"Virtual Caliphate" of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): An Analysis of the Rise of Cyber Terrorism and Its Impacts from a Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Even though the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has lost its territories and 80% of its revenue base, 30 official and semi-official ISIS channels and chat rooms still emphasize ISIS's longevity and future strength. The sharp decline in the area controlled by ISIS has also destroyed ISIS's ability to collect revenues from oil production, smuggling, taxation, confiscation and other similar activities. ISIS's average monthly income has dropped by 80 percent, from US $ 81 million in the second quarter of 2015 to only US $ 16 million in the second quarter of 2017. Nevertheless, ISIS maintains a strong presence on social media and the internet, promoting its state development efforts – including constructing dams, digging wells, building infrastructure, electrifying villages, and inoculating children – to both domestic and international audiences. ISIS has also used the internet and social media for cyber-terrorism and spreading hatred. They use the internet and social media sites to promote violence as well as provide a network where individuals can learn about deviant behavior from other groups – where they can learn about extremism through association, definition, differentiation, reinforcement and imitation.

Keywords: ISIS, Salafi, Radical, Cyberspace, Virtual, Islam, Syria, Iraq