

New Wars Will Be Fought In Cyberspace

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Take this urbane terrorist. He or she shares exactly the same priorities as the college student on the couch, texting madly to a friend. The depressed housewife making 4,752 friends across the world and feeling wanted or more meaningfully, needed. The overnight success reflects his lack of self-esteem through photos of himself on the Costa del Sol or in a first-class airline seat. Boasting of his achievements indicates that the single largest spur to becoming a slave to QWERTY in its many debasing forms is unbridled narcissism.

WITH every passing day the fear of cyberwar becomes so much more real. I read a book the other day in which the author says that one day we will long for the scruffy terrorist with the used AK-47 as opposed to the intellectual terrorist who is now in our midst. He is erudite, educated, urbane, holds a responsible post in a working hierarchy and his mindset is more devious and dangerous than a thousand foot soldiers.

The gun-toting caricature of the current militant, regardless of which part of the world he is in, will be vanilla compared to what a handful of such people can do by way of tearing apart the social fabric.

It got me thinking that either the author had a fertile imagination or that society was in peril now and we are hurtling, sans geographical boundaries, into a new world where the terrorist persona is being aided and abetted by you and I thanks to our servile surrender to social media.

Take this urbane terrorist. He or she shares exactly the same priorities as the college student on the couch, texting madly to a friend. The depressed housewife making 4,752 friends across the world and feeling wanted or more meaningfully, needed. The overnight success reflects his lack of self-esteem through photos of himself on the Costa del Sol or in a first-class airline seat. Boasting of his achievements indicates that the single largest spur to becoming a slave to QWERTY in its many debasing forms is unbridled narcissism.

And with narcissism comes the blank cheque on blackmail.

In 2012, psychologists in the US produced a paper that said: Narcissism is excessive self-love, inflated self-importance and unjustified feelings of entitlement. Along with electrons, it is the primary active ingredient in the internet.

It is you. The executive sharing insider information in cryptic code confident that it cannot be broken. Hackers wearing a mantle of romance as they inveigle themselves into your lives as insidiously as HIV. In fact, there could be five legs on the evil toadstool.

The computer-savvy extremist: Texting madly, he would send his messages to create awareness, build tension, generate a daisy chain, provide knowledge to his cohorts, a knowledge that we would so unstintingly volunteer and keep updating.

The depressed housewife: Who are those lonely people, where do they come from, where do they belong? People living lives of lonely despair are perfect



recruits for the 'good' fight. Eleanor Rigby has a million facsimiles and they are cannon fodder so easily led astray by blandishment and flattery, their excruciating need to be wanted. They will flock to the recruiter and his cause. Somebody 'understands' them.

The overnight success: Spewing data about himself and his wealth, he will give any half-witted terror cell leader information. The amount of information we so freely dispense in these public forums underscores an ignorance that, for the evil-doer, is pure bliss.

The executive playing the odds: He is an ideal choice for tracking and since he is already cheating and breaking the laws, what better person to befriend? So dramatically are we all brain-washed into not seeing a terrorist and a Brooks Brothers suit using his iPad to play Candy Crush, that we cannot possibly see him plotting mayhem. You better believe it, we are getting there. Besides, the inherent narcissism and the need to show off offers the clever extremist great insight into the weaknesses of his target.

Once he has hacked him, he has got him and his wealth.

Hackers - they target the ones they need for specific reasons and the lonely people, the misled and the easily swayed are all marked for mental slaughter...which could then lead to the worst-case scenarios of violence executed by self-imposed martyrdom. If law enforcement agencies of the world can hire hackers, why can't threat and coercion be used to enlist such geniuses by the cells? It is a no-brainer.

Every now and again we read of mobile phones being compromised by malware that would then access personal

data, including photographs, messages, and private correspondence. I know who you are and what you wrote. So easy is it to obtain data that the image of a sacked employee carrying away his personal effects in a brown cardboard box and not being allowed to check his computer as Security marches him off is ludicrous. He probably has a hundred copies already. Up in the cloud, seeded with information.

So there is no difference between the 21st century spawning of the intellectual terrorist and the student on the couch. He can spread the message in real time. He can get funding directly or by proxy. He can recruit with consummate ease. He can sit at home over breakfast and generate a campaign over the long haul, provide a chat room for the truly deranged and by bouncing his signals and using cut-outs, he can be reasonably confident that he will not be traced.

