, social networks emerged and were used by more and more people, becoming a simplified method to get in touch one with another, much faster and easier in comparison with last decade. This advantages are also being used by members of extremist groups to communicate fast and to plan different actions, consistency, expansion and coercion being added to these groups.

More than that, social media influences even the organization of modern extremist and terrorist groups, organized in cells that can merge very fast to achieve an organizational objective. Practices of different groups can be shared, contacts between members can be established and the recruitment process can be easily developed. Common strategies emerge, with a greater force of action if applied, making harder and harder the work of an

intelligence service to prevent violent reactions and terrorist attacks. The reactions of intelligence services must be prompt, quick and efficient, achievable only if intelligence services adapt to this new situation. One of the solutions is to gather intelligence from social media, here being included blogs, social network profiles or forums with extremist or terrorist content. This action is very difficult, because data gathering from social media must not affect the right and liberties of any citizen.

An intelligence service can use data gathered from social media, analyzed by analysts using specific criteria, to counter risks and threats to national security, generated by extremist and terrorist organizations that now activate even on the internet. An intelligence analyst can use a wide range of opportunities, derived from the knowledge possessed, to streamline gathering and selection of relevant data or to present the final analysis to legal beneficiary. For better accuracy and more relevant intelligence analyses, an analyst must realize that the constantly changing security context generates constant obstacles in understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, he must constantly try to overrun the difficulties and challenges for the analytic process.

Social Media – OSINT in intelligence

Given the fact that the internet is global, interactive, flexible, resourceful, dynamic, rich in information, relatively cheap compared to other means of mass communication, but also that it opened new ways of communication, collaboration, socialization, interaction and coordination between users, more and more applications and Internet services have been developed, in order to support users' needs, actions and accessibility to a more and more diverse audience (Ella Ciupercă, Cristian Ciupercă, Cristian Niţă, Mihaela Stoica, 2011, p. 14). Research about the internet's ascension revealed two distinct functions of it, one of communication and transmission of information and the other one of medium for the users' social manifestation. The first component is one of interest to the intelligence services because it includes online mass-media, with multiple advantages, but also disadvantages. But the social manifestation function it ensures is a less debated subject, whose utility is less known.

The means of communication which are part of the Web 2.0 category are: blogs, social networks and streaming sites through which people can send different types of content, like texts, audio files or videos. These collaborative platforms are continuously changing, they appear or disappear according to

the needs of those who use them, gain followers or lose users. But the fundamental idea remains always the same, no matter the shape it takes: creating an opportunity for the individuals to affiliate themselves to a community or to create the basis for a new one.

The multitude of platforms and on-line instruments which grow and ensure the sharing of information represents the definition of what social media means, and its dominant characteristic is the possibility it offers to share text messages, photographs, audio files, videos and other types of content between internet users. The websites which allow the creation of social networks are services based on internet connection which offer the individuals the opportunity to build a public profile for themselves, to make a list of other users with whom they share common passions and also to see the members of other groups with common elements. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn have led to the birth of online communities where people can share information with others as they please.

Social media is not designed to be static, it is a virtual environment constantly evolving in order to fulfill the individual needs of internet users, which vary from maintaining the connection with old friends, knowing new people, socializing, sharing photos, videos or ideas. In the case of many social media component sites, participants are not seeking primarily to meet new persons, but to communicate with those who are already part of their extended social network, more exactly with their friends' friends.

The far superior ability to communicate and stay informed, compared to using traditional means, grows the capacity to influence in the virtual environment, and then it is transposed in the real, actual environment of action and reaction. Social networks analysis is about understanding the relationships built in the virtual environment, which, combined with the other data offered by the users, builds a definition of themselves and their ways of action. Personality traits, education, ethnicity and social class of the users leave their mark on the way people relate to each other and help identify action patterns. Relationships can refer to friendships between different persons, the feelings that appear between them, the influence they have on each other (voluntarily or involuntarily), trust or distrust, tolerance, sympathy or conflicts. Even if similar age, nationality, ethnicity or other common elements between people tend to bring them closer and facilitate their bonding, the complexity of internal dynamics of virtual communities and social networks created this way allow the mixing of similarities and differences.

