# Mass Media and Terrorism

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## SUMMARY

*The new paradigm of terrorism is partly a consequence of a sudden develop-ment of information technology, which is particularly manifested in the fact that terrorist organisations have recognized the importance mass media has on the accomplishment of their aims. Between media and terrorism there exists a very interactive (symbiotic) relationship, because media industry trends and patterns for media contents production head towards preference of sensation–seeking contents, whereas terrorist organisations can, due to their actions, en-sure themselves maximum presence in the media. In so doing, terrorist organi-zations are constantly trying to manipulate and exploit free media for their own purpose. We might say that it is the mass media itself that provide global reach to terrorism, it influences the way the public perceives terrorism and dangers that arise from it, it influences political decisions used to respond to terrorism, but also the relations formed through national and international politics.*
*However, media does not have to become an instrument of terrorism. Through a thoughtful approach media can, in western liberal countries, turn into a kind of weapon which can then be used as an important device in defeating terror-ists, and the positive benefits certainly exceed unfavourable consequences caused by possible irresponsible actions by a part of journalists or media companies.*

Key words: mass media, terrorism, counterterrorist strategies

## Introduction

The information revolution which reached its peak in the second half of the 20th century exerts influence on all spheres of global society and prompts their transformation. One of the consequences of society thus transformed is its open-

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ness as well as ever faster and greater availability of information. Still there is another phenomenon that coexists with the above mentioned one – a phenomenon transforming today's society – terrorism. In all its contemporary attributes terrorism has a double potential: firstly, it represents a global threat; secondly, it influences the transformation of contemporary societies. Only after the information revolution has spurred the development of society in the direction of openness and new communication possibilities could this form of new or mega terrorism have come into existence.

Debates on the role played by the mass media that with the coming of the information revolution also gained in momentum and reached the peak of their development should also be included in contemporary terrorism research. Terrorists, namely, seek first and foremost to manipulate and exploit the media for their own purposes by sending messages of violence and thus gaining mass publicity. On the other hand, national countries by all means also have to include both national and international media into their counterterrorist strategy. Since all those are democratic countries with free media, it is not likely to expect that the media shall react upon a direct inquiry and request of the country in accordance with the expectations of the national safety apparatus.

The purpose of this study is to determine how could a contemporary society respond on terrorism and to determine how it could, in doing so, benefit from the effects resulting from IT revolution. Namely, societies react on terrorism in different ways, and it is of great importance to investigate how democratic societies respond to terrorism, especially if we know that all of them point out that the greatest peril to the societies is terrorism itself. In doing so, special attention should be given to the role of the media, as the major channel for transmission and dissemination of information, that have come to represent one of the essential levers of both terrorist and antiterrorist organisations in contemporary society.

Thus, we think that the existing scientific and expert contribution in research on terrorism should be additionally reimbursed, and special attention should be paid to studying correlation between mass media and the new paradigm of terrorism. In doing so, it is greatly important to achieve a balance between country interest in the segment of national safety and citizen rights for freedom of speech and data access.

The article in the first section considers the symbiotic relationship between media and terrorism, the second section takes a look at the role that mass media have in counterterrorist strategies, and the third section presents main political options in a democratic society in terms of media reactions on terrorism.

## Mass media and terrorism

The majority of experts justly call the contemporary terrorism mass media oriented terrorism. Namely, by analysing terrorist activities one may notice that in the majority of cases they are carried out precisely in order to draw the attention of the international media. It could be said that terrorist acts aim at causing heavy

casualties, but also at raising fear with the public which, thanks to the media, participates" collaterally in every terrorist attack.

The modern technologies have made it possible for small terror groups to use the mass media as a powerful gun, in such a way the mass media serves in the interests of terrorists, against its own will. But, opinions on the real relationship between media and terrorism vary greatly.

