

## The Modern Terrorism, The Media and the Democracy

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**Abstract:** The article investigates the reasons of established relationship between modern terror and mass media. The author gives definition of the notion 'terrorism', analyses its main characteristics, explains multiplicity of its definitions. The article reasonably criticized point of view that terrorism can exist only in democratic states. The question asked by the author: Is there any connection between terrorism and freedom of speech? Is terrorism a problem only for democratic states? The author gives different interpretations of this statement and arrives at conclusion about its subjectivity and out-of-datedness.

**Key words:** Terrorism • Mass Media, Democracy • Security State • The Phenomenon of Double-standard Policies • Liberal Democratic States • Non-democratic countries

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### INTRODUCTION

At the end of 20th century world community had faced sudden increase in terroristic activity and now it becomes more serious every day and has more cruel forms. After terrorist attacks in the USA in September 11, 2001 General Assembly of UN adopted resolution # 1373 dated September 28, 2001 about cooperation in the struggle against terror which obliged all states-members of UN to suspend support, financing and giving shelter to terrorists [1].

But this resolution did not take into consideration one of the most important components of terrorism - which allows to increase effect from terrorist attacks manifold. This is mass media and their role in coverage of terrorism and the mechanisms of their interaction. On the one hand terrorists need mass media to spread their ideas, on the other hand mass media also use terrorism to broaden its audience. Both feed and use each other while implementing their own interests: terrorists - political, mass media - commercial.

Russian expert S. Rastorguev points out that the terrorism attack is not so horrible by itself, but horrible by its motivation, ideology, psychological atmosphere resulting in the society after its realization [2]. This author views terrorism as a part of informative operation in an universal way influencing audience regardless of the characteristics of the sender and receiver of the message.

Many experts characterize interaction of mass media and terrorism as relationship of the best friends. For example, J. Lukaszewski even calls them inseparable kindred souls [3]. Former prime-minister of Great Britain M. Thatcher is famous by her statement about mass media as "oxygen providers without which terrorists would not survive" [4]. In Hirschman's opinion terrorism is a strategy of the weak against the strong whose successful realization depends on mass media. [5] Ukrainian scientist G. Pocheptsov compares symbiosis of terrorism and mass media with Siamese twins equating a terrorist attack and its coverage by mass media - both viewed as military operations. [6] In his opinion terrorism rests on significant informative component and directly depends on tools of mass media which are the field for achieving by terrorists of their goals.

We see that central idea of all these points of view is as follows: public outcry from terroristic acts is a necessary component of every terrorist attack. We can fix distinct need of terrorists in information coverage of their actions.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study of any phenomenon must be started from understanding of its essential characteristics. Therefore an appropriate step will be to define the notion "terrorism" in the context of its modern interpretation by world

community. Then We are going to analyze critically belief which is popular in the west that terrorism is only possible in democratic countries because it is free access to mass media which provides terrorists with necessary public outcry.

**What is Terrorism?:** By now in scientific community there is no common, shared by most of experts opinion about interpretation of the notion terrorism. Significant barrier is accentuation by political analysts, law experts, psychologists, philosophers and other scientists of their attention on different aspects of this phenomenon.

Famous American scientist W. Laqueur explains difficulties of interpretation of terrorism by its basic components - suddenness, scandal features and extreme cruelty. In his opinion there is no comprehensive definition of terrorism and it will not appear in the nearest future, but it does not prevent from study of this phenomenon [7]. W. Laqueur proposes to accept basic definition describing terrorism as "the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted" accepted by a number of Russian and western scientists.

Some experts share Laqueur's position thinking that tries to go beyond laconic definition will suffer a defeat because of deeply intrinsic contradictory character of the object of investigation. In their turn a number of other experts criticize point of view about impossibility to elaborate single and comprehensive definition of terrorism which as they think can result in obscurantism and false conclusions [8]. They believe that Laqueur's definition has no analytical value because of its vagueness enabling free interpretation of this term and its extension to other kinds of armed struggle.

