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The Symbiotic Relationship Between Media And Terrorism

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Abstract

This study examines the evolving relationship between media and terrorism in the contemporary world. The global expansion of terrorism, particularly following the 9/11 attacks, has been facilitated by technological advancements and globalization, allowing terrorist organizations to extend their reach and operational capabilities. Concurrently, the development of new media, driven by communication technologies and the Internet, has transformed media into a social and cultural arena with global accessibility. The paper highlights the symbiotic relationship between media and terrorism, noting that media not only amplify the impact of terrorist acts but also enable the dissemination of ideology, recruitment, and operational coordination. The study emphasizes that this relationship is complex, dynamic, and multi-dimensional, and it cannot be analyzed in a unilateral or subjective manner. Understanding the interplay between media and terrorism is crucial for developing effective strategies to mitigate the global threat posed by contemporary terrorism.

Keywords: Terrorism, media, new media, globalization, propaganda.

Introduction

Today, terrorism is one of the most important issues facing the international community. With the events of 9/11, terrorism has taken on a global dimension. Terrorist organizations have expanded their reach and capabilities as a result of globalization and technological advancements. At the core of the concept of "new terrorism" lie technological developments. Technology has provided terrorist organizations with extensive opportunities. Additionally, developments in transportation, communication, and information technologies have allowed terrorist organizations to gain various advantages, making it easier for them to carry out their activities.

With the development of communication technologies worldwide, a new era of media has emerged. In this context, a new system has been established that people can access from anywhere in the world. At the same time, the media has become a social and cultural space. Different researchers and academics have started to define media as "old" and "new" media. Heated debates continue regarding old and new media. To clarify what constitutes old media, most academics define it as a period without digital developments and interactive television.

Since the media is an integral part of globalization, states have sought to exercise strict control over it. Global powers use media to carry out cultural attacks on other countries, aiming to impose their own culture. On the other hand, states attempt to use media to resist imperialism. Scholars have long tried to uncover the links between media, which exists in every corner of the world, and terrorism, a major global threat. However, it has become clear that demonstrating these connections convincingly is very difficult. Therefore, the relationship between media and terrorism remains a highly debated topic, and it should not be examined in a one-sided or subjective manner.

The Rise of Media Throughout History and Its True Purpose

The history of media can be traced back to the invention of the printing press in the 1450s. This technological development facilitated the dissemination of ideas on a large scale. However, the media was not only significant for the circulation of ideas but also emerged as a crucial instrument for the exchange of knowledge among societies. By the 1800s, media-related technologies coincided with the onset of industrialization. The first printing press in North America was established in 1628, primarily used for religious purposes, though it also produced cultural brochures

and books. Nevertheless, printing activities were subject to extensive restrictions. The invention and widespread adoption of the press enhanced the flow of information between individuals and societies, underscoring the importance of such exchanges. Furthermore, the printing press was intensively employed as a tool to influence people through different religions and ideologies.

As the printing press became increasingly prominent, the export of books was prohibited. Moreover, some authors were executed or severely punished by the Church. More conservative states, such as the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, banned the printing press for more than two centuries. Consequently, between the 16th and 19th centuries, Western Europe and North America struggled against restrictions imposed on political freedoms and human rights. By the 18th century, freedom of publication had emerged in England and France, and similar liberties were extended to the Austrian and Hungarian empires. However, such freedoms never materialized in Russia.

In the 19th century, the notion of "media" began to take shape with the invention of the electric telegraph, followed by the telephone, which paved new dimensions on the way toward radio. These developments were regulated through international treaties and national laws. Media control was exercised by powerful governmental bodies, as exemplified in the United States. By the 20th century, the establishment of cinema contributed to the global expansion of media. Since the 1980s, the emergence of cable and satellite technologies, along with new mass communication tools, has added new layers to communication services (McQuail, 2010) and further reinforced media as a decisive factor in shaping the world.

