



MEDIA AND TERRORISM AMBIGUOUS VISIONS

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Given its digital manifestations, the media has become a breeding ground for extremist and excommunication-driven movements to create incubator environments favorably conducive for their fundamentalist ideologies. All propaganda platforms are critically important to such groups. Empowered by the state-of-the-art media technologies, they perform varying and complex functions to serve their political, ideological and methodological goals, most notorious is recruiting individuals and attracting sympathizers, while sowing ideological and political chaos against the opposition parties that renounce their aggressive practices and armed terrorist attacks.

Using Media Outlets

One of the goals of the indirect media extremist movements is to spread their ideologies among wide sectors to communicate and instill political and organizational information and experiences, while interlinking and yoking together with similar ideologies or different groups. They take this action into one step further to make narratives available for debate, discussion, and gaining legitimacy rather than being trapped into forced exclusion.

several excommunication organizations, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, have been able to infamously use the influential and complex media tools. Consequently, globalization of terrorism, inter alia, has come into play. Terrorist groups, especially ISIS, have attached great importance to the media, and have taken advantage of the great technical progress to employ the smart online system to build their savage propaganda image. Terrorist group have become ubiquitous rife across all digital applications, smart phones, modern media, and social networks through which they launch huge media campaigns. The media, with all its manifestations and sources, has become ideologically weaponized notoriously juggled by terrorists, achieving the same destructive results as physical lethal weapons.

Terrorist groups exploited media freedoms in some Western countries, drawing on the concepts and values of pluralistic and private media to promote their agendas and political ideologies, which in turn paper over and patch up their aggressive operations. Instead of being rejected, terrorist groups, are becoming sometimes accepted, while some others they sneak into a popular welcome. They have successfully drummed up for a sense of being oppressed; it is a propaganda that makes such terrorist groups fight off counternarratives. Unwittingly, the media pays a good service to terrorist excommunication for their propaganda to be promoted.

Terrorist fundamentalist groups do not care that their operations receive extensive media coverage; rather, they seek to always use such media channels for provocative purposes and justify their malicious ideologies through messages couched in terror and panic, making others fall victims to their clutches, mesmerized and hypnotized by graphic scenes that shock naïve followers.

Al-Qaeda and ISIS owned media companies, and press platforms, (visual, audio and print publications). For instance, they have radio stations that communicate their ideologies and beliefs that support terrorism across all regions and publish details of terrorist operations to gain support and attract supporters and sympathizers. The lifelong media of terrorists aims to reach public opinion and to propagandize their ideologies. Their media provides all takfiri groups with an important means of overt communications, researching into development methods for weapons and explosives, while pooling and soliciting donations from all over the world.

Dr. Nabil Abdel-Fattah, a researcher in extremism, states in a research study, featuring AMBIGUOUS VISIONS: MEDIA AND TERRORISM that the goal of a fundamentalist political organization that practices violence and terrorism is to communicate its political, religious, ethnic or national premises to public opinion at home and abroad, which over the course of time snowballing into the associated members in detention centers or prisons, or to the political administrations of major countries.

Concept Generalization

The generalization of the concept and description of terrorism leads to the inclusion of various acts of violence, be it social, political, religious and sectarian; protests fueled by political and religious beliefs may sometimes be yoked together with the concept of terrorism. The generalization of the concept of terrorism gives the security and media agencies and politicking great resilience to include any security or political threats from

illegal groups in the blacklisted organizations practicing violence and terrorism. The generalization and ambiguity of the concept of terrorism leads to the concealment of correct and accurate scientific and knowledge-based descriptions of political and social violence groups with sectarian and religious faces, not to mention that condemning extremist ideology and violent acts leads to a pattern of verbal counter-violence.

The media discourse is shrouded in ambiguity and deficiency related to the level of knowledge of fundamentalist groups, ideologies, references, methodological and organizational developments, and poor concept of political, media and security actions with these groups. In many cases, the use of the media by takfiri groups is to achieve specific political demands, such as releasing their members from prison, obtaining a ransom, or fulfilling a group's demand, as is the case of the kidnappings of foreign tourists.