In spite of various definitions offered by different experts, we can make out single line in emphasizing key elements of the modern terrorism. A. Schmid and A. Jongman having analyzed 109 definitions of modern terrorism, pointed out to most often characteristics: 1) violence (83,5%); 2) politics (65%); fear (51%); 4) threat (51%); 5) Influence on psychological state (41,5%); 6) choice of targets and victims (37,5%); 7) planned internationally and well-organized activity (32%); 8) methods of combat, tactics, strategy [9]. In our opinion some of the mentioned components overlap - for example fear and violence and threat; or the notions from the same level - methods of combat and systematically organized activity, influence on psychological state; therefore they can be merged.

We believe that essential characteristics of modern terrorism are distinctly manifested in aims, object, way and non-legitimacy of violent actions, namely: 1) availability of political motives; 2) use of force mainly against non-armed innocent people; 3) achievement of goals by means of atmosphere of fear; 4) non-state application of violence.

**The Phenomenon of Double-standard Policies on Terrorism: Reasons and Consequences:** On political level it is also not possible to achieve concord in formulation of universal internationally legal definition of terrorism. Many experts explain inability of politicians to arrive at consensus in regard to this issue not because of technical but political reasons because absence of the common interpretation prevents from development of effective system for extradition of terrorists. On the one hand it allows them to hide in the countries which have not signed appropriate convention, on the other hand, gives opportunity to states to find excuse for non-extradition of criminals while standing for state's political interests, referring to the articles on documents with protectionist clauses and ambiguities.

Explanation of this phenomenon should also be looked for on geopolitical level. F. Tolipov pointed out that "terrorism can turn out to be geopolitical tool when war for unification of world community against terrorism faces dividing conflictogenic geopolitical competition of the states for different strategically important regions of the world" [10]. National means media as a rule acts in accordance with policies adopted by their governments.

Mass media cover mainly the most impressive terrorist attacks taking place in the countries which are important strategic objects by some reasons or play important part in world affairs and when terrorist attacks influences global economy. Examples can be found in conflicts in Africa, Laos, Cambodia - these do not attract attention of mass media and do not disturb world community while events in Persian Gulf are considered as direct threat for the whole world. As a result different interpretations of terrorism by different national governments lead to double standards policies, formation by means of mass media of images of good and bad, dangerous and useful terrorists which allow to "legitimize" their actions at the territory of some countries.

Double standards policies can be easily observed in coverage of terrorism at the territory of the Russian Federation by foreign mass media. For example, in February 3, 2005 Britain commercial "4 channel" showed interview with Sh. Basaev, in July 29 one more interview

with this terrorist was shown on American television channel ABC [11]. In both cases Sh. Basaev openly recognized his terrorist activity against Russia and promised to organize new terrorist attacks in Russia.

In response to Russian Ministry of foreign affairs' claim that such a step is viewed as information support of terrorists acting in the North Caucasus the directors of the channel dismissed this charge finding an excuse that broadcasting of interview with a terrorist does not mean justification of terrorism. But the announcer of the ABC channel, Ted Koppel, in the introduction to interview with Sh. Basaev found it appropriate to remind the audience about deportation of the Chechens in Soviet period, casualties among Chechnya population after collapse of Soviet Union and ended his comment by the following transparent phrase: "Add casualties among the members of the Basaev's family and you will not think much about the reasons of his actions" [12]. Maybe mister Koppel was unaware about the mechanism of interaction of mass media and terrorism? No! Back In 1983 he acted as a moderator discussing this problem and admitted that "without television terrorism is like hypothetic philosophic tree in a forest. No one heard how it fell that is why there are no grounds of its existence" [13].

**The Relation Between Terrorism and Democracy:** Many western experts share opinion that interaction of terrorism and mass media is possible only in open pluralist states. P. Wilkinson points out that "when they talk about terrorism they always talk about mass media". [14] In accordance with this point of view in authoritarian societies terrorism can not exist because of impossibility of coverage of it by mass media. It is freedom of speech and mass media being key element of any democratic society which provide necessary publicity for terrorists. R. Cohen-Almagor believes that that democracy is the best arena for those, who wish to realize their aims by violence [15]. But this does not mean availability of harmony between terrorism and democracy. On the contrary, their relations are similar to the zero sum game - if one wins the other automatically loses.

