Case Analysis On Cyber Conflict

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Cyber conflict around the world is escalating everyday. Throughout recent history and major conflicts around the world today we have been seeing a heavy emphasis put on a country's cyber capabilities. This could not be anymore true for the conflict between Israel and Iran today. Over the past decade Iran and Israel have been in a cyber conflict that is very recently starting to become very dangerous not only for the country's government but the citizens themselves are facing the consequences. This cyberwar is very peculiar as both countries have denied the allegations of attacking one another and neither have taken responsibility for the attacks. Most recently there has been an attack on Iranian gas stations and this is being seen as a direct attack on the citizens of Iran who ultimately are bystanders in all of this conflict. This is sparking thoughts about the morality and ethics surrounding this cyber war. In this Case Analysis I will argue that Confucianism shows us that the cyberwar between Israel and Iran is not just because the attacks are no longer following the ethical guidelines of a traditional war, both countries are directly attacking the citizens and hospitals of one another.

Throughout history warfare has sparked many questions about morals and ethics. Many of these questions seek to find if wars we've had are just. In Boylans article one of the central points asked is if there can be a just cyber war. Boylan uses tools such as the “Just War Theory”, which deals with the justification on how and why wars are fought. Mainly the means a country uses to impose their will on another nation. This is a very interesting way to look at the cyber conflict between Iran and Israel and this point has made me question my outlook.

A traditional war we have seen throughout history is often very bloody and many sacrifices are made. In cyber conflicts many times citizens are not affected or targeted at all. Many times its countries try to find the best new innovations a country has made to their jets or where a country is stockpiling their armaments. But this Iranian and Israeli conflict has taken a turn. Citizens are now being targeted with cyber attacks from both countries. In the articles we read the Israeli government attacked Iranian gas stations andIranians attacked a major Israeli hospital. These are both examples of the citizens being directly targeted and this is where the moral and ethical dilemmas come in.

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese belief that focuses on having a good moral character. Ethical and moral values are a large contributor to the core values of Confucianism. In this cyber conflict a lot of moral and ethical codes of a traditional war are being violated. It may sound weird discussing the ethics and morals of war when it is often seen as a barbaric and cutthroat thing but wars with the help of treaties and pacts have become a lot more regulated. Especially when it comes to targeting civilians. “War is one of the most consequential arenas in which our technological and social circumstances have created new moral dilemmas. There’s a long tradition of ethical thinking, dating back to the Mahabharata in India and to St. Augustine in the West, that lays down the rules of just war. This is a rich and honorable tradition, but none of the writers in this tradition envisioned drone warfare or the use of autonomous robots, or the phenomena of asymmetric warfare or the development of nuclear weapons.” (Debra Satz, 2017) In this quote from Debra Satz she talks about the moral and ethical principles of war that have been in place since the Mahabharata in India and St. Augustine. She talks about how since the rules of the game are changing and the means in which we use to fight are becoming different, so should the morals and ethics behind it.

In the article by Taddeo one of the central concepts discussed would be the three concepts for a just cyber war. The first principle he says is “prescribes that any entity that endangers or disrupts the well-being of the Infosphere loses its basic rights and becomes a licit target. Therefore, a state can rightly endorse CW as an early move against a malicious entity”. The next being “In the case of cyber war, the damage to non-physical entities needs to be considered as well as the damage to the physical ones. More precisely, the assessment of the good and the harm should be determined considering the general condition of the Infosphere ‘before and after’ waging the war.” Lastly, “The distinction between combatants and non-combatants promoted by this principle rests on the distinction between militaries and civilians that is inherited from traditional warfare. As we have seen, CW is transversal with respect to the social status of the combatants, for it does not require military skills to be waged.”

In the terms of the cyber war between Israel and Iran we can then assume that the cyber war is not in fact a just one. Both countries fail to take into account damage to non-physical entities as well as physical ones, especially ones that affect the lives of civilians. One conflict that we can compare this to is the current war in Ukraine with Russia. The world is very carefully watching Russia and any move that Russia makes on Ukrainian civilians is being thoroughly observed. In the news article by NBC they say that Iran targeted an Israeli hospital and this caused much uproar and was very unethical, it is very similar to what Russia did at the beginning of their conflict as well. But Russia used a missile on the hospital while Iran used cyber warfare. This poses the question: is it any more ethical to use cyber means to destroy a hospital as it is to launch a missile at it?

The three core principles from Taddeo tie in very well with the ideals of confucianism as well. With the main goal of upholding the moral and ethical values of individuals or in this case nations. Keeping in mind the principles of confucianism and the core concepts discussed in Taddeo's article there are many changes that these nations need to make in their cyber war. In its current state it is putting the lives of civilians at risk and is not following ethical and moral values that are expected between nations today.

Overall, the cyber conflict between Israel and Iran is not a just war as it does not follow the ethical and moral values that nation states are expected to uphold. It is evident that each country knows this and that is why they are both refusing to take responsibility for their actions so as to not suffer any consequences from other nations intervening. Although warfare is often thought to be a “win by any means necessary” endeavor that is simply not true and war should be regulated. Through the

References

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