

CASE STUDIES

ONLINE
RADICALIZATIONNatural
Language
ProcessingNetwork
AnalysisDeep
Learning

One of the most nefarious causes for which social media platforms can be used is online radicalization and recruitment for terrorist organizations. ISIS sympathisers can be virtually anywhere in the world and their commitment and attempts to lure teenagers and young adults to their cause are also present in the Western world.

PROBLEM

After a few young nationals of their country had positively confirmed as having left their homes to join the Islamic State, a Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) from a central European country reached out to us to see if we could assist them in determining, first and foremost, if any other **teens** were **at risk** of making the same choice imminently and secondly, if we could shed any light on the **specific tactics** that were being used to **recruit them**.



HOW WE HELPED

The LEA initially briefed us on what the online public profiles of previously converted teenagers looked like and we used those insights to canvas the social media platforms to identify if other **profiles** were **exhibiting patterns** similar to the original ones. We found that, in this specific case, the teenagers that had been convinced to join the terrorist networks **had at least once before posted about Islam** (expressing plain curiosity or simple observations) and/or had **manifested on social media at times feeling isolated**, lonely or “the odd one out”. These impressions are overwhelmingly common amongst all teenagers and young adults, but not all of them repeatedly post about it openly on social media.

Using social network analysis we were able to identify how the recruiters interacted with each other and with their potential victims. What we corroborated is that **recruiters do not necessarily interact with each other at all**, they match with the “lone wolf” descriptor – these are ISIS sympathisers that voluntarily and independently pursue these recruitment efforts. Our AI analysis showed that these recruiters were **outliers from virtually all networks**; they did follow accounts with patently radicalized content, but they did not proactively engage with any of the account holders, nor were they followed back by them. **They were not part of the teenagers’ circles either, and targeted their victims individually on a 1-1 basis.**

ISIS recruiters matched the “lone wolf” descriptor – sympathisers that voluntarily and independently pursue these recruitment efforts.

SOLUTION

When a teenager’s profile with the features mentioned above coincided in close online proximity with a username potentially matching the type of interests and connections previously described, **the police treated it as a red flag to investigate further the true nature of that interaction.**