Limitations of freedom of speech in coverage of terrorist attacks are considered by some scientists and journalists as elimination of one of the foundations of democratic society and its main achievement. Censorship introduction corresponds to terrorists' interests, who want to prove that small group of people can destroy traditional values of the state. As a result terrorists skillfully encourage mass media's ambition to cover the events in the way as they happen, without extractions and abbreviations, using subconscious fear of journalists to lose their right to express ideas in a free way.

In our opinion, point of view that terrorism is possible only in democratic states was true up to end of 80-s - beginning of 90-s of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays in conditions of total expansion of new communication systems and formation of open information space production and spreading of messages can not be strictly controlled by any state. Mass media and terrorists will come into contact even with strict censorship and restriction of communication through Internet, mobile communication, through foreign information agencies. Events in Uzbekistan and Fergana valley in May of 2005 had shown that mass media were able to form public opinion even in conditions of prohibited access of journalists into combat area and absence of true information.

Belief that mass media and terrorism interact only in democratic states means subjective, biased, approach to this problem. In fact this suggests 3 interpretations of such thesis. The first variant: terrorism in non-democratic states exists in information vacuum. This hypothesis fully contradicts to well-known scientific opinion that without mass media participation terroristic activity becomes quite senseless. Moreover, today experts often point out to increase in information activity of terrorists, in particular, in the Middle East [16]. In some Islamic countries, for example, in Algeria and Egypt information counteraction to terrorism is a significant component of national security concept.

**Second Variant:** Terrorism in non-democratic states is not possible in principle. But in such case we won't explain availability of terrorist trouble zones in non-democratic countries in Southern Asia, the Middle East.

**Third Variant:** Acts of violence against innocent population in non-democratic countries must be considered in other terms - for example, partisan wars, national liberation movements etc. In this case we are in danger of use this hypothesis as double standards policy, as an excuse which allows to question legitimacy of violence from terrorists' side in the countries where international community finds out pseudo- or real trends to authoritarianism and imperfectness of legal system.

Also it is worth mentioning availability of censorship and restriction of speech freedom in the democratic states, especially while covering anti-terrorist operations. German scientist P. Waldman pointed out that today in the USA "all information connected with operations against terrorists is controlled by Pentagon" [17]. All messages intercepted by American and foreign mass media are the result of work by analysts from Defense Department. That is why this point of view can not be applied in a number

of cases and this is admitted by some Western experts. For example, D. Carlton emphasizes: "all states regardless of their democratic or non democratic orientation will face in future direct threat of terrorist attacks" [18].

### CONCLUSION

Modern terrorism is directed against non-armed innocent people and is based on strategy of frightening, used by non-state actors, its aim is to influence governmental bodies.

Without detailed coverage in mass media modern terrorism is senseless. Mass media helps terrorists to stage dramatic performance focusing audience's attention first of all on emotional moments of tragedy, which provoke total atmosphere of fear and personal defenselessness. Modern terrorism needs information coverage on global scale. The more public outcry from performed terrorist attacks, the more effect is produced on representatives of power structures while making final decision – in order to make them ready to meet terrorists' demands.

In 21st century terrorism has become powerful mean of political influence on separate countries through public opinion. No state including the USA can ignore point of view of international community - politicians, journalists and population. Today effectiveness of terrorist activity to a great extent depends on its expansion far beyond separate countries to obtain as much public outcry as possible.

We believe that opinion in regard to interaction of terrorism and mass media only in democratic states is outdated and biased because in such case we won't explain availability of terrorist trouble zones in non-democratic countries in Southern Asia, Middle East. On the contrary, there are many facts of speech freedom restriction in democratic countries themselves in coverage of anti-terrorist operations.

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