Media can be defined as a sphere in which people engage in social communication. Its content can be understood both as technological forms and as a cultural practice of communication. Moreover, media may also be described as a popular, ritualized space of interaction that connects different people across the same landscape (Gitelman, 2006). When examining media content, three main categories can be identified. The first is informative content, which includes news, documentaries, opinion columns, articles, talk shows, and interviews. The second is entertainment content, encompassing games, radio plays, films, television series, quiz shows, and concerts. The third category consists of advertising content, such as commercials, announcements, promotional materials, and classified ads (Ekinci, 2016). In recent years, however, additional functions have been attributed to the media. In this regard, the media is considered to perform an essential public duty by contributing to the establishment of democratic norms and policies within societies. Another

function is the obligation of the media to provide space for the expression of not only a single perspective but also of diverse opinions and cultures in the form of news coverage. A third function concerns ensuring the maximum independence of the media, which represents one of the most important responsibilities of communication institutions toward society. Finally, it is recognized that within media structures, certain standards and strict rules must also be observed (Ekinci, 2016).

According to Bassiouni, the functions of the media can be outlined as follows:

- **Informative**: to provide a flow of news to an increasing number of people,
- **Judicial**: to establish standards of decision-making that are openly accessible to the public,
- **Educational**: to define and explain social objectives and social values,
- **Interactive**: to create a free forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions,
- **Recreational**: to provide entertainment, relieve tension, and facilitate learning situations (Bassiouni, 1983).

The emergence of media as a significant global factor has primarily been driven by technological advancements. In addition to technological innovations, the development of minerals and plastics has played a decisive role in shaping media. Other crucial elements contributing to its evolution have been politics and economics. In this context, the rise of electronic media, along with the institutionalization of media, was strongly influenced by governments and political ideologies. The advent of computers and the internet further introduced numerous innovations into the media sphere. In contemporary settings, it is evident that if media fails to meet human needs or to align with cultural and social conventions (Kortti, 2017), the question of whether it truly fulfills its intended purpose becomes a matter of debate.

It is almost impossible to imagine how our world could function without the telephone, computer, television, and the internet. Over the past fifty years, technological advancements have rapidly transformed the media (Taylor, 1997). Contemporary media keeps people informed about events from every corner of the world. Yet its role extends far beyond simply delivering news. The media contributes to reflecting truth during times of war, promoting peace, supporting cultural activities, stimulating the economy and tourism, providing vital information on health, and alerting nations to threats of disease. Its foremost duty is to inform the public with accurate and truthful information, free from vested interests. At the same time, there are areas where media must refrain from involvement: it should not

dictate political directions, serve as a tool of great powers, or operate in favor of the interests of any country, region, individual, or corporation. Although the duties of the media are regulated by national laws and international agreements, in practice, media outlets are often deliberately used as instruments for the pursuit of the political agendas of powerful states.

An example supporting the idea that media can serve as a tool of great powers is East Timor. While the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda received extensive media coverage, the events in East Timor did not receive comparable attention (Taylor, 1997). The media's double standards are clearly reflected in its failure to adequately cover the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Myanmar throughout history. Similar biases are evident in reporting on terrorist attacks. For instance, when the terrorist group Al-Shabaab carried out attacks in Somalia, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people, the events were often reported only as third- or fourth-tier news stories. In contrast, comparatively smaller-scale attacks, such as the one in Manchester, are covered as major news across the globe. These double standards complicate efforts to combat terrorism and reflect biased approaches in media coverage.

Contemporary news media have played a significant role in shaping modern media and have also contributed substantially to the acceleration of globalization. This has been achieved by delivering news from every corner of the world. Through satellite communications and other advanced technologies, instantaneous connections can be established with various locations (Zhang, 2015). This has enabled the media to assume an extraordinary role on a global scale. However, developed countries have begun to exploit these information advantages for their own interests, turning news and media into instruments of propaganda. This propaganda tool is employed both within their own national borders and on the international stage.

The Debate between Old and New Media

In the 19th century, the printing press provided the greatest support for the development of modern society and culture, and it also had a revolutionary impact on the evolution of media. However, the current media revolution has produced a far deeper and more pervasive effect than previous revolutions. Similarly, the invention of photography affected only one domain—the static image. In contrast, the media revolution today encompasses all areas, including storage, distribution, communication, moving images, sound, and spatial structures (Manovich, 2001, pp. 5-6).

The media has no boundaries in terms of subject matter, providing information on everything from weather forecasts to political developments, war events, health issues, financial matters, science and education, fashion, and music. A defining feature of contemporary media is its ability to deliver the latest news or developments to people anytime and from anywhere they choose (Nasir, 2013). There are virtually no places in the world that the media cannot reach. This has significantly increased the importance and influence of the media globally.

