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Media and Terrorism: The Ethical Challenges of A Symbiotic Relationship

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Terrorists try to exercise influence over targeted officials or nations through intimidation of the public and arousal of sympathy for the social and political causes they espouse. Without widespread publicity, terrorist acts can achieve neither of these effects.

Albert Bandura

If the media are not there to cover terrorist acts and explain their political and social significance, terrorism will cease to exist.

John O'sullivan

Abstract

Mass media and terrorism have become more interdependent in a mutually beneficial relationship often described as 'symbiotic.' This article addresses that dynamic and demonstrates the need for news organizations to balance the public's right to know, against the ability of militants who exploit news coverage to promote their beliefs.

This article discusses the issue of the media coverage of terrorist's acts. The relationship between media and terrorism has always been a problem of a heated debate. In the first place, there is a huge controversy about the definition of terrorism. Secondly the polemic is raised concerning the mutual exploitation of the terrorists and the media. The paper discusses the objectives and motives of terrorists to have their acts covered by the news media to gain publicity and access to local and international public opinion. From the other side, the media with their agenda and editorial policy frame the events focusing on profitability and competition. The paper argues that the media are looking in their coverage of terrorist acts for scoops, sensationalism, oddity under the pretext of the people's right to know and freedom of the press and individual freedom. According to this logic terrorists get extensive coverage, become well publicized and get the privilege to be political actors on the same level as the government and state officials. The relationship between media and terrorism remains intricate, complex, and sensitive, subject to various considerations, most of which are unethical, relying on extortion and exploitation to access public opinion on one hand, while pursuing profit and fame on the other hand.

Key words: sabotage, sensationalism, legitimacy, violence, terror, fear, publicity.

Introduction

Terrorism has become the defining phenomenon of the twenty-first century. The issue has evolved into a tool for communication, politics, international relations, publicity, and public opinion. Consequently, it has become a rich subject extensively covered, discussed, and analyzed by the media. Numerous questions arise when addressing the complex relationship between media and terrorism: Should the media cover and present the demands of terrorist groups, or should they boycott them? Terrorists plan and execute their acts to achieve various goals, including gaining attention, raising awareness of their issues, spreading terror and fear, acknowledging their motives and objectives, and obtaining respect, sympathy, and legitimacy. Media outlets often succumb to these goals by providing extensive coverage, exaggerating events, and sensationalizing them in pursuit of journalistic scoop, exclusivity, distinctiveness, and uniqueness in presenting information, analyses, and interpretations of terrorist acts. (Nacos, 2007)

Terrorists resort to crimes, acts of violence, sabotage, hostage-taking, and hijacking innocent planes to pressure governments into meeting their demands and objectives. To reach the public opinion, they heavily rely on the media, which eagerly disseminate and magnify terrorist incidents. The entire process is a propaganda and internationalization of the terrorists' message, diligently conveyed to officials, politicians, decision-makers, and the local and international public. Here, it is evident that terrorists understand the importance of the media in achieving their goals by exploiting strategic means of communication and expression of their demands and objectives. On the other hand, media outlets hasten to broadcast terrorist acts for several reasons, including journalistic exclusivity, excitement, sensationalism, crime coverage, exaggeration, and sensationalism to boost sales and generate profits. The significant challenge faced by the media is determining the appropriate course of action. Should they cover and present the demands and objectives, or should they completely boycott coverage, ignoring terrorist acts? If local media outlets opt for a boycott, will foreign media follow suit? If the media refrains from coverage, who

guarantees the non-leakage of information and prevents the use of new media and social networking platforms, opening the door to the spread of rumors? The dilemma persists, and the relationship remains complex and intricate as long as the extortion process continues and the exploitation and complicity persist, manifested in the pursuit of publicity and reaching the public opinion on one hand, and the quest for increasing sales and profits on the other hand.

Defining Terrorism: Ambiguity, ideology, and politicization

In the problematics of defining terrorism, one of the most significant challenges posed by the phenomenon of terrorism to the international system is defining the word 'terrorism.' There is no comprehensive and universally agreed-upon definition for the term until now. Merely discussing terrorism raises several questions and debates due to the issues surrounding defining this phenomenon and determining its motives, dimensions, and objectives. Here, we observe the different perspectives of societies, countries, and cultures on the concept, and this dilemma has contributed to confusion, overlap, and chaos in its presentation, treatment, and analysis. (Hamilton, 2006)

To this day, there is no internationally agreed-upon definition for terrorism due to variations in interests and differences in standards and values among countries. This has, for example, led to a lack of distinction in many cases between terrorism and legitimate resistance to occupation. The labeling of an act as terrorist is tied to the political vision and social philosophy embraced by institutions, organizations, and the media. Various interests defended by these organizations also play a significant role in this. (Kirat, 2011).