After all, new media are the ideal place to promote an idea, a project or an initiative. But, besides the functions these platforms were created to fulfill, namely those of socializing, representing an easy, fast and cheap way to keep in touch with persons you know around the globe, they have started being exploited for criminal purposes. Some of these crimes are against national or even regional security and, implicitly, fall into the intelligence services' area of expertise of prevention and counteraction. Given this, the necessity of monitoring social networks and analyzing risky tendencies against social welfare arises. Thus, social networks have become a propitious environment for spreading extremist ideas and radical Islamic propaganda.

Social Media as a way of spreading terrorism

The blend of particularities and the possibility to influence in the virtual environment has attracted the attention of terrorist groups, which take advantage of what 21st century technology can offer to potential militants. When social media didn't exist, a terrorist had to travel to one of the terrorist organization's bases to learn how to build or detonate a bomb. Now, profiles of some terrorist organizations can be found on Facebook or Twitter and provide, besides their propaganda, the necessary instructions, if the one who is interested talks to certain members and subsequently receives access to private forums.

Individuals and groups used social media and the internet to radicalize and then to plan and prepare attacks. Hussain Oman, one of those who planned the terrorist bomb-attack in London, confessed that he was influenced by videos available on the internet, which contained scenes of the war in Iraq. Khan al-Khalili, one of the authors of the attack in Cairo in 2005 downloaded the fabrication instructions of the bomb from a jihadist site.

Twitter is considered the social network with the highest level of terrorist messages content. Terrorist or extremist organizations use it to post links which lead to websites with the same type of content, where more detailed explanations about certain subjects of interest can be found, that would cause the Twitter page they would be posted on to be closed. This is the case of the English written magazine „Inspire" and the site which takes over part of the content of this magazine, „The pocketbook of a lonely mujahedin". It offers instructions for building a bomb, similar to the one used in the Boston attack on 15th April 2013 and appeared two weeks before it. Almost at the same time, the Al Qaeda Airlines magazine showed up, written in both English and Arabic, and it includes detailed explanations about how hydrocyanic acid

is prepared and what are his lethal effects when used in offices buildings or embassies.

In March 2013, Al Qaeda from the Islamic Maghreb launched a Twitter account which raised 5500 followers in the first month. Through this account, Al-Qaeda follows in turn the Twitter accounts of the terrorist organization in Somalia Al-Shabab and that of Al-Nusra Front in Syria. Furthermore, Al-Nusra follows the activity of a rebel group in Alep (http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/27/world/rivers-social-media-terror/).

Al-Shabab is another terrorist group which profits from the advantages social media offers. Besides recruitment, the social network Twitter was used by Al-Shabab to claim the attack which took place in the West Gate Mall in Nairobi. A group of armed militants entered the building and opened the fire, shooting deadly at least 67 persons. Other few hundreds were hurt. The target was the mall because it was believed that the owners were Israelis. People who were close by started posting on Twitter, immediately after the attack occurred, details about they thought had happened. Initially, in the first few minutes, there was a total confusion, but it was sure that something bad happened when the Ministry of Interior in Kenya posted on its official Twitter page a message to warn the people to stay away from the mall. The NTV Kenya journalist, Smriti Vidyarthi, was the first one who told those who followed her on Twitter that there were armed men in the building, information which was subsequently confirmed by Kenya's Ministry of Interior and the police inspector David Kimayo. The terrorist attack was claimed by Al-Shabab through its tweets, promising that they will also post a video of the attack, which was actually done a few hours after sharing the comment.

The West Gate mall attack wasn't the only event that Al-Shabab terrorist made known using Twitter. The attacks in Mogadishu as well as the attempt to assassinate Somalia's president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud were also published on the terrorist organization's official page.

An ex-leader of the terrorist organization Al-Shabab, Ahmed Abdi Godane, the one who admitted the connections between his organization and Al-Qaeda and who had joined the global war, wanted a new operational structure. The recruiters couldn't be older than 30, had to have connections in the democratic countries and speak well foreign languages, for a better influence on young people. Probably this new generation will use more and more social media as a means of propaganda and recruitment.

Social media has become a vital instrument for modern terrorist organizations, being seen as a "show-window" from where terrorists can choose

their next followers. This way, the first stage of the recruitment and of the process of influencing towards activities specific for terrorism is fulfilled, because, in the recruitment process, a physical contact between people is necessary. A "mentor" with whom frequent dates in a mosque, university or high school are set is always present and plays a key role in inducing a violent mentality.

