The Role of the Media in Fighting Terrorism

Dr: Hashim El-Siddig Mohamed
Assistant Professor
Faculty of languages
International University of Africa

Abstract

The discourse of this study is a focus on the phenomenon of terrorism which is pertinent to the innovations of this era as far as the modern technology is concerned. It's no doubt that the media has a pivotal role in influencing the public opinion for enlightment and guidance.

This is for the sake of presenting a constructive message to counteract the destructive terroristic operations. Furthermore, the media is capable of biding a strong national sense and a security consciousness for all the society individuals.

This can be accomplished by valid, reliable and well-studied programs to deal with the problem of terrorism.

The study confirms that terrorism belongs to no nation or country. It's a dangerous threat to all people and human civilization. For this reason the study digs deep in the causes of terrorism and comes forth with a number of suggested solutions.

The study calls on all countries and the United Nations Organizations to help in the war against terrorism.

The study is also a refutation of what is claimed in the Western media that terrorism springs from Moslems. That is why

the Islamic media should create programs to falsify these unfair accusations.

A number of recommendations are suggested so as to come up with a suitable cure for the problem of terrorism and pluck out its roots for the sake of a peaceful and stable world.

Introduction:

The role of the media in its confrontation against terrorism has now a priority in researches and studies. The media is now an important mediator which is exploited by the terrorist groups to promote their extremist ideologies or recruit supporters not only in a definite country but world- wide. We have witnessed the spread of these terrorist organizations to the heart of different countries in the West, like France and England. The messages of these extremist terrorists have reached them through the media.

We can state that the media has an important role. To succeed in this target the media has to perform a cognitive a well as an enlighment role.

The cognitive role is represented mainly by a thorough examination of the phenomenon of terrorism from the social science point of view. This leads to the discovery of the different aspects of terrorism and according to that a perfect policy will be adopted.

The religious address is imperative in the cultural confrontation. That's why this religious address should be brought up to date. Creating a critical thinking is an enlightment role which can be considered as an essential start.

Political, economical, social and cultural factors which breed terrorism are not to be ignored.

What is media ?

The word media comes from the Latin plural of medium. The traditional view is that it should therefore be treated as a plural noun in all its senses in English and be used with a plural rather than a singular verb. These senses are represented by the means or channels through which news, entertainment, education , data or promotional channels are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, TV, billboards, direct mail, telephone, tax and internet.

Terrorism:

The topic of terrorism has so far held a large domain and has been of great interest to the scholars of the international and criminal law. The phenomenon of terrorism is a tremendous thrill on the society as it leads to the loss of security, the destruction of property, the desecration of families, the defiling of sanctified places and killing and kidnapping of civilians. That's why the concept of terrorism requires a study from its different aspects.

1- Charles Ruby devoted a whole chapter in his book" The Definition of Terrorism" to define terrorism. Furthermore, many states have held a number of conferences to define the concept, the factors and causes of terrorism.

2- Mohamed Badawi in his book "Obstacles and Challenges" mentioned some characteristics of the terroristic crimes to distinguish them from other crimes.

According to Badawi, these terroristic crimes are:

a- Illegal violence

b- This illegal violence creates terror and fear.

c- This violence is systematic and continuous.

The defining factors for a terrorist crime are according to the following:

1- Illegal violence.

2- Systemized and arranged.

3- The violence leads to terror and fear.

4- The target of a terroristic action is the accomplishment of a political, religious or racist goal and can be executed by the individuals, the establishments or the states.

In the Islamic history there was a spread of a systemized violence which led to assassination crimes. The assassination of khalif Omer Ibn Al-Khatab, Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, Al-Hassan Ibn Ali was carried out b a terrorist group (AL-Khawarij) which was well- arranged with political aims.

The massacres which succeeded the French Revolution led to the death of 40.000 human beings, the Zionist terrorist gangs in Palestine , the massacres of the thousands of Moslems in Kosovo and Bosnia by the Serbs can be considered terrorism in its current meaning.

3- According to Crenshaw it is noteworthy to mention that one should be careful to distinguish between terrorists and

freedom fighters. Colonizing countries should not be allowed to deal with terrorists and freedom fighters on the same level. Fighting terrorism is never an excuse for them to eradicate the liberty movements. During the Second World War there were many movements against the Nazist invation especially in France.

The Nazists considered these freedom fighters as terrorists and anyone who was caught was sentenced to death.