With the advent of the internet, it is evident that new media have begun to play a significant role in our lives. To resolve debates over what constitutes old media, most scholars have defined media that lack digital developments and interactive television as "old media" (Hollingsworth & Stewart-Mole, 2003, pp. 37-39). Contemporary media is still in a stage of development, which makes it a challenging phenomenon to define and analyze.

The first and most important question in this context is: what exactly constitutes new media? Commonly discussed and widely recognized examples include the internet, digital televisions, computers, CD-ROMs and DVDs, and websites. However, debates continue regarding whether three-dimensional digital animations, advertisements, and computer-generated materials that are later printed can also be classified as new media (Manovich, 2001, pp. 5-6).

Globalization and the New Dimensions of Media

The rapid development of information and communication technologies has facilitated the spread of globalization across the world. Many scholars argue that globalization consists of extensive flows of information. In this context, the rapid dissemination of electronic information has also brought about changes in society and culture. The modern understanding of globalization remains filled with unresolved tensions and uncertainties. Some view globalization as a process, a system, or a condition, while others see it as the dismantling of geographical boundaries and the facilitation of international trade. Moreover, the rapid advancement and proliferation of information and communication technologies pose challenges to implementing social, cultural, and technological changes within society (Zajda & Gibbs, 2009).

At the political level, globalization enhances international cooperation. Technology has enabled the widespread dissemination of ideas across the globe, producing a profound cultural impact. Today, people form their opinions through television and gain direct exposure (Parekh, 2004, pp. 130-135) to different cultures, including information about cuisine, music, clothing, habits, values, and social norms.

Culturally, the media has been utilized by states, and governments around the world have sought to monitor, regulate, or employ their media in education and cultural spheres. In this context, globalization has profoundly influenced the natural relationship between states and media (Matos, 2012). As the media has become an inseparable component of globalization, states have sought to exert intensive control over it.

The emergence of media as a decisive factor in the cultural sphere, combined with the uneven cross-border dissemination of films, television, music, news, and information, has been defined by states as cultural imperialism. This form of dominance is particularly evident in the West, especially the United States, where it reflects and shapes societal attitudes and values across other societies (Jan, 2009).

The media holds a central position in globalization for three main reasons. First, media companies have globalized their own operations. Second, the global communication infrastructure allows for the rapid flow of information worldwide. Third, the media plays a guiding role in shaping how we perceive events around the world. Scholars focusing on cultural studies argue that media and globalization foster international dialogue and contribute to democratic processes. In contrast, scholars examining media and globalization from economic and political perspectives contend that media is a homogenizing process exploited by powerful actors, which, as a result, can lead to the misuse or weakening of democratic systems (Movius, 2010). Furthermore, the concept of global communication is closely linked to notions such as cultural imperialism and media imperialism. Global communication is often seen as a tool for controlling, invading, or weakening other cultures through political means. Cultural independence is threatened by media imperialism, and it can be argued that national identity faces the risk of erosion in the era of globalization (Wang, 2008).

The Relationship between Media and Terrorism

In 2006, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations, acknowledged the significant relationship between media and terrorism, stating the following:

> *"...Violent extremists and terrorists establish various connections through the media, implementing their strategies not with bullets but through communication. All forms of communication tools are used to instill fear, and these same tools are employed to plan their attacks. Terrorists are well aware that communication transcends all boundaries and can directly harm our cause. They understand that this form of communication can be far more effective*

> *than any other military method. Consequently, it is used extensively. They are able to act very quickly and carry out attacks with a minimal number of people..."*(Conway, 2007, pp. 235-236).

Rumsfeld delivered this speech in 2006, a period when the media held considerable influence. However, major social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were not yet at the forefront. This indicates that Rumsfeld's assessment did not solely refer to internet-based interactions but rather to the multidimensional connection between media and terrorism in general. Moreover, as a global power, the United States had already recognized the potential threats arising from this connection and had begun to take preventive measures.

In his speech at the "Countering Violent Extremism" summit, former U.S. President Barack Obama focused on media and terrorism. Explaining what kind of measures should be taken against violence, extremism, and terrorism, Obama stated the following:

> *" In our struggle against extremism and terrorism, we must recognize that some of our best partners are the family members of those who lost their lives in terrorist attacks. Alongside individuals who have been victimized by extremism and terrorism, society itself is also a victim. On this matter, we must be honest with ourselves. Terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS seek to target young Muslims whose minds have been manipulated. In particular, there is intense propaganda directed at young people who feel disillusioned about their own identity. This is a reality. High-quality videos, online magazines, the use of social media, and pro-terrorism Twitter accounts are all media platforms specifically designed to appeal to young people."* (The White House, 2015).

