



Media and Countering Terrorism Responsibility and Impact

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Terrorism has become a global phenomenon that engulfs most regions of the world to varying degrees, and many violent and terrorist incidents that have increased in the last two decades of the last century are being reported in various media. Although the essence of terrorism remains the same; the use or the threat of violence to instigate fear in society by targeting individuals, groups, institutions or the system of government in society in order to achieve a specific political objective, the forms of terrorism are numerous and diverse.

There is no doubt that the media plays a pivotal role in shaping attitudes and tendencies. It affects the acquisition of knowledge and information by the public, particularly at times of crisis. The public relies more on them in situations of conflict and instability, the spread of violent and terrorist incidents, thereby finding consistent meanings and appropriate interpretations of events. This is due to the violent and sudden nature of terrorist incidents, disruption and deviation from established norms and values in society, with wide-ranging and consequential impacts, as well as lack of available information.

Media and Handling of Events

All of the above highlight the significance of the media, which has become a major source of knowledge and information about these terrorist events, and of influencing public attitudes towards them. These events are classified by media professionals and journalists as events of great news value, as they involve an excessive amount of conflict, and therefore feature prominently in media interests of various kinds.

Today, the concept of terrorism and terrorist actors are controversial, with multiple interpretations of the concept of political violence, the distinction between terrorism and resistance to occupation, and other concepts associated with terrorism. They are all concepts that must be carefully dealt with by the media when dealing with this

worrying phenomenon, because the role of the media towards terrorism is not limited to providing the public with information about terrorist events only. Rather, it extends to treating these events with a professionalism that makes a serious and effective contribution to drawing attention to the dangerous and renewed nature of these events. This requires more systematic and intellectual efforts by the media, developing policies capable of directing professional persuasion practices to the risk of such events and what the public must do to deal with them, as well as supporting the sense of psychological security that is needed in the public because of the negative consequences of terrorist operations.

From this standpoint, and given the nature of terrorism issues and their negative consequences to the public, an integrative approach to dealing with them becomes necessary. They are dealt with not only by the security services, but also by all educational, cultural and intellectual institutions, civil and religious, and by the media of all types, orientations and patterns of ownership, based on the responsibility of the professional and social functions of the media towards society.

Media Societal Responsibility

In order for the media to best fulfil its societal function, attention must be paid to a number of matters and elements, the most important of which are:

- Providing analytical and critical information materials on the various political, intellectual and social areas related to terrorism issues, drawing on the views of experts and analysts, as well as on the results of studies and research in this area.
- Attention to making different information available to the public; to obtain facts about different terrorist events and issues.
- Stimulating public interest in media handling of terrorism issues by the provided materials that encourage the public to interact meaningfully with these treatments, using both persuasive and emotional approaches.
- Attention to in-depth remedies in response to terrorist incidents, not just immediate or superficial confrontation.
- Highlight local, regional and international efforts to combat terrorism resolutely and seriously by motivating the public to react to such efforts.
- Immediate response to all rumors, whether internal or external.
- Highlight guidance on citizens' responsibility in confronting terrorism and terrorist movements.

While these elements are key requirements for media handling in response to terrorism, care must also be taken to avoid mistakes that media sometimes makes when dealing with terrorism issues.

Media Errors

In order for the media to avoid making mistakes when dealing with terrorism issues, it is necessary to highlight the most important mistakes that are expected to fall into:

- More attention should be paid to the event than to the phenomenon, as the media pays more attention to terrorist operations than to terrorism as a phenomenon that has its causes, repercussions and dangerous consequences.
- The predominance of news reporting in media follow-up and the provision of prompt follow-up without adequate information and data on terrorist incidents.
- Lack of analytical and investigative explanatory character of terrorist incidents in media follow-up.
- Lack of interest in addressing the various roots, causes and perspectives of terrorism.
- Pursuing terrorist operations as an isolated event, rather than as a context-specific process with specific objectives.
- Absence of a clear-sighted media strategy, objectives, tools and methods, in the face of terrorist media that uses all modern means and communication techniques to spread rumors and misinformation.
- Lack of qualified and trained media competence to deal with terrorism.
- Security, social, psychological, cultural, religious and educational experts and specialists are often not used to provide integrated media processing.
- Rapid broadcasting of inaccurate information and data, and lack of reliance on concerned authorities in order to achieve a media scoop.
- Lack of regularity and continuity in media follow-up, which weakens its impact.
- Lack of integrated coordination among the media, institutions and bodies concerned with countering terrorism.
- The lack of balance in media monitoring and its swing between underestimation and intimidation of terrorist events, which renders it discredited.
- Absence of an integrated vision for tackling terrorism in media processing.
- Lack of adherence to professional norms and standards during media follow-up of terrorist events.