Modern media technology and communications satellites have had a marked effect in increasing the publicity potential of terrorism, giving them – the oxygen of publicity".[1]

It is the aim of terrorists to appear in the most popular programmes in order to gain mass publicity, but also legitimacy such media attention creates in the eyes of their followers and fans. That is the reason why – *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* – is of such importance. It was published in 1969 and is written by Carlos Marighella, a Brazilian terrorist and one of the most influential "theorists" of modern terror, and has become the handbook for numerous terrorist movements all over the world. It discusses different ways of taking advantage of the mass media for terrorist purposes. He states that: "to inform about the revolutionists' actions is enough for the modern mass media to become an important tool of propaganda and that the psychological war is a technique of fight, based on direct or indirect usage of the mass media"(Cepulskaite, 2000).

Terrorism, therefore, for Hoffman (2003:118), may be seen as a violent act that is conceived specifically to attract attention and then, through the publicity it generates, to communicate a message. As a one of leaders of the United Red Army once realistically explained: "violent actions… are shocking. We want to shock people, everywhere… It is our way of communicating with the people (Hoffman, 2003:118). Mass media, as the principal conduit of information about such acts, thus play a vital part in the terrorists' calculus. It is obvious that only by spreading the terror and outrage to a much larger audience can the terrorists gain the maximum potential of their actions and intentions they need to effect fundamental political change.

On the other hand, informing about terrorism, especially kidnappings and hostage crisis, is for mass media a source of news that, due to the fact that these news are dramatic, updated and raise great public attention, could significantly raise reader and viewer ratings, and thus media companies' profit as well. Mass media will always do so in case of terrorist attacks because of a great public attention for such an event. Wilkinson (2002) points out that every percentage of rating increase raises the annual profit by tens of millions of pounds. At the same time, in his opinion, chief editors are not even aware of the political implications caused by their relentless struggle to increase ratings, i.e. profit.

Determining influences mass media have on terrorism is a very complex issue. Ieva Cepulkauskaite considered two hypothesis, one of which advocates "the powerful mass media paradigm" which is trying to prove great effects of the mass media, and the other "the weak mass media paradigm", stating that the mass media effects are minimal. She came to the conclusion that the influence of mass media grows in cases when they are the only source of information and when there are no other opinions on certain event. Taking into consideration that information on ter-

rorism are mostly transmitted through mass media and that the public does not have a preconception on a certain event, Cepulkauskaite (2000) considers that the hypothesis according to which mass media shall play the crucial role in forming public opinion on terrorism and their actions is a logical conclusion.

Some authors have even tried to develop a theory according to which the development of mass media had a primary influence on expansion of terrorism. Wilkinson, Hoffman and others strongly opposed to these attempts in their works, and they point out that terrorist organizations, throughout history, have tried to spread the word on their actions in many different ways, first through retelling, and later due to technological development, through different ways as well.[2] Both authors give the theory on symbiotic relationship between terrorism and mass media which occurs during terrorist actions.

The French sociologist Michel Wieviorka (1993:43) attempts to dismiss the claim that terrorism and the media are in a symbiotic relationship, offering his theory according to which there are four modes between the terrorists and the media:

1. *Pure indifference* – when the terrorists neither seek to frighten a given population group beyond their intended victims nor to realise a propaganda through their acts
2. *Relative indifference* – in which perpetrators are indifferent on news about terrorist's violence
3. *The media-oriented strategy* – terrorists uses mass media as an instrument for spread messages of threats
4. *Total break* – relationship where the terrorists come to view the media organisations, editors and journalists as enemies to be punished and destroyed.

Wilkinson rejects Wieviorkina's modes and in defending his thesis on the symbiotic relationship between terrorism and media states that terrorism is in itself a psychological weapon which depends on transmitting the threat to the public and that is the essence of their symbiosis, according to him. Wilkinson finds the evidence on the nature of relationship between terrorism and media in the following facts:

1. terrorists feed on publicity;
2. Media freedom in an open society enables their manipulation and exploitation.

