You Wanna Be In Our gang?

Someone please tell me exactly what is a 'hacker group'. That would be more than one ‘hacker’, I hear you say, more than one 'tech' wizard going about their business. Or should I say going about other peoples' business.

A 'hacker', I believe, is someone who breaks into computer systems, networks, data or whatever else is out there on the web. It's a term that can be looked upon by some as 'cool', as these individuals are a lot smarter than your average 'surfer' - maybe ten times smarter that your average 'silver surfer' like me. Or are they?

In reality, they are just thieves, fraudsters and criminals who happen to steal data, codes and secrets that we try to keep safe on our systems, instead of our physical belongings that we can see and carry about with us, or that we have around our homes.

When I know they are working in groups, then that's where it gets creepy for me. Who are these 'hacker groups' and when did they decide to get together? In reality, they probably have never actually got together and don't even know one another's identity, just their online persona. Personally, I thought hackers spent most of their waking hours alone, in a darkened room, in front of their computer screen, not wishing to share anything with anyone lest they lose their 'edge' over them.

There's nothing new about them working in groups, I suppose, as all thieves can act in groups otherwise there would be no 'organised' crime. The scary part comes into play when we are told that they are being hired by overseas governments to hack into our national secrets and disrupt elections, as well as being hired by organised criminals to hack into our personal data on systems maintained by our banks, other financial institutions and public bodies.

Their activities can bring networks and services to their knees, as was shown recently in the case of the hacking of NHS systems. Even here, though, these activities have been attributed to foreign powers, Russia, China, North Korea, to name but a few.

So, are these groups of individuals acting together but really not aware of who is who in their group, or are these groups trained and set up by these foreign powers themselves. Are they in fact, (please let this be the case) just teens having a laugh at our expense in a tenement in Govan, as we search the dark web for them and blame foreign powers when we can't seem to trace them and take their toys away and put them on the naughty step for a ten-year stretch?

If they are individuals hired by foreign powers, how did they hire them? Did they have to apply online and supply references? Presumably there was no face-to-face interview. How did these foreign powers decide they could be trusted?  If they are trained employees of foreign powers' secret services, what's to stop them disappearing into the dark web with their own stash of top secrets data destined for WikiLeaks, or if not WikiLeaks then where? Visions of James Bond 007 villains spring to mind, hell-bent on taking over what's left of our world.

The future seems even scarier. The potential is there for power stations to be taken off grid, nuclear power plants to be hacked, news networks rendered useless because of the weight of fake news, home appliances talking to one another and taking over the house and barring you from coming in. Even worse, the age of the robot is upon us. From home-helps to business advisers, from online medical advice to AI surgeons and ..... well just about everything eventually. Who will be in charge of the robots; the hacker groups?

The truth is out there. We just don't know where. Or is it all 'fake news' anyway?

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