In the year 1970 the United Nations issued decree No.2672 which denounced the denial for the liberation movement for self-determination, especially South Africa and Palestine. The decree also confirmed the right of these freedom fighters to be treated as captive according to Geneva agreement which was issued in 1949.

4- Jason Frank in his book "Understanding the Enemy" made a clear distinction between piracy and terrorism. To him piracy targets ships and aero planes in no recognized boundaries, on the other hand terrorism has political aims- in eradicating the materialistic and moral ability for a certain group or nation unlike piracy which is directed by a personal interest.

There are a number of internal and external factors which leads to the spread of terrorism.

Some of the internal factors are bred by the main problems which are discharged by the society .

Many researchers agree on what is to be mentioned as the main problems.

1: Retardation:

This creates a gap between the rich and the poor, the educated and uneducated, those who have economical status and those who are marginalized.

2: unemployment:

It creates a feeling of impotence among the youth and a feeling of depression as they have nothing to change or preserve t continues living.
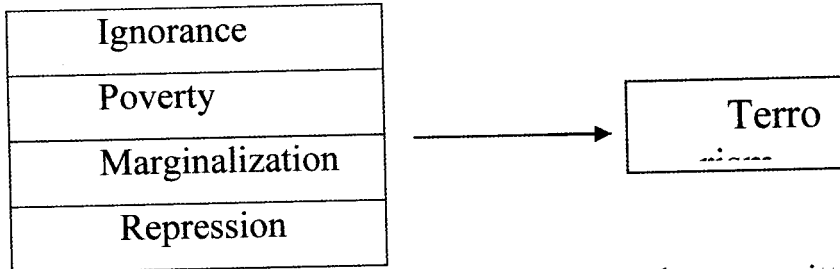
3: Unfair distribution of wealth: this creates a defect in the social justice and hence the youth become an easy target for the extremist trends whether they are religious or political .

4: Maladministration:

Those who hold the key posts in the government serve their own interests ignoring completely the others. Through bribes, expired goods find their way to the market. This creates among the youth and the deprived a violent aggressive behavior which will definitely explode or end into a disciplined activity against the establishment and the states.

This is discussed by Martha Crenshaw in her book "Explaining Terrorism." To summarize this, a table can be drawn.

Ignorance
Poverty
Marginalization
Repression

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In 1972 the United Nations formed a committee to study the phenomenon of terrorism. It recognized a number of reasons:

1- Unfair and unjust international economy which lead to the hostility among nations.

2- Foreign exploitation of the national resources.

3- Political and economical exploitation.

4- Poverty, starvation , lack of hope and depression.

5- The domination of some countries over the international economy.

To conclude we must say that the human being is the one who has the power and the will to unpluck the roots of terrorism to rise up again as a creative and constructive being to react positively to the different burdens of life.

The role of the media :

There is no doubt in the essential role which the media plays in the contemporary societies.

6- Brighitte Nacos in her book "The Central role of the Media" states that this role is rising and is unlimited in such a condition, humanity has never witnessed across its history.

The media is now the main source in shaping a collective awareness for all people. Realizing the importance of the media in its educational message is a corner stone in the general strategy of all countries especially in the times of wars and crises. That is why many countries spend millions of dollars for media promotion. The media is no more a transporter of the news, but plays a role in guiding and enlighting the public opinion due to the development in technology. It is a must to utilize the media to the maximum level through its different technicalities so as to present a constructive message to stand against terrorism. We can state that the role of the media can be fruitful and influential, when the programs are well studied, in dealing with terrorism In addition to that joint co-operation and coordination between experts in the field of the media should be sought. These experts can work together in planning programs to face the problem of terrorism. Further more, specialized training for those working in the media has to be included. New philosophy in creating programs is not to be ignored. Drama can address a lot of people. It can be added to these programs in explaining the dangers of

terrorism to the civilized human world. The religious role is of the utmost importance and some programs can be based on religion to show the importance of peace and the fact that all religions abhor violence.

All people and security people should be oriented in the field of the media and modern technology as terrorists tend to use them for spreading their evil message.

The terrorists resort to use the media to market their evil philosophy.

They tend to use the media especially the internet to make propaganda of the evil operations they execute. In addition to that, the terrorists utilize these communication channels to pervert the security forces and to gain the support of the public opinion when they advertise their operations.

The media campaigns which cover these evil operations help the terrorist to consummate their goals as it is a standard measure for their success. That is why the terrorists work hard in searching for propaganda through the means of the media to lay light on their existence and aims. They even refrain from carrying out any terroristic operation when they realize that it is not accompanied by the media coverage.