Political science professor Abraham Miller talks about the symbiotic relationship between terrorism and media, from which neither of the two can step out. He noted: "terrorism is capable of writing any drama – no matter how horrible – to compel the media's attention … Terrorism, like an ill-mannered *enfant terrible*, is the media's stepchild, a stepchild which the media, unfortunately, can neither completely ignore nor deny" (Tuman, 2003:115).

The revolution in mass communication offers abundant new opportunities to communicate on a vaster scale than ever before and the development of technological inventions significantly changed the way news are communicated, making them accessible to a great number of people. Terrorists take advantage of that successfully and recklessly. So, Hoffman (2003:122) also uses the term symbiosis between media and terrorism and he mentions three great revolutions in mass communications which had a direct influence on terrorism.

First such revolution happened in the 19th century and was caused by the invention of the printing machine which enabled printing papers in great number. Hoffman sees the symbiotic relationship between terrorism and the media during this era by in the example of Narodnaya Volye and their anarchist contemporaries who used the papers to communicate their messages to a wide audience. The second great revolution in mass communication occurred in 1968. That year marked not only the birth of international terrorism but also the launching the first television satellite by the United States which accelerated news broadcasting, and terrorists immediately started to use it to achieve their goals.[3] A third revolution in the communication of news appeared in the end of the 20th century, and compared to the previous two, has been less dependent upon new major technological breakthrough, but used the existing ones to change the style of news presentation. Hoffman names this the "CNN syndrome" which has revolutionized news broadcasting through the emergence of dedicated round-the-clock, "all the news all the time", which was the reason why American media were proclaimed "the best intelligence agency".[4]

Besides classic terrorist threats, the influence of contemporary media has initiated the so called *propaganda war*, and terrorist organisations attach great importance to it. Propaganda war can be a very powerful psychological weapon and can greatly increase the effect of certain actions. Terrorists, on the one hand, need media propaganda in order to demonstrate „absolute justness of their goals", but at the same time they are aware of how much damage negative publicity might cause to their goals. The meaning of terrorist propaganda, i.e. the four main objectives in using mass media are:

1. to convey the propaganda of the deed and to create extreme fear among their target group;
2. to mobilise wider support for their cause among the general population, and international opinion by emphasising such themes as righteousness of their cause and the inevitability of their victory;
3. to frustrate and disrupt the response of the government and security forces;
4. to mobilise, incite and boost their constituency of actual and potential supporters and in so doing to increase recruitment, raise more funds and inspire further attacks (Wilkinson, 2002:192).

Free media are a symbol and basic value of a democratic society. But, due to competition in open society and ever-present rivalry in who will be the first one to deliver a significant news, media sometimes consciously react on terrorist propaganda. Wilkinson (2002:190), however, notices that it would be wrong to conclude that terrorists control mass media; they barely try to manipulate and exploit them for their own purpose.

Hoffman (2003:120-121) for that reason, names terrorism "a perverted form of show business", and ways in which some media companies inform about terrorist actions "a capitulation of American TV networks before terrorists' opinions". Media professionals and the public thus have to constantly be on the watch before terrorist manipulation attempts.

There are a lot of examples in which the efforts of safety forces were directly endangered by the behaviour of part of the media. In an open society with free

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media it is possible to have corrupted and interrupted counterterrorist operations due to irresponsible media behaviour. TV crews appearing too close to the hostage area, which might complicate rescue team action, or releasing too many information about the terrorists in the media, which later could endanger and obstruct court trials against them.

Giving great publicity to terrorist actions, kidnappings in the first place, greatly increases the public pressure on government representatives to give in to terrorists' requests. The respond American TV networks had on the crises related to kidnapping of American hostages who were taken to Beirut in 1985, is without a shadow of a doubt one of the best examples of terrorism capability to draw attention, and to exploit and manipulate media.[5] Alex P. Schmid (1989:555) concluded in an analysis of this case that the overwhelming media exposure of their worried families proved useful to the terrorists. Although the result was successful both for the hostages and for the terrorists, it has by all means undermined the politics of the American government which stated that there are "no haggling and concessions" and for sure enlarged the chances for similar actions.

