

Forum: General Assembly 3

Issue: Addressing the rise of political extremism and violence stemming from digital platforms

Student Officer: Seungheon Lee

Position: Deputy President

Introduction

The history of the global world cannot be explained without mentioning the rise of technology that still significantly affects the global world. Technology exists as the starting point of its formation in history but does not have an ending point as technology is still rapidly developing every day for more people's comfort. Although there are numerous technologies developed that are ubiquitously shown in the world, the most common type of technology that global citizens are most familiar with is the digital platform which is the online tool for communications. Digital platforms open the space for people to freely share their opinions on certain topics. With getting to communicate freely, people on digital platforms all have different standards and beliefs on the topics that frequently create conflicts between people on digital platforms. The conflicts stimulate them to insist on their arguments more offensively and violence starts to appear in the conversation that eventually leads to harassing and threatening people. Except for the emergence of violence, opportunities to express their opinions also lead people to inadvertently promote the spread of extremist ideologies. The rapid spread of extremist ideologies through digital platforms can lead to increased polarization and reinforce the opposition to rise up. Although the rise of technology revolutionized the world by providing various facilities, it also raised people's level of violence and spread of political extremism by giving them opportunities to freely express their opinions on digital platforms. To solve these issues that can potentially spread globally, various nations have started to put efforts to alleviate and solve the issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Political Extremism

Political Extremism is activities that do not conform to the convention of states and reject the existing concept of societal components working together to improve the world.

Digital Platform

Digital Platform is the electronic tool for communication that has become essential for current global citizens in their daily lives.

Digital Violence

Digital Violence is violence that started to emerge from the beginning of technology. It is one of the most rapidly spread violence in the world. Every person who has access to the technologies can be involved.

Propaganda

Propaganda is information of a biased or misleading nature that is used to publicize a political cause. It particularly shapes people's opinion so they think in a particular way.

Background

Expression of Political Extremism and Violence before the rise of digital platforms

Every person has a different political inclination and that leads to dissatisfaction and complaints toward their country's government. People expressing their uncomfortable feelings about the country's political system can lead to a significant effect on the country as it can sway other citizens' perspective and their inclination toward the government. However, the countries in the past didn't worry as much as recently as there wasn't any mass media that could rapidly spread the political extremists' ideas. Because of this reason, governments tend to ignore the effects of rising political extremism and keep insisting on their system by discounting their ideas. As soon as the extremists realized how the governments were not accounting for the contrasting ideas, they started to express their ideas by utilizing various methods.

The methods utilized before the rise of digital platforms

The one typical way political extremists expressed their ideas was by making public speeches to persuade citizens. They delivered their sincere opinions at the public gathering to awaken the citizens to support them and oppose the government's political system. The speakers exquisitely showed charismatic leadership and persuasive techniques to grab their attention. Their persuasive techniques typically included vivid storytelling that eventually led to evoking strong sympathetic emotions from the audiences. Although they included various skills to persuade people, it was always difficult to gather a mass audience to earnestly hear their speeches. Because they couldn't gather people by saying that they would make a speech, they found a place where numerous people could share their speeches. The expression of their ideas was spread to the people who heard the speeches directly but did not succeed in spreading them widely to spread their ideas perfectly through their countries. The more efficient way emerged was the utilization of the posters. Political extremists produced the printed material and distributed it to the public areas where a lot of people were crowded. The poster specifically contained persuasive ideological messages including their proposed solutions and the reason people should support their political extremism. However, the real reason posters efficiently grabbed people's attention was the inclusion of imposing colorful visuals. By adding this visual, people were inclined to read it and get to understand their ideas. The utilization of the poster was illustrated during World War 1. During World War 1, the political movements used posters to form public opinion and accumulate support for their actions. The poster typically emphasized how the citizens should promote patriotism together with the extremists to strengthen the country's power.

Expression of Political Extremism and Violence after the rise of digital platforms

In the 20th century, the rise of mass media including the radio emerged and this raised the term propaganda which includes sharing ideas by utilizing different platforms. Although it wasn't developed enough to be spread all over the countries, it still resulted in more successful outcomes than the previous methods which included the utilization of posters and public speeches. However, not all of the people in countries had the radios as the availability varied depending on the economic conditions. Even though the price of it decreased over time, at the time when it first appeared, the price was high, and it was only available to economically stable people. Because of this reason, the extremists decided to utilize the newspaper as it was the most ubiquitous object that most people could obtain easily. As soon the political extremists realized this trend, they similarly started to utilize the newspaper. The newspaper contained reporting and narratives to shape public opinion in political extremists' favor. Their techniques of involving a sense of urgency helped the readers to focus and support their opinions. By getting persuaded by their propaganda newspaper, readers followed the plan of political extremists which was recruiting members to make the group larger which would make their solidified ideas powerful. The rise of mass media made political extremist ideas spread more quickly than the time when there were no developed tools to inform the ideas. However, the spread of their idea and even violence spread more quickly when the improved digital platforms emerged.