Terrorist organizations have not always had access to the internet, television, and other technologies to disseminate their ideologies, recruit militants, influence the public, and display their objectives. Throughout history, they carried out their activities by employing traditional methods of warfare. In addition to these conventional tactics, they sought to achieve their aims through practices such as hostage-taking and abductions (Lumbaca & Gray, 2011). However, informing societies about such incidents or ensuring that these reports were read often took days, sometimes even weeks. Instead of relying on telegrams to transmit the details of an attack across thousands of kilometers, today's terrorists can initiate their propaganda through the media with just a single photograph taken on even the simplest of modern mobile phones. In contemporary incidents, advanced technology, professional equipment, and rapid means of transportation enable the immediate transmission of information directly from the scene. Journalists, moreover,

go beyond this by collecting various videos capable of creating impact in multiple ways and sending them to editors located thousands of kilometers away, who can then publish them online within a very short period of time (Eugenis, 2013). The connection between media and terrorism is influenced by various factors. Among the most significant is whether a terrorist organization operates at the national or international level, as this largely determines the extent of its strength.

The primary aim of terrorist incidents is to deeply influence the public. Those directly affected by terrorism or who witness such events firsthand are the first to experience its impact. However, if terrorists intend to achieve broader objectives through an attack, the media will often amplify fear and panic among the general population. This is particularly evident when terrorists aim to influence political decisions, demand resources, or seek revenge. In such cases, the messages conveyed to the public typically aim to convince people that chaos and fear are ever-present in their lives; to draw attention to issues that the public might normally overlook; and to coerce individuals into actions they would not normally take, using the pressure and threat of terrorism as leverage (Tuman, 2003, p. 20-23). This entire process occurs within the media, which simultaneously constructs and maintains its relationships with its audiences. Media outlets engage in this practice to increase their viewership. However, news related to terrorism is often reported with the anticipation of potential future threats, including similar or even larger attacks (Hoskins et al., 2011). Information regarding terrorist incidents is initially disseminated by the media. This information plays a crucial role in shaping how the public responds to acts of terrorism.

Laqueur, on the other hand, states that "journalists are said to be the best friends of terrorists because terrorists want to give maximum publicity to their operations. Terrorists need the media, and the media finds all the elements of an exciting story within terrorism. Media coverage has consistently reinforced the terrorist agenda and has amplified the political significance of many terrorist acts far beyond their actual scale" (Laqueur, 1999, p. 44). Hoffman summarizes the media–terrorism relationship as follows: "Terrorism and the media are inherently linked in a symbiotic relationship, each feeding and exploiting the other for its own purposes. The real issue is not the relationship itself, but whether it genuinely influences public opinion and government decision-making in ways that favor or assist terrorists. The answer to this question is far more complex and uncertain than traditional wisdom suggests" (Hoffman, 2017, p. 183).

In some cases, the media engages in efforts to legitimize terrorism. By choosing either not to cover terrorism or to present it in certain ways when it is covered,

the media can become a tool in struggles over legitimization. However, some researchers argue that if the media does not report on terrorist incidents, it allows unfounded rumors to spread, and therefore, the media can play an educational role in informing the public about counterterrorism efforts (Crelinsten, 1989).

After a terrorist incident occurs, both the media and the terrorists strive to prolong public attention to the event. The longer the reporting lasts, the more it captures audience interest. The presence of terrorist lifestyles, struggles, and related narratives in the media agenda enables terrorists to achieve their objectives, such as recruiting new militants and opening channels for financial support (Perešin, 2007, pp. 7-11).