Linguists affirm that the word 'terrorism' is derived from the verb 'to terrify.' An act of terrorism is committed by individuals or groups to instill fear and panic among the innocent. The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism defines terrorism as, "Any act of violence or threat thereof, regardless of its motives or purposes, carried out as an individual or collective criminal enterprise, aiming to spread terror among people or intimidate them, endangering their lives, freedoms, security, or causing harm to the environment, public or private facilities, or seizing them" (Article 1 of the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism, 1998). While this definition highlights aspects and the nature of terrorist activity, it does not delve into the means and methods used by terrorists, which are numerous and diverse, often taking modern forms such as electronic messages and text messages.

Moreover, this definition does not address the various sectors, fields, and terrorist activities. The Islamic Fiqh Council's definition, however, focuses on specifying the aspects and sectors targeted by terrorism. According to their definition, terrorism is, "Aggression committed by individuals, groups, or states against humanity (its religion, blood, intellect, wealth, and honor). It includes forms of intimidation, harm, threat, unjust killing, and actions related to besieging, instilling fear, and all acts of violence or threats carried out as part of an individual or collective criminal enterprise, aiming to spread terror among people, intimidate them through harm, or expose their lives, freedom, security, or conditions to danger. This includes causing harm to the environment, public or private facilities, or seizing them, or endangering any national or natural resources. All of this represents corruption on earth, which Allah has forbidden" (Resolutions of the Islamic Fiqh Council – Organization of the Islamic Conference Agreement on Terrorism, 1999).

The United Nations resolutions state that terrorism is, "Acts that endanger innocent human lives, threaten basic freedoms, or violate human dignity." In the same context, experts from the United Nations define it as, "A prohibited international violent strategy, driven by ideological motives, seeking to instill terror within society to achieve or undermine power." This definition emphasizes the primary goal of terrorism, which is to achieve or undermine power. However, in some cases, terrorism aims to create confusion and chaos within society. Additionally, the motives and causes of terrorism are not always ideological but can be economic, cultural, or social. (Awni, 2003).

Through these definitions, it becomes clear that there is a noticeable difference and divergence in defining terrorism. This is attributed to several reasons, with the most important being the confusion of concepts and terms related to the rights of the world's peoples in their struggle, resistance, and jihad for achieving independence and defending their interests (Aouni, 2003). Additionally, some countries lack legislation and laws that differentiate between criminal and aggressive behavior and the menace of terrorism. There is often no legal distinction between organized crime, especially terrorism. Furthermore, the interests of entities and institutions defining and initiating various definitions for terrorism are directly or indirectly drawn from their own self-interests. These interests may conflict with the interests of other peoples, countries, or institutions. Moreover, major countries define terrorism, terrorist behavior, organizations, groups, and individuals based on their vital and strategic interests.

Terrorism is an unexpected and organized event, involving unjust violence and aggression committed by an individual or group. It is usually directed against innocent civilians, targeting media presence, publicity, and propaganda to capture the attention of the widest possible audience with the aim of influencing decision-makers to achieve social, political, and strategic goals. Terrorism is a complex and intertwined phenomenon produced by a combination of personal and psychological factors, along with cultural, political, economic, and social factors.

These factors create terrorism, which aims to achieve its goals through intimidation, terror, violence, murder, and crime. (Kirat, 2012).

Internationally, political, economic, and social reasons that generate terrorism are summarized by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee as follows: "Control of one state over another, the use of force against weaker states, the practice of repression, violence, and displacement, imbalance in the global economic system, foreign exploitation of natural resources in developing countries, violation of political, economic, social, and cultural human rights through torture, imprisonment, or revenge, hunger, deprivation, poverty, ignorance, and ignoring the suffering of a persecuted people, and environmental destruction.