The Rise of internet

It was the latter half of the 19th century when the internet started to rise. The invention of early computer networks and the internet facilitated citizens to understand the world better than in previous times. People used computer networks and the internet to research certain topics they didn't understand well before and eventually, the invention of the internet became a remedy for them to take one more step forward to become knowledgeable. From realizing how effective the utilization of digital platforms is in sharing ideas, the political extremists started to use the digital platform to make their groups larger. They used the internet to disseminate their propaganda materials more easily which helped to reach a global audience that favorably listened to their situations and stance. Not only did it help to reach larger audiences, but it also helped to hide their identity as the internet provided them anonymity. Because of this reason, people who were afraid to share their ideas due to the fear that they were going to get attacked started to express their ideas without fear. As it allowed them to keep their anonymity, more people who originally had hatred toward their countries' political stance started to emerge and actively started to support and publish their opinions on the internet. Even though it was a time when the digital platforms were not fully developed, the effects of the internet for political extremists was significant as it allowed them to easily spread their ideas and intimidate their governments.

The Rise of social media

Although the effect of the internet was significant enough for the political extremist, the rise of social media was forming the perfect background for them to spread their ideas. In the 2000s, major digital platforms were formed which had a profound impact on society. Google became the most famous platform that users can use to search the topics they want to emerge and other digital platforms such as Facebook gained popularity as it allowed users to connect and communicate online. Digital platforms have continued to expand which includes platforms that can share videos or send messages. As more and more apps are formed by the world's development, it becomes a more suitable situation for political extremists to easily share their ideas on the platform. The crucial problem started to appear at this time as a lot of people are using social media and they can access these political extremists' information. As the information is shared, they exploit the algorithm features on social media platforms to maximize the visibility of their content. They did not just gain benefits for spreading their opinions by dominating algorithms but also by coordinating the supporters. They started to maximize the efficiency of coordinating the supporters by utilizing the advantage of social media. They used the messaging tools of the digital platforms to communicate with the individuals who showed favor to their ideas. This direct relationship helped them to form a solidified relationship which helped to gain the supporters of their group more easily. From seeing how the development of technology, which includes digital platforms, is advancing political extremists to share their information, it can be derived that the activities of political extremists and violence are increasingly corresponding to the development of digital platforms.

Major Parties Involved

Global Internet Forum of Counter Terrorism (GIFCT)

Global Internet Forum of Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) is a group founded by Facebook, Microsoft, Google, and Twitter in 2017 to maximize the efforts to prevent the use of digital platforms by political and violent extremists. They support the deployment of technology tools and solutions to identify and remove terrorist and extremist content. Their technology tools include the use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other techniques to enhance content moderation capabilities across other digital platforms.

United States

The United States has been crucially involved in addressing the issue of political extremism and violence stemming from digital platforms. The United States government has been actively researching and countering extremist digital platform activities by encouraging agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). From the research and collaboration with the United States government, the FBI established a digital platform tip line where users can report extremist and violent activities they witnessed. Except for applying other agencies, the United States kept regulating the system to reduce the rise of political extremism and violence from digital platforms.

Australia

Australia is one of the countries that put the most effort into countering violent extremism from digital platforms. Australia's counterwork to political extremism helps to prevent people from radicalizing to violent extremism by delivering nationally consistent approaches. The Australian government's sincere efforts induced the establishment of eSafety commissioner's office which leads and coordinates online safety efforts across Australian Government departments, authorities, and agencies. The Australian government's leading office eSafety also engages with key online safety stakeholders internationally to amplify its impact across borders. From seeing the establishment of the office and amplifying its impact across borders, Australia is putting their most efforts into solving the issue of mitigating the rise of political extremism and violence stemming from digital platforms.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In order to prevent the rise of political extremism and violence stemming from digital platforms, numerous attempts were made in a global world. One of the previous attempts to resolve the issue was the establishment of the Global Internet Forum of Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) in 2017. GIFCT was established to prevent terrorist and violent extremist exploitation of digital platforms. GIFCT allowed different countries to interact with organizations to enhance the collaboration of sharing deep knowledge about the issue to mitigate the intensity of extremism and violence. Through GIFCT, the organization of technology companies and other countries' governments shared their insights regarding the trend of online extremism and violence inducer. Active sharing of the insights helped the other countries to acknowledge the significant implications of the violence on digital platforms which led the issue to be solved more collaboratively among different countries. GIFCT also helped to improve for detecting extremist content before it gets spread which helped to lessen the violent content available on digital platforms. Their focus on mitigating deliberate efforts to misuse technology helped the world get closer to solving the issue.