The Challenge of Defining Terrorism

The history of terrorism stretches back to the very history of humanity. The first documented terrorist attacks were carried out by the Jewish Zealots – Sicarii, who sought to initiate an uprising against Roman rule. In the heart of Jerusalem, Jewish terrorists launched attacks against the Roman administration in an attempt to incite mass uprisings among the people (Brown et al., 2010, pp. 32). What we call "modern terrorism" today is often thought to have its roots in the French Revolution. In this regard, if we look at some of the world's most renowned dictionaries—such as the Oxford English Dictionary and Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary—they trace the term back to France in the late 1700s. It is noted that during the Revolution of 1793–94, the term *terrorism* was first coined etymologically. More importantly, however, in those years, acts of terror carried a *positive* connotation and had no external connection. The French revolutionaries, believing that conspiracies were being plotted by émigrés, began taking precautionary measures, and later, under Jacobin leadership, implemented every possible step and sanction to counter perceived threats (Williamson, 2009, pp. 42-43). The birth of terrorism in its present sense can be traced back to this event. The French Revolution shares at least two fundamental aspects with modern terrorism. First, the regime of terror was not accidental but rather organized, deliberate, and systematic. Second, much like contemporary terrorism, its purpose and justification lay in the aspiration to replace a non-democratic system and deep-rooted corruption with the creation of a "new and better society (Ayhan, 2015, p. 123). Thus, terrorism has undergone significant transformations from period to period and has persisted up to the present day. The Cold War, which began after World War II, marked another turning point in the evolution of terrorism. From this period onward, terrorism came to be used as a dirty tool of politics (Kanat, 2014, p. 196).

The word terror comes from the Latin "terrere," which means "to frighten" or "to terrify" (Alkan, 2013, p. 19). Terrorism, however, is a different term from terror, as it systematically and continuously involves the use of violence or the threat of violence. Nevertheless, there is no universally accepted definition of the term. Terrorist organizations, however, are nearly as old a phenomenon as states themselves (Ceylan, 2012, p.21).

The objectives of terrorist organizations have undergone significant changes throughout history. In this context, their goals have included regime change, political change, territorial change, and social control (Kydd & Walter, 2006, pp. 96-97). However, the choice of victims is carefully calculated to achieve objectives, and there is no randomness in their selection. In this context, terrorist attacks are carried out in open and crowded places—busy streets, train stations, airports, shops, shopping malls, and embassies—in order to create fear and panic among the public and to exert pressure on governments. Individual attacks are typically aimed at state representatives, diplomats, prominent journalists, writers, academics, and scientists (Flory & Higgins, 2014, pp. 30-31). When terrorist attacks against these targets occur, the aim is to influence the entire public through the media by spreading panic and fear. This, in turn, helps terrorist organizations achieve their objectives more quickly.

Political scientists have produced numerous definitions of terrorism. In this context, Alex Schmid analyzed the term "terrorism" from a comprehensive and distinct perspective. Since the common response among scholars was that "there is no sufficient definition," Schmid examined 109 existing definitions to identify the characteristic features of terrorism. From these 109 definitions, he extracted 22 common elements. Schmid attempted to develop a definition that could be internationally acceptable, but he was ultimately unsuccessful (Williamson, 2009, pp. 45-49). It is evident how much effort has been devoted to defining terrorism and how difficult this task is.

Bruce Hoffman defines terrorism as follows: "Terrorism, in its most widely accepted contemporary usage, is fundamentally and inherently political. It is also concerned with power: the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power, and the use of power to effect political change. Terrorism, therefore, is violence—or the threat of violence—used for, or in service of, a political purpose" (Hoffman, 2006, pp. 2-3).

Media organizations attempt to define terrorism from different perspectives. For example, they do not hesitate to label foreign-based individuals or groups as "terrorists." However, when local terrorist attacks occur and killings are carried out

for political objectives, these acts are often described as "anti-government citizen movements." Another example is that attacks by the United States on civilians—whether carried out by political groups or states—are often labeled as terrorist acts, which is an accurate classification. On the other hand, when the U.S. or its allies carry out similar attacks against civilians abroad, killing thousands, these actions are framed under the term "counter-terrorism operations" (McQueeney, 2014, pp. 2). This reflects a double-standard approach, which indicates that the media can never truly be independent.

Another issue arising from the problem of defining terrorism is its multidimensional nature. This is particularly evident in three main aspects: first, the objectives, operational methods, and targets of terrorism; second, the use of the term "terrorism" in different regions and by members of different religions to justify actions according to their own political beliefs; and third, the dynamic nature of terrorism. Its methods, targets, and objectives constantly change, making it complex to define. As a result, in recent years, terrorism has been adopted as a method of struggle by independent groups waging war in the name of religion (Perliger, 2006, pp. 10-12). Another significant factor complicating the term "terrorism" is whether terrorism can be carried out by states. There is disagreement over whether it is conducted solely by non-state actors, such as national or clandestine groups, or also by state actors. Additionally, there is debate over whether terrorist attacks are directed exclusively at civilians or can also target military objectives (Williamson, 2009, pp. 45-48). Schmid identifies four reasons why defining terrorism is difficult:

- Because terrorism is a "contested concept," and political, legal, social science, and other popular interpretations continue to diverge;
- Because the definitional issue is linked to delegitimization and "criminalization";
- Because there are many types of terrorism with different forms and manifestations;
- Because over its existence of more than 200 years, the term has undergone continuous changes in meaning (Schmid, 2004, pp. 395).