Causes of Terrorism

The causes of terrorism can be traced back to various internal and external factors. Internally, many countries around the world are undergoing significant and crucial changes imposed by the circumstances affecting the international system, such as the collapse of communism and the socialist bloc, leading to the disappearance of bipolarity and the emergence of indicators of a new world order that has not yet been clearly defined. However, it is being led by the United States with strong resistance and significant conflicts from some influential countries on the international stage. (Awni, 2003)

Furthermore, most development experiences in the third world, which includes more than 75% of the world's population, have failed to achieve their intended goals. This has deepened the gap between developed countries, and underdeveloped countries, formerly colonized. The failure of development projects within third-world countries has widened the gap between the very few who share the country's wealth and the general masses who suffer poverty and harsh living conditions. (Conway, 2006).

The reasons for terrorism in developing nations, specifically in the Arab world, are determined by political, ideological, economic, cultural, and social factors. (Kirat, 2011). Problems that have emerged at these levels collectively led to the rise of extremism, terrorism, and the rejection of the other internally. On the international level, some countries provide refuge for terrorists, while others use terrorism to weaken some other countries so that they can control their destiny as they wish. The third type includes states that engage in state terrorism to ensure economic and ideological goals. (Hamilton, 2006).

On the local level, we observe that political exclusion, the absence of individual freedoms, and the lack of political participation by broad segments of society, resulting from the prevalence of authoritarian political systems, have led to an exceptionally large gap between the rulers and the ruled. This is the case with most undemocratic countries. Consequently, civil society is deprived of its basic rights to express the demands, problems, and concerns of the economic, political, and social masses. The lack of political participation by most of the population leads to exclusion and marginalization, allowing government institutions to manipulate the political space as they please, serving the interests of a handful of influential and powerful individuals.

Globalization of Terrorism

One of the distinctive features of terrorism at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is its process of globalization. This is evident through international collaboration among numerous terrorist groups, as well as the establishment of strong networks across continents for financing, training, and providing logistical support, weapons, and funds to these groups (Taheri, 2008). The events of September 11, 2001, undoubtedly remain the most significant terrorist incident of this century, considering factors such as the number of casualties, the execution methods, meticulous planning, and the targeted country, the greatest and most powerful in the world. The implications of the September 11 attacks indicate a new interpretation of terrorism in the twenty-first century, threatening and reaching any country worldwide, regardless of its strength, size, or experience in national security and self-defense. The message is clear: no country in the world is immune to terrorism. Terrorism has also struck in recent years in India (Parliament), Indonesia (Bali), Britain (London Underground), Spain (train in Madrid), and Mumbai in India (hotels and train station). The current international terrorism operations center revolves around Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. (Lim, 2021)

Given the stakes, challenges, and consequences associated with terrorism, it has always been subject to manipulation and uses by many countries worldwide (Hamilton, 2006). Even before World War I, there were political forces using terrorism to achieve their goals and to support and endorse one party against another. A prime example is the officials in the Serbian government and army who supported, trained, and armed various Balkan groups that were active before the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 in Sarajevo. Walter Laqueur (Laqueur, 1999) also argues that the Bulgarian government used the "Macedonian Revolutionary Organization" against Yugoslavia and local enemies. State terrorism is not a recent phenomenon on the international stage, with the term "state terrorism" referring to systems of terror produced by major revolutions, such as the terrorism of Maximilien Robespierre and Stalin, and the behaviors of totalitarian, authoritarian, and racist states, such as the crimes committed by Hitler and his regime in Germany, Mussolini in fascist Italy, Idi Amin in Uganda, Mobutu in

Zaire, Pol Pot in Cambodia, and the practices of military dictatorships in Latin America, including Chile under the guidance and support of the American Central intelligence agency. This does not mean that democratic countries do not practice or use terrorism; rather, they employ it under the pretext of combating terrorism or protecting their interests and national security. The current war on terrorism is nothing more than combating terrorism with terrorism. It is terrorism, a blatant contradiction to the principles of democracy and human rights. The events in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Syria serve as unmistakable evidence of this.

Annually, the United States issues a list of countries sponsoring terrorism according to its criteria and standards, based on the negative or positive evolution of its relations with these countries. Many countries adopt this list either willingly or under coercion. Thus, terrorism has become a fundamental variable in international relations, serving as a tool in the hands of influential states in the international system to achieve their interests and objectives. Acting on the principle that the end justifies the means, several countries, some claiming democracy and freedom while advocating respect for human rights, use terrorism as a covert apparatus, managing it like other state institutions. Dr. Obaidat emphasizes that understanding the phenomenon of state terrorism requires understanding its intelligence agencies, which secretly engage in activities the state fails to achieve openly or what the state does not want to be directly attributed to it, such as funding certain organizations in other countries for use as a means of sabotage, pressure, or physical eliminations, as France did when supporting the "Secret Army" to counter the Algerian National Liberation Movement (Obaidat, 2004, pp. 101-101).