T0 counteract the vicious activities of the terrorists, religious programs have to be included in the media to explain

the fact that all religions call for peace and cooperation between nations.

Some channels to gain financial support promotes the operations of the terrorists. It's very important to deprive the terrorists from getting access to the media. They should never be interviewed nor get the chance to address the public. This is because some people may be influenced by these interviews and hence start to think of joining the terrorists groups.

Lack of specialized personnel in the media and the absence of a cognitive background may have a negative effect when dealing with the phenomenon of terrorism.

The media coverage and analysis of the 11th September attacks in the United States of America has been unfair and unjust in trying to convince people that Islam is behind all that and that the values of Islam as a religion support terrorism. Even the war in Iraq and Afghanistan was thus justified by the Western media as mentioned by Jason Frank in his book" Understanding the Enemy".

6- According to J.D.Brown the media can cheat people when it cleverly dominates their thinking and ideas. It's every important not to concentrate only on the terrorists operations but to study fully the political, social,

economical and religious causes of the phenomenon of terrorism.

The Islamic media can adopt a policy to uncover the so many falsehoods that characterize the Western media.

Islamic Media:

The Islamic media is requested to adopt a strategy which is credible and just to face the falsehoods of the Western media which tries to connect terrorism with Islam.

The Islamic media has to design moderate cultural programs for the sake of immunizing the youth against terrorism and to show that Islam is innocent of these extremist trends. These cultural programs can cite many verses from Holly Quran which indicate the fact that Islam is a religion of tolerance, love and peace. In addition to that the whole life of the prophet- peace be upon him- can be shown to confirm this.

The Islamic media should address the human world to the fact that these extremist groups have no connection with Islam. 7- The third Islamic conference held in 1978 elaborated on this and sent messages world wide to show that Islam is a religion of peace and love.

There should be a modern look according to scientist studies to contribute to the condemning of violent activities which claim that its stand springs from Islam.

(12)

As the youth are the backbone of the nation who are liable to be easily influenced by these extremist trends, the Islamic media can make use of the following to address them:

1- The mosques.

2- The religious newspapers.

3- The weekly specialized Islamic magazines.

4- Books.

5- Religious programs in the radio

6- Religious programs on T.V

7- The Holly Quran radio stations.

8- Media programs which convey the culture and history of Islam.

9- Films like the famous film" the Message" and documentary films.

There is wide spread of Islam in the West especially the United States of America and England. The Islamic media when credible will never allow this fact to withdraw and those opportunistic politicians who try to equate Islam with terrorism will be silenced and defeated.

Furthermore, the Islamic media has to send messages to all Muslims all over the world demanding them to play a positive role in the war against terrorism as this is not confined to the governments only. These extremist trends try to hide behind the

shade of Islam in spite of the fact that all the teachings of Islam are against violence. The messenger of God is sent as a mercy and a blessing to all people irrespective of their color or race.

The Islamic media should rise from its long sleep to correct the wrong view about Islam as the world now is showing great interest in Islam and its values. This can be done in using different languages in many programs.

By doing this terrorism will definitely be doomed to fail and the fair will never be fowl.

Recommendations:

1- The media is encouraged to uncover terroristic crimes to show their destructive influences without misleading or counterfeiting reality.

2- Preventive programs should be designed to deter people from joining these evil groups.

3- Cultural programs that promote forgiveness and the right of discrepancy in religions and sects as a means of creating communities that deny religious violence.

4- The media has to draw experts in the different fields to make studies for the phenomenon of terrorism. These studies can equip the international and regional resolution enters with information and thoughts.

5- The media should backup the United Nations strategy in dealing with terrorism.

6- The media has to call on other countries for more co-operation in fighting violence.

7- The media has to pay especial attention to the emigrants and refugees as they are sometimes subject to discrimination which may lead them to join the terrorists.

8- The media has to uncover the criminal nets through which the terrorists find logistic and materialistic support.

9- The media has to spread human rights culture in accordance with international standards.

10- The media has to call the international community for an international day to immortalize the victims of terrorists

11- The media has to play a strong role to strengthen the efforts for national reformation for the sake of political participation.

Conclusion:

We don't need to repeat again and again that terrorism does not have a specific land. It's a threat to the world and humanity because the world now is a global village. To quote D.H. Lawerence" We have got live, no matter how the skies have fallen"

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