

BOOK REVIEW

Exchanging Terrorism Oxygen for Media Airwaves: The Age of Terroredia

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Exchanging Terrorism Oxygen for Media Airwaves: The Age of Terroredia

Mahmoud Eid (Ed.)

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Recently, Al-Baghdadi the Commander in Chief of IS (Islamic State) proclaimed the “jihad” against the luxury centers of mass-consumption, tourist resorts and places of recreation worldwide. Undoubtedly, this exhibits not only the concerns of West since its style of life was in jeopardy, but what is presented as the hallmark of its supremacy over other cultures. A second problem relates to the fact that there is a dependency of media to cover terrorist attacks. This begs some more than interesting questions. Is the media conducive to terror-tactics? Is this terror used to manipulate internally the citizens?

This book introduces a neologism, *terroredia*, which expresses the connection of terrorism and media. Not only terrorists have fluency in English to disseminate a message to audiences (even many of them are English native speakers which reveals a crisis in the modern world), but also they are cognizant with the digital technologies as websites, Facebook and other social networks. The wide range of situations lived daily respecting to media and how terrorists uses media as a weapon to administer terror, is one of the aspects concerned Mahmoud Eid, professor at University of Ottawa (CA) to edit this all-encompassing book. Formed by 8 sections (17 pungent chapters), this text explores (from diverse angles) the mutual dependency of terrorism and media. This type of coexistence not only is not new, but has been expanded its influence over peoples at time the new digital technologies were developed.

In this vein, the first section discusses terrorism within other forms of violence, which are not objectified by the needs of being public. Since its outset, terrorism seems to be intended to media exposition. To what extent terrorism and media are two sides of the same coin is examined in this interesting section. Rather, section 2 focuses on the changes of making wars and the targets of terrorists. The discourse post 9/11 rests on a tendency to demonize the “Other” while the human right violations are not denounced. This creates a paradoxical situation since media, which are originally aimed to report events to citizenship, is being manipulated to tell partial truths. The third and fourth sections are oriented to study not only the forms but the tactics of terrorism in a hyper-mediated world. Starting from the premise that fear and risk perception vary on nation and culture, depending on its linguistic affiliation, newspapers have developed diverse strategies to cover the same event. Sections 5 and 6 highlight on the radical spirit of our times, where the Other is portrayed as an agent of political instability. Is media technology an instrument to promote liberal democracy in Middle East?, or simply a disciplinary mechanism of control?. In what I consider the best chapter of the book, Samuel Winch observes:

In terms of media coverage of protest movements, we could expect ruling class interests to include maintaining the status quo, and therefore, efforts to marginalize dissent and dissenters, attempts to make them seem deviant and strange. Likewise, American Middle East foreign policy has long been criticized for the tendency to support corrupt autocratic dictators friendly to elite capitalists (particularly oil companies). (p. 222)

The main outcome of this research reveals that in one decade, photographers have faced new sensitive to the spectacle of drama. Negative emotions as anger, violence and tragedy are valorized over other cultural aspects of Arab Spring coverage. In the last section, the problem of responsibility is placed under the lens of scrutiny. Terrorism has become in a commodity which gives further legitimacy to professional politicians. The war on terror, post 9/11, attempted to confront with the needs of struggling against an invisible enemy. As a result of this, terrorism engulfed as a part of postmodern politics. The US obsession for terrorism, as well as its tactics in counter-terrorism seems to feed back an unending atmosphere of fear. The struggle against terrorism should embrace ethics as the main flagship.

As the previous snapshot given, one of the merits of this book consists in unveiling the sacralized image of media and journalism. As Mahmoud Eid puts it, we are educated to imagine terrorism is a criminal act while media are a positive phenomenon. Both sides are being helped each other, simply because the treatment of media facilitates the terrorist to achieve their goals, while the perpetration of attacks gives substantial content and debate to journalism. Understanding terrorism as a try of communicating a violent message, this project exerts a considerable criticism to free-value media. The mediatization of terrorism corresponds with a tactic further beneficial for terrorists than governments. The main thesis in Eid’s book is that terrorism and media’s swamp is explained by the co-dependency to fabricate “oxygen”. Without terror, both parties would be never benefited as now they are. In this vein, Editor writes:

Meanwhile, in order for both to survive, terrorists seek to garner public attention and the media seek to find top-stories to sell. In a sense, both parties target wide-ranging audiences (although for different purposes); hence, they interact in a highly toxic relationship that involves a process of exchange necessary for their survival. The exchanging process contributes to the survival of each party; acts of terrorism provide media stories that result in more broadcasting airwaves,

press texts, and digital data bytes, while the media coverage brings public attention to terrorists—the oxygen necessary for their existent. (p. 24)

In other terms, the question whether media plays a crucial role in disseminating the fear that terrorism engenders, *terroredia* is created by the dialectics of fear and violence. At time media covers explanations on how terrorists plan their attacks, global audiences devote considerable attention in this issue. Paradoxically, this attention paves the ways for “terror-inspiring” messages (p. 25). To my end, although an edited book, which often contains a lot of arguments, chapters and authors, is very hard to follow into one-sided argument, *Exchanging Terrorism Oxygen for Media Airwaves* keeps a coherent view of the issue. Among its strengths, Mahmoud Eid and his colleagues not only situates a neologism *Terroredia* as a key point of discussion in these type of issues, but also it represents one of the best attempts (I have read) to explain why we are obsessed with terrorism. The codependency brilliantly discussed by Eid reveals coherence with Korstanje’s argument respecting to the connection between labor organization and terrorism. In earlier works Korstanje argued that industrial revolution has expanded in Europe first but in US later because of two relevant aspects, extortion and the disciplined violence. While thousand European migrants arrived to US, Capital-owners resisted the claims of unions to confer further rights and benefits to work-force. In an atmosphere of tension, some anarchist newcomers saw the opportunity to instill their ideologies in this new world. The first anarchists not only perpetrated violent attack against politicians and police, but also were labeled as terrorists. Traced, expelled and even imprisoned by State, a wave of anarchists appealed to organize the incipient worker unions, abandoning the violent struggle. As a result of this, unionization not only brought further benefits in the reduction of working hours, leisure practices, tourism, an purchasing power enhancements, but pressed state to allow legally the right to strike. The force of production, workers, and its counter-forces, tourists were inextricably intertwined to terrorism from the outset. This concept was vital to understand how capitalism adopted ideologically the roots of anarchism while terrorism was repressed towards the contours. What beyond the borderland was “terrorist attack”, homeland was dubbed as “strike”. In the bottom, both shares similar conditions, which are explained below.

At a closer look, strikes and terrorism need from surprise factors to cause a substantial damage in the government or corporations. In this token, both manipulates the “Others” to achieve the own goals. Although the degree of violence is different, no less true is that strikes (like terrorism) keeps insensible to the Other suffering. The disciplinary mechanism of states that repressed terrorism, adopted its own ideology to be part of capitalist ethos (Korstanje & Skoll 2013; Korstanje 2015; Korstanje, Skoll & Timmermann, 2014). This explains satisfactorily why global tourists are targeted by international terrorism worldwide. Tourism seems to be terrorism by other means.

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