Terrorism has become of paramount importance in today's global forums, shaping international relations between peoples and nations. Since the events of September 2001, terrorism has been linked to the idea that no one in the world is immune to it. What is more dangerous is that the fear now revolves around the possibility of terrorist groups using weapons of mass destruction. Adding complexity and danger to the issue is the fact that the United States' view of terrorism and its counterterrorism efforts is narrow, self-centric, identity-centric, with local and internal dimensions, far from being objective and international (Cohen, 2004). Terrorism is not confined to Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or ISIS. Fighting terrorism with terrorism is futile. Furthermore, major powers in the global system do not address the roots and causes of terrorism but focus on superficial aspects, consequences, and temporary cosmetic solutions that quickly fade away, allowing terrorism to resurface. This is evident in the current situation with the phenomenon of "ISIS." It implies that the international system needs to reconsider its approach to addressing the phenomenon, holding explicit and objective international conferences and forums to ensure the security and stability of humanity as a whole, fostering cooperation and integration instead of conflicts and disputes that provide fertile ground for the spread of terrorism and the inability to effectively combat and eliminate it. The persistence of Al-Qaeda and the emergence of "ISIS" with the strength and danger witnessed by the world are straightforward evidence of the failure of major and influential powers in the world to effectively deal with the phenomenon of terrorism and their inability to contain and eliminate it. Lim looks at the globalization of terrorism from a different angle:

Terrorism has little or nothing to do with globalization, just as it has little or nothing to do with Islam. Most of the many varieties of terrorism that afflict and have long afflicted the world are responses not to global phenomena, but to intensely local ones. Examples include particularly ethnic, nationalist, and religious fault lines such as violence by Catholics and Protestants in Ireland; Basques in Spain; the Hindu Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka; Kashmiris, Sikhs, and Hindu nationalists in India; the Aum cult in Japan; and Uighurs in Xinjiang, China. (Lim, 2021)

Terrorism and the Media: A Symbiotic Relationship

What is the relationship between the media and terrorism, and how do media institutions and their operators deal with a complex phenomenon that has numerous and serious repercussions across various levels and fields? How do the media handle terrorism, and does their approach differ from their performance in normal times? Do media outlets simply cover terrorism, or do they attempt to confront it, or politicize it according to the interests of specific entities, whether they be in power, opposition, or political and financial entities, etc. Do media institutions face specific pressures when dealing with terrorism? Are there ethical decisions that editors, section heads, chief editors, and managing editors need to make considering the risks, repercussions, consequences, and numerous outcomes associated with terrorism (Schmid and Graaf, 1982) (www.transnationalterrorism.eu)?

Wardlaw summarizes the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorists as follows:

It is well recognized that some form of symbiotic relationship exists between the news media and perpetrators of spectacular terrorist incidents. One of the most important aims of a terrorist attack is to gain publicity for a particular cause. In some cases, publicity is the sole aim. The presumed primary aim of the news media is to inform. However, it is at least as important in practice to entertain, shock, amuse or otherwise affect the emotions of the audience. This is particularly true of the medium of television. Competition between media organizations seems to heighten the necessity to focus on emotion-generating as opposed to the purely informational aspects of news reporting. (Wardlaw, 1989).

