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Case Analysis on Cyberconflict

For the sixth module in this semester, our primary focus was the topic of cyberconflict. Cyberconflict usually comes in the forms of cyber terrorism and cyber warfare, which typically occurs between two countries. The main conflict that this case analysis is about is between Israel and Iran. Not only is the war between Israel and Iran a cyber issue, but it is also a physical issue, and has been going on for the last few decades. This cyberwar is back and forth, as Iran has targeted Israel's water and sanitation facilities, and Israel targeted Iran's railways and gas network, as well as a port in the city of Bandar Abbas. Though it could be argued that this war is necessary, it is still negatively impacting millions of citizens by preventing their ability to obtain simple things like water, gasoline, and sanitation. In this case analysis, I will argue that virtue ethics shows us that the cyber war between Israel and Iran is not morally just because there are no right things being done for the right reasons.

The first source I would like to use to explain why the war between Israel and Iran is not just because it is not for the morally right reasons comes from Michael Boylan in his journal "Can there be a Just Cyber War?". One central concept from this source that I found to be interesting is the Just War Theory itself. This theory works with the justification of war and why wars are fought. There are some principles in the Just War Theory, those being: war must be for just cause, war must be lawfully declared by authority, and the war must have good intentions. To put it in simpler terms, war is

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considered as "an aggressive act by one state against the territory or sovereignty of another state for the purposes of gaining land, resources, or strategic tactical advantage according to internationally recognized rules and constraints governing such action both ad bellum and in bello." (Boylan, 2013). Boylan explains how acts within a country, like temporarily shutting down a company with the goal of stealing something, is a simple crime. Meanwhile, if a foreign country were to do that to the United States, then it would be considered an act of war. Though most of the time war is considered unjust, sometimes it can be necessary. However, a war being necessary does not make it just because of the possible overwhelmingly negative impacts war can have.

The Just War Theory needs to be considered in the Israel and Iran cyberwar. Moreso, the three main principles previously mentioned can tell us if this conflict is actually just. As previously mentioned, Iran an Israel have been attacking each other for the past few decades. Using the first principle of the war being for a just cause, it seems that there is no just cause in there being a war between the two nations. With them being in constant war over the past few nations as well as there not being any progress made, it is hard to see any justification for why war between the two nations is still going on. It does not seem like either nation is at war with the purpose of defending their country, but instead just looking to take each other down. The current basis of war between the two seems to be about nuclear power, but another major factor fueling this war is the differences in religion. There seems to be no good intentions from this war.

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One ethical that I believe can be applied to the cyber war between Israel and Iran would be virtue ethics. Virtue ethics is all about doing the right thing in the right situation. I believe that the cyberwar between Iran and Israel is not the right thing to do, nor do I believe that the current situation they are in is the right thing. The main virtue that I believe can be applied to this case is justice. In this case, the virtue of justice is all about being lawful. There are a lot of things in this situation that I think could be done that could be considered morally right, the main and obvious one being to not engage in cyberwarfare at all. There is a lack of virtues by both Iran and Israel, as they are not doing what is right. While there are arguments for war potentially being just, war is a mostly unjust game, no matter the situation.

The next source I would like to use to explain why the ongoing cyberwar between Iran and Israel comes from Mariarosaria Taddeo in her journal titled "An analysis for a just cyber warfare". In this journal, Taddeo discusses cyber warfare from an ethical point of view and all the principles that come with it. One central concept that stood out to me from this journal was the idea of information ethics. Information ethics has two relatively important concepts, those being the Infosphere and informational ontology. The Infosphere is considered as a "totality of what exists – what philosophers would describe as 'Being' – when considered from an informational perspective" (Taddeo, 2012). The second concept, informational ontology, is used with information ethics as a principle which "all entities, understood as informational objects, have the fundamental

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ethical rights to exist and flourish" (Taddeo, 2012). With information ethics, the morality of something is key in the evaluation of the potential effects on not only informational entities, but also the Infosphere. There are four moral concepts that information ethics offers, those being:

"0. Entropy ought not to be caused in the Infosphere (null law);

1. Entropy ought to be prevented in the Infosphere;

2. Entropy ought to be removed from the Infosphere;

3. The flourishing of informational entities as well as the whole Infosphere ought to be promoted by preserving, cultivating, enhancing and enriching their properties." (Taddeo, 2012).

Using the idea that all informational entities must have the basic right to exist in the Infosphere, I believe that this central concept can also be applied to the ongoing cyberwarfare between Iran and Israel. One reason as to why this is the case is because when cyber attacks are carried out, many things within the Infosphere could potentially lose their basic moral right to exist. This could be due to the result of entropy within the Infosphere, which was mentioned earlier. Another thing mentioned in Taddeo's article is when cyberwarfare (CW) can be ethically used in the Infosphere. That main reasons are if the Infosphere's well-being is under attack, and that "CW should act only when some evil has been or is about to be perpetrated with the goal of stopping it" (Taddeo,

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2012). In the case of the Iran and Israel conflict, cyberwarfare cannot be just because the evil that is being done between the two nations is not in defense of themselves, but looking to harm one another. Take the cyberattacks for example. They are both actively causing harm to each other and disorder to their citizens.

Once again, virtue ethics is all about doing the right thing in the right situation. With the information ethics principle of preventing evil from happening, both Iran and Israel are doing the exact opposite. For both Iran and Israel, it has to come to mind if what either of them are doing is even morally right. If Iran and Israel wanted to display more virtuous habits in what they are doing against each other, they should consider the idea of strengthening their cyber defenses instead of the constant cyberattacks. Once again, the virtuous habit of justice could be what helps them do better in this war to possibly bring an end to it, but it is difficult to end a war, even in the cyber realm, without causing mass harm.

Overall, I believe that there are many reasons as to why the ongoing cyberwarfare between Iran and Israel is not just. In this case analysis, I used the ethical theory of virtue ethics to explain why the war is unjust. The main reason that I used to explain so was because the war itself is not being fought in a moral manner, nor do I think it is being fought for the right reasons. One of the main arguments to people saying that any kind of war is unjust is that the war cannot be avoided and that unethical things will have to be done to help end the war. Also, people think that things could get worse

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sometimes if war does not go through. To that I say of course everyone knows that war is wrong and that there are many other ways that things can be resolved. Also, on the subject of a just war, there is no such thing, because all types of war are unjust.

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