- Failure to employ modern communication technologies in media dealing with terrorist incidents.
- Absence of a code of media honor to which media organizations are committed in dealing with terrorist incidents.
- Absence of a media strategy to counter terrorism, which requires the formulation of a media strategy based on different pillars and themes to serve as a guide for media professionals in their media follow-up to terrorism issues.

Media Strategy

1) The foundations of the media strategy:

The media strategy is based on indispensable foundations, the most prominent of which are:

- Activating the role of the media in improving the knowledge of individuals, evaluating their attitudes and behavior in the face of extremism and highlighting the dangers of terrorism to the individual and society.
- Stressing the significance of the media in achieving intellectual security that the hostile media threatens.
- Commitment to credibility and objectivity in the media message, away from misinformation and excitement.
- Attention to outreach messages to individuals and communities, and well thought out media programs aimed at dealing with terrorism, especially in villages, regions and border areas.
- Emphasizing that the responsibility to combat terrorism is a collective and solidarity responsibility, in which all state agencies and all media with their various types join.
- Adopting an integrative approach to countering terrorism, while promoting moderation, dialogue and tolerance within the concept of comprehensive security.

2) Media Strategy Objectives:

- Making public opinion aware that terrorism is aimed at terrorizing the safe, destroying vital installations and forming public opinion against extremism in its various forms.
- Purifying media programs from anything that promotes violence, extremism and terrorism.

- Renewing the language of media discourse, correct misconceptions of jihad in the name of God and distinguish between terrorism and legitimate resistance to occupation in divine laws and international laws.
- Highlighting the values of tolerance and rejection of extremism and terrorism advocated by religions.
- Raising public awareness of terrorist acts and raising community awareness of the negative consequences of terrorism.
- Educating young people intellectually, socially and culturally about the danger of extremism and terrorism, and strengthening the values of loyalty and patriotism.
- Qualifying and training of media teams to be able to deal with modern technologies and realize the objectives of the media strategy to counter terrorism.

3) Information Strategy Implementation:

- Development of public awareness of the threat of terrorism and the importance of countering it with the information materials provided by the media that motivate the public to engage meaningfully.
- In-depth treatment in response to terrorist events, not just immediate confrontation.
- Highlighting local, regional and international efforts to combat terrorism in order to motivate the public to interact with these efforts.
- Coordination between the public and private media sectors to highlight the threat of terrorism, the importance of countering it, adherence to professional controls and not seeking ill-considered media preemption.
- Developing the informational culture of the journalist about terrorism with educational tools to explain the phenomenon, its trends and its stages of development, and defining terms intertwined with the phenomenon of terrorism (armed resistance, violence, extremism, peaceful resistance, confrontation, and all kinds of sectarian, denominational and ethnic conflict).
- Using various information materials (recorded audio materials, awareness campaigns, recorded videos) to raise awareness of the dangers of terrorism, reveal its causes, elements and motives, as well as investigations and reports illustrating aspects of the phenomenon.
- Developing religious programs and materials presented in the media, attention to moderation and the values of tolerance and peace, and the fight against extremist and takfirist ideology.

- Dealing with caution with the media data of terrorist movements that broadcast on websites; so as not to be a way to promote those trends.
- Attention to formulating the media message with several considerations, the most important of which are: explaining the legal, security and legislative aspects of countering terrorist crimes. Attention to guidance on citizens' responsibility to counter terrorism. Attention is paid to the ongoing training of media professionals in dealing with the phenomenon of terrorism. Attention to the preventive aspect of countering terrorism; to provide integrated follow-up and to provide insights that help the public to form a national public opinion that is transformed into an attitude, and thus positive behavior, towards countering terrorism. Use and standardize terminology that defines and clarifies the concept of terrorism to avoid the use of terminology that serves the faith and objectives of terrorist groups and organizations. Reducing the visibility of the psychological impact of terrorist operations for the morale of the people. Interest in official data; as it is a reliable source for broadcasting accurate information on terrorist operations.