The equation of terrorism, media, and power raises issues of national interest and an individual's right to knowledge. It highlights the exploitation and manipulation of terrorists using the media to gain publicity, media presence, and access to the local and international public opinion. What is the interest of the individual and society during this complex relationship, and is there no conflict between exploitation and the right of the individual to know? Is there no conflict between nationalism on one hand and the pursuit of journalistic scoops and sensationalism on the other? There is difficulty in defining the methodological, theoretical, and ethical framework for journalistic work during daily news coverage of the activities and demands of local and global terrorist groups. This presents several challenging questions and methodological problems that are difficult to precisely address due to the nature of journalistic work and the monitoring role that public media should play in serving the community and society. Also, it is influenced by the nature of legislation, laws, and ethical standards applied in media work. What is the relationship between the media and terrorism? Why do terrorists always focus on exploiting the media to reach local and international public opinion? How should the media deal with this phenomenon? Through coverage or censorship or not covering terrorism at all? Here we face a complex and ethically challenging dilemma: Does the media serve the public when covering terrorist events, or does it serve the terrorists, or perhaps both at the same time? Does coverage contribute to public opinion in any way? How can the media determine when an incident or event should be covered or boycotted, and if they decide to cover the news, how should it be managed and what aspects should be emphasized or ignored? When should the press and media adhere to not publishing information and news that, if published, could have serious repercussions? These are the questions and inquiries that every editor-in-chief, section head, and responsible person in a media institution faces when it comes to covering terrorist events. The stance is primarily ethical and requires a thoughtful and responsible decision above all (Cohen-Almagor, 2005) (Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, and Shapiro, 2007).

What do terrorist groups achieve from media coverage of their actions?

Behind their criminal activities, terrorists primarily aim to access various media outlets to achieve the following: Spreading fear (Agenda-setting theory - Framing Theory). Terrorists seek to publish their agenda, shape public opinion, recruit new members, disseminate their statements and demands, use the media as a means of threat, negotiation, and gaining positive publicity, connect their message to the victim, deceive the enemy by spreading false information, gain publicity through interviews with journalists, intimidate the media by killing, kidnapping, or torturing journalists, announce the terrorist movement and its goals, and influence the public to obtain concessions from the government. (Nacos, 2007)

Emphasizing the other party's viewpoint error, directing public attention according to the terrorists' agenda, announcing other terrorist acts, using journalists as negotiators in specific cases, inciting the public against the government, seizing broadcasting stations to deliver their messages, imposing their agenda, ideas, and opinions, obtaining external networks among terrorists, and instilling terror and fear in the enemy by exaggerating the strength of the terrorists and eliciting public reactions (Schmid and Graaf, 1982:51-52).

If we assume that a terrorist act does not attract the attention of various media outlets and receives no notable coverage, it means that the event did not occur. Therefore, the impact of the terrorist act is null, having no effect on people, the public, decision-makers, officials, politicians, the international public, or the international system. The fate of terrorism without media coverage is cessation and decline. What terrorists want from the media is media coverage, publicity, and coverage that focuses on excitement, spreading panic, and creating a sense of insecurity and instability among people. They encourage people to seek information about what happened, why it happened, what the motives and reasons are, how many victims there are, and what the material losses are. For terrorists, acts of terrorism are the only means to capture the public's attention, make the public and decision-makers aware of their problems, issues, and demands. The dilemma here is that in the modern age and in democratic societies, the media cannot refrain from covering terrorist acts because their role in society, based on the principle of the public's right to know, is to inform the public and public opinion about all events and incidents locally and internationally. On the other hand, democratic states cannot interfere in the affairs of the media and pressure them to abstain from covering terrorist acts, adhering to the principle of freedom of the press.

There are three objectives that terrorist groups seek to achieve through media coverage of their terrorist activities: First, to gain attention by spreading fear, terror, insecurity, and instability among the targeted masses. This also involves exposing the weakness, ineffectiveness, and inability of the targeted government to protect its citizens from terrorism. Second, terrorist groups and their supporters aim to gain recognition for their demands, arguments, and issues. The third objective for international terrorist groups is to obtain a degree of respect and legitimacy in the targeted societies (Nacos, 2014, 2007).

Regarding the issue of attention, any terrorist act attracts the attention of the media and, to a greater extent, the public. It becomes captive to everything presented by various media outlets, especially visual ones, about the details of the terrorist event. This news and information become of utmost importance to the public. On the other hand, the media are the only institutions with the capabilities and capacities to gather a large volume of information and

disseminate it quickly. This information is crucial not only for the public but also for private and public institutions. When the public becomes aware of a terrorist act, it often seeks information and details by referring to radio and television stations and newspapers around the clock to learn about the latest developments and measures to counteract the terrorist act. This intimate relationship between the public and the media, and the reliance on the media for the latest updates and information, is reflected in the increased sales of newspapers and magazines and the overwhelming interest in watching television channels and listening to radio stations when terrorist operations are conducted.

