

From Twitter with Love: An Evaluation of the Islamic State Online

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Abstract

This work provides a qualitative analysis of the Islamic State's digital media practices and discusses possible remedies for the systemic violence the group expounds online. The Islamic State has weaponized social media by using violence as a corruptive tool in order to advance its goals of becoming an internationally recognized state. The media has played a supportive role by creating moral panic in the aftermath of ISIS propaganda enable the group by gorging on their violence through non-stop coverage. In return, this causes society to restructure social interactions and informs the beliefs of public entities. However, is this a global trend?

How the Islamic State Utilizes Social Media

In the media of today, stories about Westerners leaving their homeland to join the Islamic State has become a reoccurring narrative. The Islamic State heavily relies on digital recruitment videos to engage with their foreign sympathizer. From their videogames style to their use of Hollywood cinematic techniques, these recruitment videos act as a digital bridge connecting the group to their would-be supporters. Recorded executions and other violent material have become a fixture in the contemporary cyberspace. ISIS affiliated accounts are also active on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, and hundreds of thousands of these such accounts have been identified by researchers. Private companies have turned into political actors by suspending them.



How Public Institutions Engages the Islamic State

Politicians in modern America have latched onto the Islamic State as a political lightning rod, using the group as a rallying cry for stricter national security and Immigration policies. Moreover, some European politicians have mimicked the rhetoric of their overseas counterparts. However, within the United States, no credible legislation has passed in the national legislature to combat the Islamic State online. The response has been ineffective political spectacle and performance. The United Kingdom faces similar problems. Their government has removed 15,000 pieces of jihadi propaganda (which has become a responsibility of private companies in the U.S) and they refer to ISIS by "Daesh," which they view as an insult. Public entities must rethink how they understand, interact, and qualify terrorism to effectively combat the Islamic State online. Actions must reflect words, but within an appropriate context.



How the Media Engages the Islamic State

The primary way individuals consume information is through supposedly trustworthy institutions, such as the media and politicians. However, the media has become an enabler of the Islamic State by allowing them to gain a valuable tool: publicity. But the media faces a dilemma. If they are an agent that is meant to dispense information, how are they supposed to cover the Islamic State without magnifying their ideological beliefs? To do this the media must resist gorging on acts of violence commit by the group through non-stop coverage and not post their propaganda in their entirety. For example, the Fox News website has an execution video, depicting a Jordanian pilot being immolated, posted in its entirety for the public to watch. The media also equips its non-stop coverage of terror attacks with with stylish graphics that resemble the type of production edits that the Islamic State uses to glamorize its videos. The repeated exposure to violence that the public receives from the news media creates a sense of moral panic that taints society by installing fear into the social structure. The Islamic States is given authority when its international brand is expounded by the media who use their violence as a way to generate viewership.

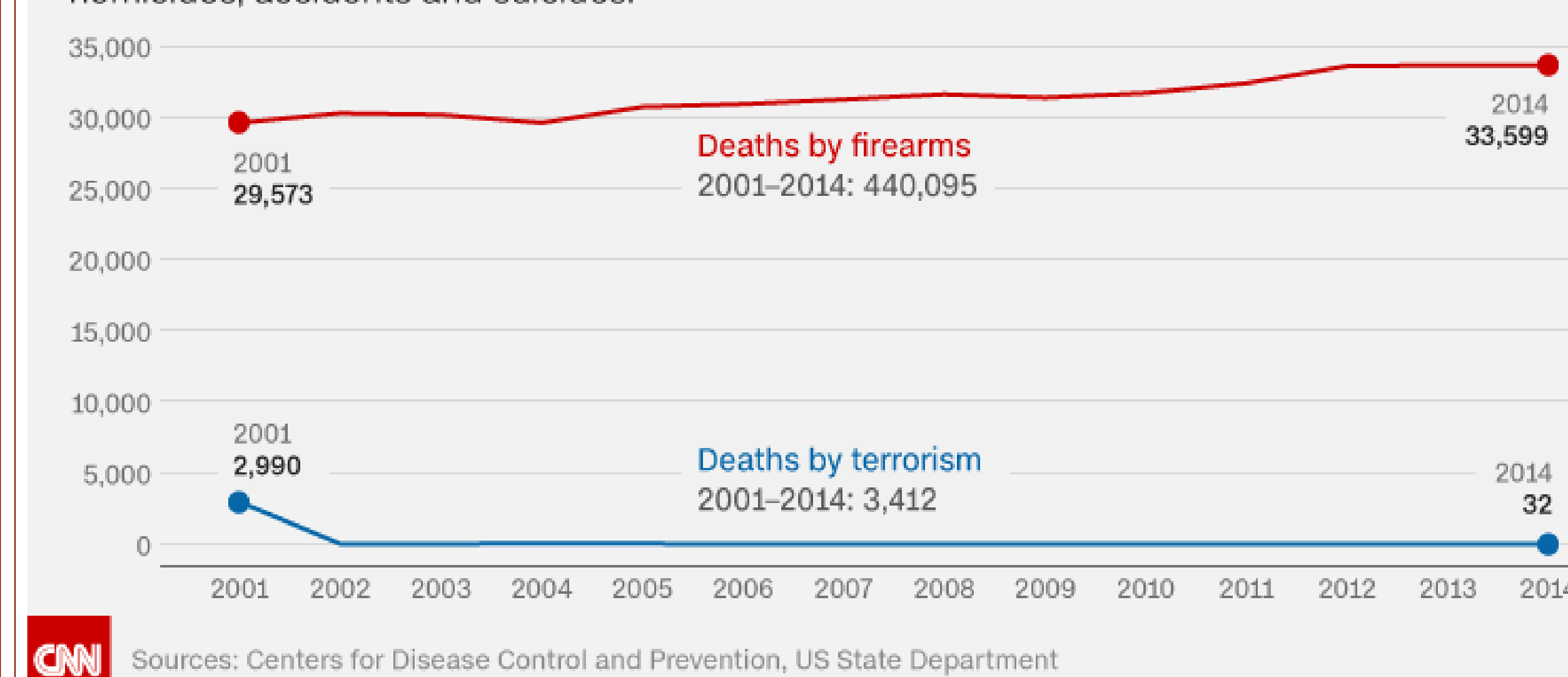
Research Question

Why has social media been such an effective tool for ISIS and how effective has the Euro-American response been at curtailing the practice?



Deaths by gun violence vs. terror

For every life claimed by terrorism on US soil (or where Americans abroad were killed by terrorists), more than 1,000 died from firearms inside the US. The gun fatalities include homicides, accidents and suicides.



Conclusion

A dual approach that combats the terror group both in the physical world and online is needed so they cannot thrive with unabashed influence. The manner in which society, as a cooperative entity, intermingles with terrorism and its digital forms must be contained in a framework that does not allow direct exposure to the violence that emanates from the propaganda of hate groups.