In professional literature the Teheran crisis is often pointed out as an example of making it difficult to the government to make a decision on proper action in a certain situation and complicating rescue action. Senator Tom Lantos commented on the consequences of media interference in that case with the following words: "focusing on individual tragedies, interviewing the families of people in anguish, completely debilitates national policymakers from making rational decisions in the national interest".[6] This example clearly shows that the media not only inform on the events, but sometimes go much further than that, and by pressuring the government become actively involved in defining country politics. Experts agree that the most fatal effect of this crisis was the *confirmation of terrorism as a tactic*.

There were cases when journalists even took on a role and responsibility of negotiating with terrorists, as CBS White House correspondent Lesley Stahl once explained: "We are an instrument for the hostages … We force the Administration to put their lives above policy" (Hoffman, 2003:120).

As much as it is important for the media to be the first to release an information, it is of same importance to collect as much detail as possible and, if there is great media interest for that information, keep it alive as long as possible. That is another example in which media and terrorists have the same interests: after a story has been created, both media and terrorists are equally interested in having it last as long as possible. Also, the greater the drama of some event, the longer the reporting about it will hold the audience attention, which is also in the interest of both media and terrorists.

Directness, exclusivity and drama (the more dangerous the better) become main means of attracting viewers and ensuring revenue from TV commercials. Hoffman is of opinion that the result of that is a trivialization of television news that concentrate more on people stories related to some dramatic event, rather than presenting its essence. Absurdities and bursts of emotion, he thinks, humiliate TV news. So it is not rarely the case that inadequate attention is paid to more significant things, for example historical background, political context or wider issues which might clarify terrorists' motives. This is a situation that is suitable for ma-

nipulation of the media, and Hoffman uses a funny remark made by one terrorist: "Don't shoot, Abdul! We're not on prime time!" (Hoffman, 2003:127). This remark, he thinks, is closer to reality than to exaggeration. There are other examples that prove this: "A hostile crowd in front of the American Embassy in Teheran suddenly picked up when a Canadian TV crew appeared and started shooting. As soon as cameras were on, the demonstrators began shouting "Death to Carter", raised their fists, looked angry and burned American flags. After two minutes, the cameraman signalled the end of the take. Then the same scene was done once more for the French-speaking Canadians, with the crowd shouting "Mort á Carter" (Hoffman, 2003:127).

Clearly, terrorism and the media are bound together in a specific way and complement each other. The real issue, however, is not so much the relationship itself, as whether it actually affects public opinion and government decision-making in a manner that assists terrorists. Hoffman heads a group of authors who think that the answer to this question is not at all simple. There are opinions, mainly shared by politicians and state officials, scientists and media critics, that media favours the terrorist goals as their "publicity oxygen" or "amplifier of media campaign for publicity" and one might conclude that depriving them publicity could diminish their influence and frequency of their actions significantly. Hoffmann, on the other hand, warns that one should not ignore the fact that media coverage of terrorist actions is almost always presented in a negative context, and this was supported by Laqueur (1987:128) who noted that, although at some times it may be benevolent, media coverage of terrorism has not resulted in a more favourable public opinion, neither on terrorists nor on their struggle.

Laqueur and Hoffman base their claim on conclusions from a study carried out end 1980s by the American corporation RAND with the objective to empirically identify public perceptions of both terrorism and terrorists and analyse how public opinion is affected by terrorist acts. The study was conducted after a prolonged period of heightened international terrorist activity, mostly against American targets, and resulted in a conclusion that, despite a constant five-year long media attention "public commitment to terrorists is non existent" (Laqueur, 1987:128-129).

However, the study revealed that even if the public had little attachment to the terrorist and their financiers, a certain fascination with terrorists, their way of life, their struggle etc. is notable in one part of the public. That opens up possibilities for terrorists to fulfil their goals – recruiting new members and opening new channels for financial support.