Even if it is or if is not necessary a physical contact between the sympathizer of the ideas spread by terrorists through social media and a member of the terrorist network, in order for the process to be complete, there are some certain advantages that social media sites offer to terrorist organizations. Social media creates more radicalization opportunities, it offers the opportunity of fast dissemination of information, it accelerates the radicalization process and it supports communication in the virtual environment.

Social media as a way of spreading extremism

Social media is not only used by the radical Islamic groups, for them to organize easier and commit terrorist attacks. The role social media had in protests and revolutions has enjoyed media attention during the last few years, because social media networks constituted in the virtual environment have made organizing protests and the regime changes occurred after a lot easier.

The Moldovan revolution, which happened in 2009, the Arab Spring revolutions and the protests in Iran can be called the "Twitter revolutions", because it was through this social network that the protesters managed to organize much easier, the conflicts escalated and politic regimes were taken down. The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt are considered the biggest in amplitude and more challenging for the world order existent at that time (Maksim Tsvetovat, Alexander Kouznetsov, 2011, p.14). Twitter, as well as Facebook, were used for organization, communication and finally, protest campaigns in public places.

In an interview from January 2007, posted on YouTube, the US president Barack Obama has compared social networks with universal freedoms, like that of speech. The point is that social media itself doesn't instigate at riots, it only offers the necessary means to revolutionary groups to minimize the costs of participation, organization, recruitment and training. But, as any means of achieving a goal, social media also has its strong and weak spots and the inherent efficiency, whose intensity varies depending on the capacity of the leaders to use them efficiently and on the users' degree of accessibility (http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110202-social-media-tool-protest).

The ability to amplify remote and weakly organized protests into revolutions capable of changing politic regimes comes from amplifying the weak ties set between people. A weak tie is a relationship which doesn't involve sentimental attachments or it does to a very small extent, and reaches a consensus on the rules which guide the community those people are a part of. It also involves low frequency communication, meaning that the persons are not synchronized in transmitting and receiving data, because of the small amount of time invested in the relationship. Still, weak ties between users have proved themselves to be very powerful, capable of bringing people closer and mediate the transfer of information. Different opinions which inevitably occur inside a community are accepted by the members linked by this kind of tie, without creating conflicts, but it is very probable that the information carries a strong personal mark or/and it is not reliable. But the connections created are broader, between users who don't know each other personally.

The theory according to which there aren't more than 6 degrees of separation between any two persons, no matter the place they are in, is not always true. Not all members of a group have remote connections, which you can reach in maximum 6 degrees of separation, but those who have are enough to transmit the flow of information from a group or even a single member of it to other persons from different parts of the world. If the groups are situated in a narrower geographical area, it is possible that less than 6 steps are enough. In combination with the speed of disseminating information, the fast cohesion reached by a group of protesters can be understood, taking as example what happened in Moldova in 2009, the events included in the Arab Spring in 2011 and the protests in Ukraine which took place in 2013.

a. The revolution in Egypt

On 8th June 2010, Wael Ghonim, an executive member of marketing at Google, found a picture of Khaled Mohamed Said while he navigated on Facebook.

He was disfigured as he was beaten to death by the Egyptian police. Ghonim's age was close to the one of his compatriot, Khaled, and he considered it necessary to make his story known so that a case like that, in which he himself could be involved, wouldn't happen again. Animated by these thoughts, he created a Facebook page named "We are all Khaled Said" and wrote a book entitled „People's strength is bigger than that of those in power: a biography". The Facebook page, as well as his book, explain the power of

influence that social media has and the author instigates people to protest through the ideas it evokes.

In the first two minutes from the creation of the page, 300 people have joined his cause. And after three months, the number rose up to 250.000. The virtual community ended up protesting in the street, at first marching without chorus, ad then culminating with massive protests in the Tahrir Square, situated into the center of the capital city Cairo, being the reason wh Hosni Mubarak resigned from the leadership of Egypt in February 2011. Ghonim, the author of the page, was arrested during the protests and after liberation he became one of the most prominent voices of the Arab Spring.