One of the most significant criticisms leveled at the media in its handling of terrorism is that it has become a crucial player in terrorist activities, exploited to serve interests and goals that may entirely contradict the noble mission of the media in society. With its strength and immense communication capabilities, the media provides terrorists with an excellent opportunity to reach millions of people locally and internationally to express their demands. Satellite and terrestrial television channels escalate crises, magnify them, increase their panic and fear, and this can serve the agenda and demands of terrorists, exerting substantial and powerful pressure on the government to concede and negotiate from a position of weakness. After sensationalism, exaggeration, and amplification, decision-makers find themselves weakened in the face of public opinion's impacts on both domestic and global fronts. Gaining access to international public opinion is considered one of the terrorists' most crucial objectives, realizing the mission of reaching international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other civil society institutions worldwide. This exploitative equation is seen as a negative practice by the media, which considers itself responsible for informing the public about local and global events in the most viable way. However, it serves distant issues far removed from the public interest and the well-being of society. The decision here is ethical, and it is the duty of the media to rid itself of any commercial considerations, competitive thinking, or journalistic scoop because the matter is much more critical, involving the security and safety of the state and its people. It also relates to the processes of extortion and exploitation.

Media authorities should approach the phenomenon of dealing with terrorist acts with caution, vigilance, and depth because the idea of press freedom, the free flow of information, and blind obedience to the principle of an individual's right to knowledge have no place when it comes to societal security and safety. What is required here is the establishment of strict standards for dealing with terrorist acts. If the media can marginalize these acts and not give them any significant importance, it serves the entire society, sidelining terrorists and their actions from publicity and media coverage, alongside state institutions and entities.

In this case, the media should not think in terms of profit, commerce, competition, or the logic of freedom and non-interference by the state in its private affairs or other considerations for imposing restrictions and guidelines on dealing with terrorism. When the media covers terrorist acts, it amplifies the events, making them public, sensational, emotional, tense, and fearful. Often, these media reports, especially on television, lead to public sympathy for terrorists. Here, the media finds itself in an enviable position: maintaining freedom of expression, performing its reporting role, satisfying public demands - the right to know - while harnessing its media services for terrorists who use violence, force, and illegitimate means to access the media and, in turn, public opinion, reaching the largest possible audience locally and globally.

Media gains from covering terrorist acts?

The media covers terrorist acts based on the principle of the public's right to know and with the aim of achieving goals that are integral to the media industry, targeting political and ideological objectives, competition, and profit. Some of the key gains that the media accrues when covering terrorist acts include: Building Reputation and Profit, achieving a reputable status in the industry, increasing profitability, securing exclusivity for superior coverage, boosting sales and viewership, increasing sales or viewership, attracting more advertisements and raising advertising prices, serving the public and ensuring the Right to know, fulfilling the duty of providing a service to the public, guaranteeing the right to know. speed and competition, maintaining speed and competitiveness in reporting, Sensationalism and Public Interest, exploiting terrorism as a source of sensational and intriguing news, utilizing violence, crime, and excitement as valued news elements.

Nacos argues:

Needless to say, terrorism is an attractive boom for media coverage, mainly because terrorist attacks make viewer ratings surge and profits increase. To be more specific, terrorism has many aspects that make it an incredibly attractive subject for the media, as it has the elements of drama, danger, blood, human tragedy, miracle stories, heroes, shocking footage, and action (Terrorism and the Media 2008). Another reason is that violence is a central and defining quality in contemporary television culture and is critical to the semiotic and financial momentum of contemporary media organizations (Lewis 2005). Indeed, the media has always been interested in reporting terrorism; however, the recent proliferation of television and radio channels, and the emergence of mega-media organizations have resulted in greater competition and insatiable appetites for shocking, sensational "infotainment" that is believed to keep audiences captivated, boost ratings and circulation, and increase profits. (Nacos 2006).

Media as a Player: Part of the Terrorism Narrative

By covering terrorists acts the media are portraying terrorists as media figures. The media itself is becoming part of the terrorism narrative. Following the audience preferences and providing the audience with news related to violence, crime, and excitement. The media are applying their news conventions such as eliminating routine and boredom, viewer sympathy and retribution, generating audience sympathy for terrorists seeking revenge against authority, alignment with Television Characteristics, Aligning with the specific characteristics of television, such as movement, excitement, and suspense, For the media, terrorist acts are considered matters pertaining to nations, posing threats and challenges to public order, security, and stability in society.