Other researchers have also come to same conclusions. For example Paul S. Nelson and John L. Scott (1992:329-339) and professor Gabriel Weimann from Haifa University, Israel, who explored the influence information about one terrorist act released by newspapers and TV had on public. The results show that the judgement of the act itself remained negative, but it also acquired certain positive attributes, primarily concerning the changing image of terrorists. Cepulkauskaite (2000) finds in the results of that research several aspects in which the public notion of terrorism is "improved":

1. Rationalisation of terrorism. Before presenting the news about a terror act, the media has to explain the reasons of the aggression directed against innocent

people. In order to find the motives and show political or social context, media often "rationalises" terrorism. If terrorists have politically, socially or culturally grounded motives, the reasons presented and elucidated by the media may arouse sympathy for or identification with the terrorists.

2. Labelling of terrorism. Terrorists are given different names in the media; sometimes they are called "killers" and sometimes referred to as "fighters for independence." Some of the labels are connected with positive values and this might have a positive effect on the public attitude and opinion.

3. Terrorists as solitary fighters. The presentation of a terror act often stresses the disproportion in fighting forces. A small terror group usually confronts various groups of soldiers, anti-terror divisions, and police. The fact that terrorists are ready to sacrifice their lives often has a positive effect on their image.

4. "Stockholm syndrome". It is not surprising that victims of terror acts often tend to identify themselves with the terrorists and their motives and even offer their help. The phenomenon can be partly explained by the fact that the victim unexpectedly sees "humanity" in the terrorists. The media could present this unexpected behaviour (release of a pregnant woman, helping older hostages, calming down a crying child) in an affirmative context to the audience.

The character of the relationship between media and terrorism has been studied by other authors as well. And while Miller (1982:1) describes a relationship between news media and terrorism, Tuman (2003:116) suggests that the same can be said about the relationship of all mass media with terrorism including popular entertainment media. That connection, suggests Tuman, at the same time shows how terrorist manipulate news media to ensure promotion, publication and distribution of their rhetoric to a global audience. The nature of this symbiosis depends in no small measure upon whether it is a governmental or nongovernmental terrorism. The majority of research which discuss the relationship between media and terrorism present a model of nongovernmental terrorism. But even countries which conduct terror might also have a symbiotic relationship with mass media whereby the state may strictly control the media[7] or operate a propaganda with a basically free mass media.

Fascination and public interest for terrorists has been recognized by the media, so naturally a question comes up: why rapists, murderers and other criminals are not entitled to media space to justify their criminal acts, or to utter new public threats of violence, just like the terrorists. Hoffman finds the answer to this question in the fact that terrorism, as opposed to other types of crime, mainly because of its drama, is "real news".[8]

According to Hoffman, intensive media coverage of terrorism will but only slightly change the negative public opinion on terrorists, and it will influence the wider society negatively and in other ways. Firstly, on expanding personal perception about the dangers of terrorism on an individual, which will result in reduction of travels and tourism turnover, and secondly, in an increasing pressure imposed to the governments by the media in crisis situations caused by terrorist threats – all characteristics of the so called CNN syndrome.[9]

Therefore Hoffman concludes that the context and the contents of the news have been essentially altered. That news sometimes has a wrong influence both on

public opinion and on political decisions making. "It is this manner, in this era of mass communication media, that the terrorists get a chance for such a manipulation and influence they have never so far had" (Hoffman, 2003:137).

## Mass media and counterterrorist strategies

Terrorists are completely capable of applying new methods for conducting a war, adapted to the media era, as opposed to the majority of democratic countries which are, according to the American Secretary of Defence Donald H. Rumsfeld (2006), not prepared. By taking into account the fact that violent extremists have their own media relations experts who are trained in manipulating the opinion of the elite, it is apparent that at the present moment their activities are directed towards the planning and carrying out of attacks by all forms of communication. They are aware of the fact that communication eliminates borders and that a single press release can cause as much havoc as a military attack and they also have the possibility to act quickly with few people and modest means as opposed to the huge, expensive and bureaucratised democratic institutions.

