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SOCIAL MEDIA IS A THREAT TO PRIVACY

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a threat to privacy

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THE ESSAY

In 2024, various translators used by Hamas officials exploded. The incident killed top leadership and fighters of Hamas within minutes. Thus the use of modern warfare technology not only exposed the location of Hamas officials but also led to merciless killing of those officials. This is one among many incidents of 21st century where use of modern day technology led to privacy breach. This raises a serious concern about privacy issues associated with modern technology. The concerns about privacy and modern day equipments are not new and are as old as the technology itself. As everything including technology comes with pros and cons, the biggest disadvantage of technology is privacy concerns associated with modern day technology. From availability of personal data at social media apps to availability of data from public and private network at dark web shows the prevailing issue of privacy associated.

with technological advancements. The digital ~~inawareness~~ and updated technology like AI adds salt to the injury. In the same way, the availability of CCTV cameras in brands, spying softwares and use of chips in modern appliances are serious concerns in context of privacy.

To begin with, one major way in which technology acts as a threat to privacy is the availability of personal data in social media apps. All social media apps including whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook and X, collect the personal data in one or other form. The data is available and visible to social media users. Though the social media apps claim and provide privacy settings but these settings can be manipulated. Hacking of these social media app is such an easy task that people having ordinary know how of fishing and other cyber tools can manipulate the security of these apps. People having little knowledge about digital security easily become victim of such frauds. In 2018, Mark Zuckerberg was questioned by a senator in

leaked videos of teenagers girls from Instagram but he failed to provide a reasonable assurance for future such cases due to susceptibility of security to cyber attacks. This was because ~~the~~ equipping the individuals with cyber security is pre-requisite to stop privacy theft.

Likewise, the digitization of services is another issue in which technology aggravate the privacy concerns. The unavailability of up to date softwares and modern hardware not only hampers the benefits of digitization but also leads to privacy breach. Take the example of NADRA.

The availability of online data became an easy access to hackers.

The personal data including CNIC, personal info and details of registered sim ~~was~~ available of all the Pakistani citizens including NADRA chairman ~~was~~ is available on dark web according to Reuters.

Likewise, According to seep Iru, a French based independent research and investigation firm, Benazir Income support Program of Pakistan's data was leaked and used for financial frauds across the Pakistan.

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In the same way, the data from Aadhaar card application in ~~India~~ ~~was~~ ~~stolen~~ and used for frauds involving money. This is a clear manifestation that modern day technology compromises on data security in one or other way.

Cyber security unawareness is another way through which privacy of individuals is compromised. Majority of people in developing and under developed countries are unaware about cyber security. Hence they fell a prey to fraudulent softwares and application. Take the example of Beta whatsapp. In 2023, hackers released a version of whatsapp which exactly had the same features as the original whatsapp. Apart from this, Beta-whatsapp had many eye-catching features by passing the security and end to end encryption provided by whatsapp. Due to these ~~appealing~~ ~~characteristics~~, many people installed and started to use Beta-whatsapp, and thus their data was at stake. The use of personal data by Beta-whatsapp was reported by

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all the new agencies like BBC, CNN and New York Times. According to New York Times, data of many individuals was present for sale on dark web. These evidence suggests that unawareness about technology is a threat to privacy.

Another important threats to privacy comes from emerging technologies like AI and machine learning. When machines and computer systems are allowed to think like human, the huge number of data they have become at stake. Firstly, humans are becoming dependent on AI and machines for even the smallest day to day tasks. For this purpose, they provide all the data related to daily life activities to AI in form of input. Any system breach directly poses a threat to privacy. Secondly, AI systems are not immune from hackers. These systems can be manipulated and thus hacked. Thirdly, the states in modern day are entering in technological war. Data is becoming new war front. Chinese and US authorities have acknowledged data as a new warfare tool. Hence availability of such minute details of data poses a

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a direct threat to privacy of individuals.

Similarly, many day to day use equipments having advance technology poses a direct threat to users.

From smart TVs to smart phones, various chips including GPS technology are installed on modern day devices.

These devices have potential to trace the user activity and the record can be used by authorities controlling the chip. Similarly, GPS, which is directly connected to satellites, keeps surveillance 24/7. For example,

in Iran Israel was top military leadership of Israel was targeted with precision. According to Reuters, mobile phone locations of these generals were traced by Israel which helped Israel to hit the targets

precisely. Similarly, according to New York Times, the google data was used to find and assassinate many ~~israeli~~

palestinian during Hamas-Israel war. The threat to privacy was well explained by Natenyahu in his speech, "If

you are using a smart phone or any other chip device, you are under our surveillance" - Natenyahu. This reflects the interconnectivity of modern technology.

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and Privacy.

Apart from day to day home appliances, use of modern day CCTV cameras in markets, shops and public places is another way by means of which technology interferes in private affairs of individuals. CCTV cameras can capture moments related to privacy and personal affairs, which then can be used for blackmailing purpose. In 2015, computer operators of a well known clothing brand, adjusted the angles of CCTV cameras toward dressing or changing room. This led to capturing of videos of individual while changing the cloth. The issue was highlighted by mass media and social media, after which police recovered hundreds of videos from the culprit. This misuse of technological appliances leads to privacy breach.

Apart from similarly, the privacy concerns are not limited to commercial CCTV cameras, rather spying softwares can be present in one's mobile phone. According to Pakistan telecommunication authority (PTA), more than 50 spying softwares are commonly used by Pakistanis. These softwares are in form

in form of gaming or loan apps. online gaming platforms are another important source of data breach. According to a report by Eu Disinf Lab, India used online gaming applications to spy and collect data from Pakistani officials.

Thus technology in one or other form poses a threat to privacy.

In a nutshell, where modern technology offers a number of promises and services to humanity, it has many drawbacks and privacy concerns are among the major drawbacks of technology. Modern technology in one or other way leads to data breach. Social media apps and digitization schemes are major sources of data breach. Unawareness of cyber security, modern AI tools and GPS services in technological appliances make common citizens an easy prey to privacy breach. Cyber safety education and measures at national and international level are need of the hour to take full advantage of modern technology without compromising the privacy.