For many media outlets, especially those focusing on journalistic scoops, sensationalism, selling the bizarre, violence, and crime, terrorism is considered a lucrative and substantial material that helps the institution increase sales and viewership, reaping substantial profits in a truly brief period. With the emergence of "Islamophobia," the media has become adept at establishing a close connection between Islam and terrorism and associating anyone deviating from obedience to America and the West with terrorism. Strangely, journalists and specialists in Muslim and Middle Eastern affairs often fail to differentiate between various matters, mixing nations, religions, sects, and diverse cultural and civilizational trends and peculiarities, especially within the Arab-Islamic civilization.

Driven by stereotypes, preconceived notions, and distortions, the media presents colored news with the aim of tarnishing countries and religions, linking terrorism to Islam and other ideologies. Events in many Western capitals, for example, confirm the systematic, intentional bias against Arabs and Muslims.

Confronting Terrorism:

The phenomenon of terrorism in media, scientific, intellectual, and academic circles has led to serious contradictions, notably the double standards in measuring and connecting terrorism with some countries, religions, and ethnic groups. Some view it as a clash of civilizations and religions, while others see an imminent threat from the East that rejects dialogue and disregards the other. The arguments of radical or armed Islam, "Islamic fascism," and "clash of civilizations" have contributed to polluting minds and spreading a culture of fear, hatred, and animosity. This has led some to accuse the press and media, in general, of significant failure in responsibly covering terrorism, avoiding extortion, exploitation, sensationalism, and the idea of boosting sales and viewership, thereby increasing advertising space prices. The ongoing conflict between the West and the East, the North, and the South, persists, and regrettably, we often observe media bias in favor of powerful and influential forces in the world. This has made the issue of terrorism shrouded in mystery and confusion, as many media outlets frame it according to their agendas and editorial policies making the problem of terrorism worse and more complex.

As for the media strategy, it should primarily focus on the pivotal role that several types of media should play in combating terrorism intellectually, ideologically, and psychologically. Terrorism is fundamentally a set of thoughts, perceptions, and convictions. Hence, media outlets should combat terrorism in the minds and beliefs of people, avoiding sensationalism, exaggeration, exploitation, and manipulation. The comprehensive reform strategy to combat terrorism includes political reform, emphasizing the separation of powers, judicial independence, power rotation, and respecting individual freedoms, freedom of expression, press freedom, political participation, and contributing to decision-making. It also involves economic reform and responsible exploitation of national resources to serve sustainable development, ensuring a decent and honorable standard of living for citizens, and eliminating poverty, marginalization, and significant disparities between urban and rural areas. This also implies investing in science, knowledge economy, and human development across various fields.

To counter and prevent terrorist claims and narratives effectively, media outlets have a responsibility to diffuse accurate and comprehensive information on terrorism-related threats, and to avoid sensationalist or baseless media reporting causing public fear and terror. In this regard, Kosen asserts:

the media has a major role to play in moderating their reportage on terrorist activities and/or acts by ensuring balanced, unbiased, and factual analysis of events as they unfold. In the light of the findings, the study recommends among others a close working relation between media and government. Accordingly in cases of terrorists incidences timely information from the government must be provided to avert distortion and over- exaggeration of attack events. Public education and creation of awareness IS also important. (The role of media in the fight against terrorism. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/17110>).

Conclusion:

The media's handling of terrorism has always been subject to criticism due to the problems of extortion, exploitation, and the instrumental use of terrorist issues by some media institutions to increase sales, notoriety, and profitability. Kirat argues, "Modern terrorism is media terrorism. The architects of terrorism exploit the media to get publicity, media presence, gather information, recruit volunteers, and implement their propaganda programs and strategies. The media cover terrorist acts not only because it is their duty to ensure the public's right to know and to report on any major event but also because of the sensational, dramatic and spectacular aspect of terrorism

that fascinates the general public and attract a large audience not only within the borders of the country where terrorist acts take place but worldwide" (Kirat, 2014)

In the 21st century, terrorism has become a tool of politics and international relations, an integral part of politics that imposes itself on public opinion through media coverage, making it like other political actors on both local and international levels. Media coverage of terrorist acts legitimizes terrorists, portraying them as political players like political parties, pressure groups, and politicians. The relationship between media and terrorism remains intricate, complex, and sensitive, subject to various considerations, most of which are unethical, relying on extortion and exploitation to access public opinion on one hand, while pursuing profit and fame on the other hand.

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