Approximately 100 million people live in the Middle East, aged 15-29, lots of them educated but unemployed. Only a part of them have internet access, for example, in Egypt, only 13,6 million people could access the internet in 2008, a pretty big number compared to the one in 2004 – 1,5 million people. The growth of users' number was substantial between 2004 and 2008, and taking by example the planning of the Egyptian revolution through social media, the social networks and blogs became an instrument of expressing young people's discontent. In the case of the revolution in Egypt, also, the years of constant repression suffered by the Egyptians, the economic instability and people's frustration were the reasons which led to the revolution breaking out.

Facebook wasn't the only social network used by protesters to communicate and organize themselves, even if it was the first one used by Wael Ghonim to commemorate Khaled Mohamed Said. After winning adhesion in the virtual environment and the protests in Tahrir Square, Twitter played a very important role in the future of the revolution, the same that Facebook had in 2010.

A big part of the content distributed on Twitter (messages, photos, videos) doesn't become "viral" – distributed and redistributed until it reaches a big number of individuals. The case of the protests in Egypt is different from what happens to the majority of tweets because users started sharing posts that people they trusted also shared. A small number of persons were capable to generate a vast response from other persons belonging to groups in which ideas similar to theirs were shared. Some of the groups were located in Egypt, others in the United States, and others in France and had different discussion topics which ranged from the movements that security troops did to finding a toilet near the Tahrir Square.

b. The revolution in Moldova

On the morning of 6th April 2009, the central Election Committee announced the preliminary results of parliamentary elections from April 5th. After processing 96.51 percent of votes, the Communist Party had 49.94 percent (meaning 60 mandates), Liberal Party 12.82 percent (meaning 16 mandates), Liberal Democrat Party 12.27 percent (meaning 14 mandates) and The Alliance Our Moldova 9.83 percent (11 mandates). First public statement made by prime-minister Vlad Filat was in the evening of 6th April, in a press conference, in which he mentioned the disapproval of results. After that, he mentioned the organization of peaceful protests in the country. The activists and other opposition leaders used text messages, blogs and social networks to organize the peaceful protests announced by Vlad Filat.

Facebook and Twitter facilitated the gathering of young people unsatisfied with the election results in the capital Chisinau. Social media played a major role in the protests, even if the number of internet users was only 850 000 at the end of 2009, which means 19.7 percent of the total population of the country. This percent is smaller in comparison with western countries, in the same time period (71 percent at the end of 2010), but the rate of Twitter messages was approximately 200 at every 20 minutes. Each tweet was marked with the hashtag #pman, an acronym from the Square of Big National Assembly, the biggest square from Chisinau. This is not the only case when a hashtag helped young people to attend a protest, sparked by an idea. A similar situation was registered in Greece, when the hashtag #griots was attached to messages transmitted on Twitter. Used in a search, #pman revealed accurate results about all messages and comments in connection with the rioting provoked by the election results.

Protests started peacefully, leaded by the non-governmental organizations HydePark and ThinkMoldova and the main purpose was to light candles near the Square of Big National Assembly. After that, protesters formed a chain in front of the Election Committee building and in front of other governmental buildings. In a short period of time, peaceful protests became violent. Natalya Morar, one of the leaders of NGO ThinkMoldova, added on her blog details about rioting, degenerated from peace to vandalism through social media. She and other five activists had intense on-line activity, spreading the idea that protest would be organized on 6th April 2009. They managed to convince over 10 000 people to attend protests in Chisinau. All of them used Twitter, Facebook, personal blogs, emails and text messages on mobile phones.

Even if the revolution from Moldova was called "Twitter revolution", it was not the only social network that played a major role. Facebook was also one of them, according to Vasile Botnaru, the director of Radio Free Europe – Chisinau office, because the sites of local press and opposition parties could not be accessed during protests. Also, mobile networks were shut down and signal was not transmitted in Square of Big National Assembly zone, Facebook remaining to only tool of communication.

In the night of 7th to 8th April, approximately 200 persons, including the ones under the age of 18, were arrested in the capital. According to the press office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, after midnight, a big number of protesters attacked economic agents and broke the windows of the shops. Police had to intervene and to maintain the order authorized the usage of rubber bullets. Later that night, tens of young people were beaten in the Square or in police stations. Valentin Boboc died after he was beaten by the police. In the papers was also written about other young people beaten to death, but the investigation hadn't confirmed any connection with 7th April protests. In the morning of 8th April, even if in the center of Chisinau were no longer protesters, the building of presidency and the one of government were surrounded by police officers carrying shields. In order to maintain the safety, local authority forces were deployed even to the building of parliament.