Taşdemir evaluates the inability to define terrorism as follows: "There are many reasons why a single definition of terrorism has not been reached at the international level, including differences in the power capacities, political systems, ideologies, and individual interests and priorities of states. This situation makes it difficult to distinguish terrorism from other forms of political violence and also hinders the effective fight against terrorism" (Taşdemir, 2015, pp. 47-48).

Globalization and New Terrorism

In general, it is emphasized that traditional terrorism had well-defined command and control structures and a clear hierarchical organization. This is followed by a larger and active layer of terrorists who carry out attacks and are usually specialized in specific activities such as bomb-making, assassinations, or surveillance. The next level consists of active supporters who provide intelligence, weapons, equipment, communication, transportation, and safe houses. At the base are passive supporters who agree with the terrorist organization's goals, spread its ideas, and express emotional support (Spencer, 2006, p. 8-9).

Jonathan Matusitz claims that the emergence of new terrorism occurred at a certain point in the transition from old to new terrorism with the 1990 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the 1995 sarin gas attack by Aum Shinrikyo on the Tokyo subway system. He also states that new terrorism rejects all other ways of life and advocates a categorical and inflexible worldview consistent with religious belief (Matusitz, 2012, p. 11).

Post–Cold War terrorism, also referred to as "new terrorism," has become far more unpredictable, harder to combat, and less constrained compared to its predecessor. The transformation of terrorism can be attributed to two main dynamics. The first is the disruption of the power balance that existed during the Cold War. The second key dynamic underlying this transformation is globalization, which has affected terrorism in two ways: first, by widening the gap between the rich and the poor, and second, through technological advancements—one of the developments that fueled globalization—which have produced significant consequences for terrorism (Kanat, 2014). While symbolic elements persist in new terrorism, a "higher body count equals greater success" mentality has become dominant. The aim of old terrorism had been to inflict minimal harm through symbolic acts while attracting the maximum possible attention to the cause. With the end of the Cold War, that restraint disappeared, and violence shifted toward more indiscriminate acts designed to kill larger numbers of people. Until the 1990s, many terrorist organizations operated within limited regions, but the evolutionary processes driven by globalization transformed them into genuinely global threats. Concurrently, innovations associated with globalization enabled terrorist groups to extend their operations transnationally, diversify their tactics, and amplify the effects of their actions at both national and international levels. Market competition produced by globalization has also led to an increase and expansion of arms markets worldwide, facilitating the sale of more lethal,

varied, and cheaper weapons to buyers regardless of their identity, provided they can pay (Erdogan, 2013, pp. 278-279).

Terrorism evolves with changing global conditions, and with the opportunities and capabilities provided by advancing technology, its influence and power continue to grow both nationally and internationally. Over the past 20 years, terrorism has taken on a global dimension, becoming a major issue that affects the world not only politically, culturally, and psychologically, but also economically. The revolutions brought about by globalization and technology, along with developments in transportation and communication, have provided terrorists with significant opportunities, thereby creating an increased need for security (Ekinci, 2016).

The New Dimension of Terrorism: The Role of the Internet

The Internet has become a "terrorist space" that allows terrorists to conduct their activities more easily, making it the most utilized medium by terrorist organizations compared to all other media platforms. Examining the advantages offered by the Internet, it is clear that it is not used solely by political activists. Terrorist groups extensively use the Internet to communicate, organize, recruit civilians into terrorism, conduct various online trainings, and carry out propaganda (Dean, et al., 2012, p. 112).

Walter Laqueur assessed the emergence of entirely new dimensions of terrorism as follows:

> "Everything—from how to build electronic bombs to how to produce electronic terror mail—can be found on the Internet. To use computer jargon, 'anarchy toys' and anti-modem weapons have been incorporated into these hacking and code-breaking libraries. The Internet also carries far more extremist right-wing terrorist propaganda than material from any other part of the political or religious spectrum. These statements and propaganda are not illegal (at least not in the United States), and they do not represent something radically new, since similar materials have always existed in pamphlets and books. What distinguishes cyberterrorism is the ease with which a very small number of people, operating at great distance and under low personal risk, can inflict enormous damage on the technological infrastructure of a political entity" (Laqueur, 1999, p. 75).