There is no doubt that Twitter, Facebook and their other cousins were started with benign intent. To communicate with one another in a networking environment that broke the barriers of caste, colour, and creed. That turned malignant a long time ago and with every new addition to the information surge, the most benefitted are the ones with violence on their minds. Armed with cyber-weaponry (and this is no joke), this growing army will not look at suicide vests and a dozen victims, but will seek the 'pleasures' of mega-deaths.

Since we, the people, are integral to the problem, is there a solution?

There is no silver bullet.

There have been several scenarios including upgrades in surveillance, sharing of international databases and

eye in the sky activity coupled with tailing suspects on the information highway. But it is a very large terrain for an unequal battle.

Unless there is some global awakening, we will feast at the banquet of consequences. At present, there is very little correlation or evidence that one can input to shore up these concerns. Why should there be? Any par hacker would have enough backdoor brooms to obliterate his tracks.

Let us make another comparison. It has been said that the Net is a good servant but a vicious master. We have rendered it so much space that even Caesar would be teed off. To say it runs our lives is an understatement. Take a corporation, a multi-national or a bank. For all such organisations, there are real risks to using social media, ranging from damaging the brand to stealing secrets, exposing proprietary information, inviting lawsuits for copyright infringement and shoveling huge sums of money into building firewalls.

The militant has no such fears. Everything falls in his favour even if it goes off track temporarily. To him, all exposure is publicity and he thrives on it. And yet, what makes it all so insidious is that he is also the head of an organisation, with a functioning hierarchy. So how can we but lose to him. We have given him all the cards.

For people at large, the biggest fear is the ability these elements are obtaining to dismantle, freeze, turn rogue or confuse the computerised grids. Malfunctioning computers can bring cities to a halt. Yes, we have all seen those movies but we cannot get away from the fact that the fault lies not in our stars but in ourselves that we let it get so far. We never realised that from petty crime and seamy chat rooms, it was a small, very small step to full-blown intimidation via the Net.

From silly little six-digit passwords being our personal security to the mountain of data processed and available, we are vulnerable. Perhaps the first step is to individually exercise caution in sharing and giving those who might harm us undue publicity by passing on their written ideology or photographs. The frightening part is we do not even know we are doing it.

Just as a slew of TV crime shows have given criminals insight into forensic medicine and made them that much wiser, we do much the same to the professional killer. We feed him the road-map to disaster. Every minute of every day.

(Khaleej Times)

Less Stress Makes You Live Longer

Mostly the reasons Ikarians lived so long had to do with their lifestyle: walking for miles up and down, eating fresh, organic food from their own gardens.

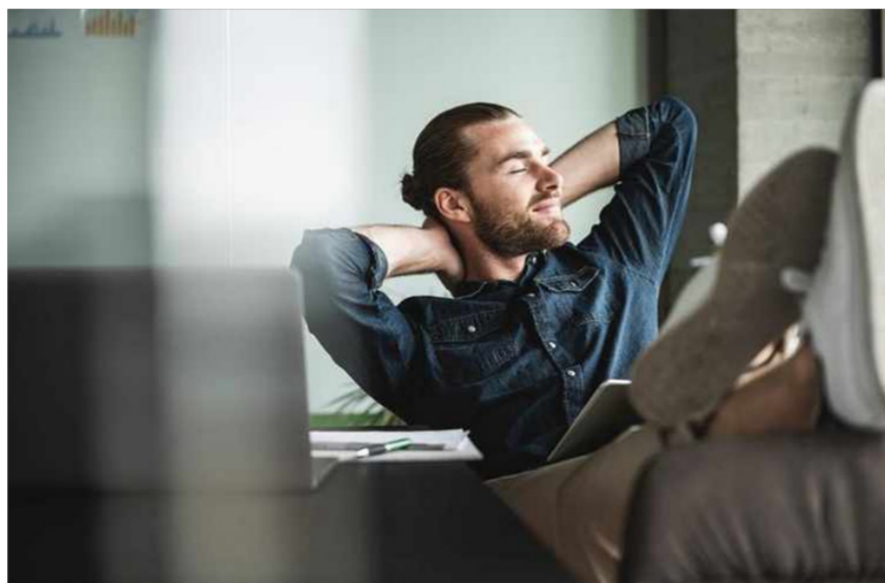
CHIP WALTER

In 2011, author Dan Buettner had come across an extraordinary story when updating his book *The Blue Zones: 9 Lessons for Living Longer*. "Blue Zones" are areas of the world where Buettner noticed that people seem to live an unusually long time. One was the Greek island of Ikaria, located in the Aegean Sea not far off the coast of Turkey.