In 2012, after three, years, authorities hadn't established who was to blame for violent protests from 7th April 2009, for the destructions produced or for the beating of young people. But a thing is certain: social networks Facebook, Twitter and blogs played a major role, adding solidarity and a plus of information to young people, who wanted to attend protests because the results weren't fair in their opinion. Some of the internet networks were shut down during protests, mobile networks suffered the same limitations, and the press and TV stations weren't transmitting something about the protests, social media was the only instrument which permitted the broadcast of objective information.

c. London protests

On 4th august 2011, Mark Duggan, who lived in Tottenham, Great Britain, was shot deadly by a police officer during an operation. The policeman tried to arrest him in the north part of London, but Mark Duggan resisted and he died on the spot in the crossfire that resulted. According to police officer Rachel Cerfontyne, member of the "Independent Commission for Evaluating Complaints against the Police", this kind of event is very rare and it involves

the population's concerns about the way the police took action. During the immediately started investigation, there were identified the first contradictory opinions referring to how the police acted and the way Mark Duggan was known in the community he lived in. A man declared for the paper London Evening Standard that he saw some police officers who shot a man while he was immobilised on the ground, and other witnesses said that there was actually a crossfire. These opposed opinions were very important during the protests, being highly discussed on the social networks.

On 6th August 2011, a group of protesters headed to the police station in Tottenham to ask for justice in the name of Mark Duggan's family. Two police cars, a bus and a shop were vandalized and set on fire, after the peaceful protests degenerated. The initial situation was misrepresented and many versions of the confrontation between Mark Duggan and the policeman appeared, a woman who posted declaring that the man was not only shot, but also disfigured. After the first group of protesters marched into the street, organised by Mark Duggan's family and friends, messages encouraging people to protest started to be posted on Twitter.

The page "R.I.P. Mark Duggan" was created on Facebook on 6th August 2011, having approximately 35.000 followers, the majority of them aged between 18 and 24. The history of the events only shows one record, an invitation to protest on 13th August 2011, between 09:00-21:00, in front of all the police stations in Great Britain. The administrator of the account sent 592 invitations, and 207 people confirmed their participation at the demonstrations. 56 users weren't sure if they would attend the event or not. In the description of the event it is called for solidarity against police abuses, the principle of equal rights between people and in front of the law being invoked. There was also another link to another invitation to protest on 10th December 2013, shared the same day, meaning the date at which the verdict in the case of Mark Duggan's death was expected. People were called to a peaceful protest, with lighted candles in front of the police station in Tottenham. Approximately 4100 invitations were sent, and 227 were confirmed. On 7th August 2011, there was created another page named "Justice For Mark Duggan aka Starrish Mark. Sho! Sho", appreciated by almost 2000 persons, and users who discussed this topic the most were between 25 and 34 years old.

When the protests broke out, the police didn't have data and information about protests organized in the memory of the boy who died shot by a cop. The monitorization of these profiles on Facebook could offer useful

information to the authorities who handled stopping the protests, because the places of the demonstrations, the hours, an approximate number of protesters, the nature of the protest and the demands were specified there.

After the protests broke out in Tottenham, in the last day, meaning 6th August 2011, the number of messages on Twitter rose to approximately 15000, as the violence rose too. The next day, the situation in Tottenham extended to Enfield, the number of messages on Twitter reaching 10000.

Between 8th and 9th August, the protests extended, both in other parts of London, but also in different cities of Great Britain. Social media was actually a speaking-tube for those in the streets to express their dissatisfaction with the police's actions against Mark Duggan, reflecting the size of the protests, the protesters' demands and the events produced. Besides this, many news about all the regions with protests were shared on Twitter during this time, reaching values as 10000.

The idea of blocking the access to social media in Great Britain during protests was also discussed, but a decision like this wasn't reached and the police didn't ask for it. More than that, the police in Manchester suggested it has control over social media through monitorization and posted on its Twitter account that they managed to identify someone who stole goods during the protests after the person posted on Facebook that he stole and couldn't be caught. Other two men, one in Northwich and the other in Warrington, were accused of using Facebook to encourage disorder and received a sentence of 4 years in prison.