The Internet now provides terrorist organizations with rapid communication and various extensive opportunities to influence the media and public opinion. These opportunities have been deeply exploited by terrorist organizations (Brunst, 2010). From this brief analysis, it's clear that terrorist organizations can now carry out

their activities on the Internet much more easily and with lower risk. Propaganda can be conducted by launching a website from anywhere in the world. While in the past it was much more difficult for terrorist groups to conduct their activities, the Internet has facilitated the execution of all their operations. Through media, social media, communication tools, and the Internet, terrorist organizations have succeeded in becoming a global threat.

Terrorists' Online Weapon: Social Media

One of the most powerful weapons of terrorist organizations is undoubtedly social media. Social media has emerged as one of the greatest threats used by terrorist groups and their supporters. As a freely accessible and legally underregulated platform, social media has provided numerous opportunities for terrorist organizations to carry out their activities. Through the Internet—especially via social media—terrorist groups have the capacity to run various support programs. Terrorist operations that were once difficult to execute can now be carried out far more easily on social media.

Terrorist organizations exploit all the opportunities provided by social media to recruit potential members. In addition to routinely used platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, there are many other sites employed for terrorist purposes. For example, a video depicting terrorist activities can be far more effective for young people than a written text about terrorism. There are various examples of how terrorist groups use YouTube: videos demonstrating weaponhandling drills and other types of training provide effective instruction via YouTube channels. Moreover, many such videos do not contain explicit violence and therefore do not violate YouTube's rules, so they are not removed. However, terrorist groups also benefit from posting videos that show how to place different types of bombs; these videos are viewed and shared thousands of times until they are reported to YouTube and removed (Dean, 2012, pp. 109-112).

Hoffman summarizes the relationship between online sites and terrorism as follows: "Online sites are often colorful, well-designed, and visually striking. They aim particularly at computer-savvy, media-saturated, video game–addicted generations. Most sites present the terrorist group's history, goals, objectives, and the damage inflicted by enemy states. They also typically include biographies of the group's leaders, founders, and key figures, as well as current news and stories, speeches, ideological analyses, and especially the organization's proclamations and other significant statements" (Hoffman, 2006, pp. 206-207).

In 2013, a member of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization opened a Twitter account that quickly gained approximately 5,500 followers. The same account also had close connections with the official accounts of the Al-Shabaab and Al-Nusra terrorist groups, and later began following another terrorist group based in Aleppo. This clearly demonstrates how terrorist organizations attempt to establish global connections through social media. Social media, in particular, serves as a powerful tool for spreading radical ideologies among young people. There are also various accounts on social media accessible only to certain individuals—these are pages where terrorist leaders exchange information about different terrorist activities, plans, and tactics (Osaherumwen, 2017, pp. 86-87). Supporters of a terrorist organization can provide assistance to the group from other parts of the world through social media. This problem typically arises when terrorist attacks receive widespread support. For instance, if a terrorist attack is endorsed by thousands of people from different parts of the world, it becomes extremely difficult for the authorities to bring it under control.

Conclusion

In conclusion, social media has become a crucial tool for terrorist organizations, enabling them to extend their influence beyond local borders and operate on a global scale. It provides these groups with unprecedented opportunities to communicate, organize, and propagate their ideologies efficiently, often with minimal risk. Unlike traditional media, social media allows anonymity, rapid dissemination of content, and access to a massive audience, making it a powerful platform for recruiting supporters and spreading radical beliefs.

Moreover, the global nature of social media creates significant challenges for authorities attempting to combat terrorism online. Supporters from different parts of the world can provide financial, logistical, or moral assistance, making the containment of terrorist activities increasingly difficult. The interconnectedness of terrorist groups through social media also facilitates the sharing of tactics, strategies, and propaganda, which strengthens their operational capacity and enhances their resilience against law enforcement efforts.

Finally, the widespread use of social media by terrorist organizations raises concerns about legitimacy and public perception. Media-based support can contribute to the normalization or perceived legitimacy of such groups, especially among vulnerable populations. Therefore, combating terrorism in the digital age requires not

only monitoring and controlling online platforms but also developing strategies to counter radical narratives and reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies to global audiences.

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