Criticism and Objection

Some Western media have criticized and objected to their indirect influence in achieving the goal of spreading terrorist and violent operations among innocent children, women and men, and some politicians, writers and clerics.

This view is supported by Mohammed Al-Sammak, senior researcher. In his **TERRORISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE**, Al-Sammak states between the media and terrorism are yoked together by a problematic correlation; each side achieves some functional, professional and political goals, while some goals are overlapping. Walter Lacker, senior historian and politician, states that a media professional is the best friend of a terrorist, which is consistent with what one of the leaders of the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda also mentioned: a terrorist organization gains half the battle through media follow-up.

According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), Europeans spend less time online; only 56% of Western Europeans use Facebook vis-à-vis 68% of Northern Europeans. 30% of Western Europeans use Instagram vis-à-vis 40% of Northern Europeans, and 10% of Western Europeans play video games vis-à-vis 18% of North Americans.

According to the UN report, between January and April of 2020, INTERPOL monitored about 907,000 spam emails, 737 incidents caused by malware programs, and 48,000 links to malicious website addresses, all related to the COVID-19 pandemic. INTERPOL collected the said data based on a survey conducted between April and May in the 194

member countries. 48 countries responded, including 42% in Europe, 19% in Asia, 17% in Africa, 12% in America, and 10% in the Middle East.

Nabil Abdel-Fattah, senior researcher, states that ISIS has employed social media and networking for its agendas empowered by highly experienced technical capabilities, providing high levels of maneuverability, banning, blocking, removing media content and creating new accounts under pseudonyms.

Threat of Violence

Given the multifaceted manifestations of violence, be it symbolic, physical, verbal and rhetorical, violence per se is an integral part of the political, religious, ideological, social and cultural fields in human societies, causing different and complex types of exclusion and segregation of social, national, linguistic, religious, sectarian, ethnic and regional groups.

Political, cultural and religious exclusion leads to a spate of frustrations, and an increased sense of injustice, grievance, hate and malice. Moreover, the psychological, social and political traumas may, at one stage, generate aggressive motives, which later produce a complex of violence, manifested in protest, insurgency or terrorism, targeting religious icons, or economic interests, ethnic, linguistic, or national groups, political leaders, writers, journalists and creators, or ordinary people who become human targets for acts of violence and terrorism to spread terror and fear.

Media Threat

Lacker confirms what Marshall McLuhan, the communication scholar, states "Without communication, there would be no terrorism". Their common vision reveals the fact that the media has a dangerous role in justifying and supporting terrorism, while giving it legitimacy through its various temptations.

In practice, we can use the analysis conducted by Michael Jeter, Professor of Economics and Finance at Yvette University in Medellin, Colombia. The research study was based on a sample of more than 60,000 terrorist attacks, between 1970 and 2012. The result reveals that terrorist attacks were on the increase. The global terrorism database recorded about 1,395 attacks in 1998. This number has doubled in recent decades, reaching close to 8,441 in 2012.

Jeter states that terrorist organizations receive wide media attention, and that terrorism is ubiquitously rampant on television, newspapers, and on radio. We also

know that terrorists need media follow-up and spread their ideologies, sow fear and recruit followers; an attack in one country increases and multiplies the number of attacks in the same country by an average of 11% to 15%. The results indicate the need to reduce the reporting of acts of terrorism. This decreases the ripple effect of attacks. Jeter further explains: We may need to rethink the media follow-up that provokes terrorism and stop providing terrorists with a free media platform. Media follow-up of other events that cause more damage in the world should not be neglected, at the expense of media blitz in discussing terrorist crimes.

In Iraq, press and media follow-up coverage have aimed to establish the sectarian image to stoke takfiri groups, while sowing seeds of population divisions on a separatist, isolationist and sectarian basis, increasing sectarian dichotomies, tensions and sensitivity.

All official and private media institutions should be aware of the threats of their media coverage of violent terrorist acts. This helps to better promote media objectives in such a manner that waters down and dilutes the goals of terrorists. Governments should pay attention to media censorship, monitor the activities of terrorist media organizations, and take measures that limit and eliminate their media activities.