Challenges and opportunities to analytic process conferred by the big amount of data from open source intelligence

The vulnerability to analysis errors, meaning false predictions, registered an exponential growth because of the dynamic of factors that generate insecurity. Even if data are complete and can assemble a context, by fulfilling the criteria established by an analyst, impediments still exist and can affect in a negative way the analytic process. Open source intelligence or OSINT, as they are designated in English literature, refers to a broad category of data and sources easy to access by those who are interested, in a permanent way. They are defined as the information offered by mass-media, studies made by academicians, official releases, studies, surveys or any other information that can be accessed by anyone. In this category are included data gathered from social media.

Open sources became more and more valuable to analysis departments of intelligence services, because intelligence generated is more important in quantity and quality then before. It offers the context elements necessary in understanding the whole problem faced. The emergence of informational era brought an overwhelming amount of data from open sources, which means an extra difficulty in selection.

By studying this aspects, emerges the necessity of a right mental model of an analyst and better analysis methods, with a bigger utility in sorting, selecting and organizing logically the amalgam of data ambiguous and contradictory. Secret sources continue to be as valuable as they were, by generating a plus of necessary knowledge to make a clear difference between propaganda and true intentions of an enemy, being a real help for analysts and beneficiaries.

After the relevance was identified, the next step that must be made by the analyst is to establish if the source of data can be trusted, a very difficult process because of the objective coercions represented by virtual anonymity – a different identity and a very big diversity of sources. On the other hand, there are subjective coercions that affect the work of intelligence analysts to evaluate an open source. In this category can be included terms established by beneficiaries, generated by a rapid need of intelligence analyses, necessary in the process of risks and threats management. The dynamic of insecurity factors causes big changes of context very fast, affecting the relevance and promptitude of intelligence delivered by the intelligence services.

The lack of adequate analysis instruments represents another difficulty in mining data from open sources, selecting the best ones, adapting them or creating new ones still remains a challenge. The big volume of data overwhelms intelligence analysts and their current work to search, examine and make connections.

Even if the big volume of data from open sources brings difficulties, intelligence obtained is an important element for beneficiaries, standing in many cases behind their decisions. OSINT is, in a specific way, more data filtered very carefully, selected, analysed and presented to a beneficiary at the right moment, in a similar way to other intelligence sources. Its role and potential exceeded the debate stage, at least theoretically, being known at this moment that open sources can provide the answers to many present challenges managed by intelligence services and their beneficiaries. (http://www.sri.ro/fisiere/studii/ATUURI_SI_LIMITE_OSINT.pdf).

OSINT analysis is an important strategic capability, providing the context of the risks and threats to national or regional security. The beneficiaries, after being briefed, can establish and, most of all, apply long term policies to have an advantage in front of competitors (George Cristian Maior, Ionel Nițu, 2013). Also, it can offer predictions about immediate effects of an issue, which means a better capacity of reaction and risk assessment. Intelligence analyses resulted can be merged with intelligence obtained from other sources, further used as raw data for multisource analysis, contributing to identification of general context components. It also simplifies the access to certain researches, from academies or other domains.

Conclusions

Social media offers an entire set of challenges and opportunities for intelligence services in their mission to maintain national and regional security or to reduce global threats. Opportunities come from databases created through usage of social media by a large amount of people, which can be accessed in real-time offering the possibility to use special analysis software to counter extremism and terrorism. In virtual space, the location isn't anymore a strategic advantage in the efforts to eliminate common threats. This aspect generates risks and threats to national security o any state in an equal way for everyone.

In this context, intelligence services must perceive in a correct manner the wide range of terrorism and extremism, obtained by members who use social media. Therefore, databases created by data from social media must be mined and the analysis methods improved. In social networks analysis, established on the internet, limits are reached very easily. Consistent improvement can be reached faster if special funds are assigned to buy the last technology used in this domain – supercomputers and special analysis programs, capable of dealing with the huge amount of data.

Intelligence gathered from social media, relevant for an intelligence service, called Social Media Intelligence, can offer useful knowledge about terrorist or extremist cell organization, about identity of members and sympathizers, including details about their future actions. The difficulty occurs when an intelligence analyst can no longer make a clear difference between real data and disinformation, generated by insufficient processing of databases, cognitive biases of each analyst or the usage of analysis softs or pieces of equipment that are no longer up to date.

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