According to Greek myth, Ikaria was the place where Icarus had plummeted to the sea when he flew too close to the sun, thus the name of the island. According to the legend, Icarus's father Daedalus was considered the greatest inventor and scientist of his day, and so he was summoned by King Minos of Crete to create a labyrinth to imprison the Minotaur, a beast with the head of a bull and the body of a man. After Daedalus dutifully built the labyrinth, Minos trapped him and his son inside to protect its secret. But Daedalus, being the clever inventor that he was, fashioned magnificent wings made of feathers and wax for him and his son, and together they made their escape from death and the labyrinth.

Daedalus cautioned his son not to fly too close to the sun, because its heat would melt his newly constructed wings. But during the flight, Icarus was so overcome with the joy and pride of flying that he disobeyed his father and flew too high. His wings melted and he plunged helplessly into the Aegean.

More recently, Ikaria has become famous for something else. As Buettner



found, many Ikarians are unusually long-lived, routinely reaching ages beyond 80, 90, or 100, strong and healthy until the end with their morbidity seriously compressed.

One of Buettner's more fascinating discoveries was a dark-haired, bowling ball of a man named Stamatis Moraitis. Stamatis had emigrated from Ikaria to the US after World War II. He moved to Port Jefferson, New York, where he married, built a painting business, and raised a family with three kids. All was well until he was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer in his early 60s. His prognosis was six to nine months.

Doctors recommended that Moraitis undergo aggressive cancer treatment, but he decided instead to return to Ikaria,

where he could pass his final days among its peaceful hills. So off he went, planning to enjoy time with his parents (who were still alive and healthy) and live out his last days in their little whitewashed cottage on the north side of the island.

But after several weeks of lying in bed waiting to die, nothing happened. In fact, Moraitis started to feel better. He began spending time with his friends. Soon he began to plant a few vegetables in the garden. Still he didn't die. Instead he grew stronger, built a vineyard. He expanded the house so his kids could visit, and lived 35 more years, utterly cancer-free. No drugs. No treatments. Just the sun, clean air, and good vibrations of Ikaria.

Moraitis's story was a fine yarn that helped reveal the joys of Blue Zone living, but he knew there weren't any magic potions. Mostly the reasons Ikarians lived so long (especially those who were born in the early 1900s) had to do with their lifestyle: walking for miles up and down the island's high hills, eating fresh, organic food from their own gardens, imbibing healthy herbal teas, living by the sea with very little stress, and spending lots of quality time with their family and good friends. No one worried about time, or the stress that came with it.

Buettner knew better than most that Ikarians didn't actively try to live exceptionally long lives; it was simply a natural side effect of how they went about their business.

Still, there had to be some way to bottle all of this vitality, didn't there? Sure enough, after the publication of Buettner's book, people from all over started coming to places like Thea's Inn in Ikaria to get their proper doses of longevity.

The desire for quick longevity fixes was understandable. This was precisely why Craig Venter and the company he founded, Human Longevity, Inc. (HLI), had wondered if some people had specialised genes the rest of the human race had been deprived of: little bundled proteins that acted as microscopic Fountains of Youth. And if they did have them, wouldn't it be nice to find them, and learn to swap them into the rest of us so that everyone could live long and prosper?

However, as HLI mined its growing reservoir of genomes, it found no such fountain. At least not so far, and probably never. The analysis of the company's first

round of 30,000 to 40,000 genomes showed that people who lived to a hundred didn't have supergenes that bequeathed long life; they simply had fewer frail ones. Later, researcher Graham Ruby and his team at Alphabet subsidiary Calico found pretty much the same thing based on the millions of Ancestry.com records. It seems centenarians aren't blessed with any genetic silver bullets. They're dealt the equivalent of a full house: terrific genetic cards in all the right combinations. If you happen to live a Blue Zones lifestyle, all the better; you might live even longer. But in the end, no matter how well you live, no matter how many colonics you try or heaps of kale you eat, the degradations of your genes will still get you. It wasn't just Blue Zone living that kept centenarians going. It was the absence of lousy genes.

Generally speaking, scientists had known for a long time that healthy genes meant a healthy body, and vice versa. The difference with HLI's findings was that now, specific genes were being revealed, genome by genome. This was making it increasingly clear where the frailty genes hid themselves, as well as how and why genes fall apart in general. As more and more of these were discovered, the next step would be to create drugs that could slow the damage, or go in and repair the battered genes themselves. That was the long-term goal.

(Excerpted from the book *Immortality, Inc.: Renegade Science, Silicon Valley Billions, and the Quest to Live Forever.*)