The legislative actions were also key attempts to resolve the issue. Countries introduced new laws to hold platforms accountable and to mitigate the spread of political extremism and violence on digital platforms. Germany enacted the Network Enforcement Act in 2017 to remove illegal content on digital platforms to reduce the possibilities of political extremism. Germany emphasized that users of digital platforms should follow great responsibility for everyone to approach moderate content, unlike violence that can affect people's mental health. The Network Enforcement Act states that users should remove illegal content within 24 hours, in certain cases 7 days of being posted, or else a maximum fine of 50 million Euros is imposed. Although it helped to significantly reduce the number of illegal contents, the concerns about political extremism and hate speeches persist. Critics argue that a more comprehensive solution beyond the legislation actions is required.

Numerous educational organizations have been also active in developing studies to understand the rise of political extremism and violence from digital platforms more precisely. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) develops educational resources that crucially address the challenge of extremism. It specifically allowed the students to focus on digital citizenship so that they refrain from committing any violent actions. Although the previous attempt at ISD's deep analysis of the negative consequences of digital platforms helped understand the

trend more clearly, it didn't affect the situation efficiently as the application of it was not made allocative. Despite these previous attempts to solve the issue, the issue continues and a solution from the global world is needed to make the digital platform safer for the global citizens.

Possible Solutions

Public awareness of the significant challenge that the global world is facing always plays a vital role in changing behaviors that simulate collaborative actions. Because of this reason, making campaigns to notify the significance of the rising violence from the digital platforms can be a possible solution that will eventually lead to the decline of interaction between the users who strongly insist on political extremism and the users who don't follow any of these actions. Delving into the solution, the campaign can specifically mention how to not easily trust the information given on social media. The mention can include teaching how to fact-check whether the arguments from political extremists are making true comments that can persuade people enough to support them. Besides guiding them on how to fact-check the information, the campaign can also include how the users should avoid violent content that can affect their mental health. Violent content can make people who see it become mentally harassed and can sometimes affect their personalities which might stimulate them to act violently. For this reason, avoiding and not looking over violent content will not only help them to get shocked and mentally stable, but it will also help the information to not be rapidly spread as people who see it decrease by avoiding the content.

Strengthening the moderation of content on digital platforms is also one of the plausible solutions to mitigate the rise of political extremism and violence from digital platforms. The content can be moderated by the strong collaboration between the technology companies and the governments. The governments can address what types of information on digital platforms are viral and spread to people rapidly and technology companies can manipulate this by advancing the algorithm to remove the content the governments mentioned. The other support the technology companies can cooperate with to mitigate the negative influence is to encourage the system of reporting mechanism in digital platforms to the users. Implementing mechanisms that allow people to report the rising political extremism and violent content easily will help the information to be deleted by the technology companies. Removing the information fast is crucial as it can spread rapidly if it is kept for a long time. By strengthening moderation, the rise of political extremism and violence from digital platforms can be minimized.

The other possible solution to mitigate the rise of political extremism and violence from digital platforms is to introduce new international laws to hold digital platforms appropriate. Although there was a previous attempt in some countries to make a new law of punishment for those who expressed their political extremism, there aren't any international laws that can be counted in every country. From implementing new international laws to punishing people who spread extremism, people will be more prudent towards expressing violent content as they fear that they will be in danger if they commit publishing it. Although potential counterarguments can emerge about how the new laws are limiting their freedom to express their opinions, implementing new international laws will help to lessen the negative implications by making political extremism and violence not spread as numerous as previously.

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Author links open overlay panel Nicola Fontana a b, a, b, c, d, e, f, g, Highlights • After foreign occupation parties active in resistance movement gain votes. • This effect persists over time. • Violence reshapes political identities in favor of the groups that emerge as winners., & Abstract We study the impact of the Italian Civil War and Nazi occupation of Italy in 1943–45 on postwar political outcomes. The Communist Party. (2023, June 20). *Historical roots of political extremism: The effects of Nazi occupation of Italy*. Journal of Comparative Economics. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147596723000537>

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