Irresponsible media behaviour can be neutralised if one sees to it that an expert link with the media and planned news broadcasting become an indispensable part of security and intelligence services' response to every terrorist campaign as well as of the process of planning and crisis management. In a democratic society a good and efficient public intelligence policy which would limit as much as possible the enormous clout that the mass media wield is an element of vital importance for a successful strategy of combating terrorism.

A key blow to the terrorist strategy may be delivered by the power of the media and political leadership to mobilize the democratic public opinion and to fortify society's resistance as well as to provoke harsher and more efficient countermeasures that would foil terrorist efforts precisely because the objective of these efforts is to crush their opponent's willpower by fear mongering.

There exists a series of other important means by which responsible media in a democratic society can thwart terrorists' aims and objectives. By broadcasting in an objective manner the cruelty of terrorist violence and the killings of the innocent the media can contribute significantly to the destruction of the myth on fighters for justice and freedom as terrorists usually describe themselves.

What else can the media do in a positive way to aid in the struggle against terrorism. Wilkinson (2002:195) notes some practical forms of help:
- responsible and accurate reporting on incidents may increase vigilance among the public (e.g., with respect to unusual parcels, suspicious persons and behaviours);
- the media may transmit warnings issued by the police to the public as well as instructions on how to behave in dangerous situations;
- the media with international reach may offer valuable data on foreign movements, relations between various persons and terrorists and different terrorist organisations, new types of weapons and possible future threats, such as the

planning of an international terrorist spectacle or signs warning of a novel threat;

- the media also constitute an absolutely indispensable forum for quality discussions on terrorism's social and political implications as well as for the development of appropriate procedures and countermeasures;
- the media will remind authorities that the response to terrorism should comply with the rule of law, basic rights and requirements for social justice.

Wilkinson sums that contributions by the media to the war against terrorism are so valuable that they outweigh the disadvantages and risks and the undoubted damage caused by a small minority of irresponsible journalists and broadcasters. Thereby he notices that the positive work of the media has been either gravely underestimated or ignored.

The media need not become an instrument of terrorism. By adopting a well thought-out approach the media in Western liberal states may become a weapon which could be used as an important means for defeating terrorists.

When speaking at he First World Congress of News Agencies *"Information: Challenge XXI"* held in Moscow in September 2004, Russian President Vladimir Putin pointed out: "We should never forget that the terrorists are cynically using the possibilities offered by the media and democracy to increase many-fold the psychological and information pressure on the public during hostage crises and other acts of terror to destroy the freedom of the press and democratic institutions" (Yakovenko, 2005).

According to what the president of Russia said at the World Congress of News Agencies: "anti-terrorist struggle should not be used to infringe on the freedom and independence of the press. It is for the information community itself to create a model in which the media could be used as an efficient anti-terrorist instrument that would rule out any, even involuntary, cooperation with the terrorists. Information obtained at the scene of action should not hurt the victims of terror" (Yakovenko, 2005).

Journalist communities should create special recommendations related to the media self-control when covering the terror-related events or individuals, as one of the indispensable conditions of a successful counterterrorist struggle.

The most prominent British media, provoked by a long lasting tense situation in Northern Ireland, were among the first to recognize the necessity of implementing their own regulations with instructions to the journalists on how to report about terrorism. BBC has the oldest instruction document named *"Terrorism and national safety"*. In the preamble of the document it is stated that the "basic role of BBC in reporting about a terrorist situation is – to tell the truth, fast, carefully, responsibly and avoiding speculation" (Geljman, 2004:29). Journalist are given instructions on the ways to cover safety situation in Northern Ireland, whereby the responsibility a journalist has for what is written is especially stressed.

In October 2001, The Union of Journalists of Russia adopted the *"Ethical Principles of Professional Conduct of Journalists Covering Acts of Terror and Counterterrorist Measures"*. The document is presented as a code of professional journalist ethics that journalist should apply in crisis situations. In 2003, The Industrial Committee that unites the heads of all leading Russian media adopted an

*"Antiterrorist Convention"* (Yakovenko, 2005) that sets up the rules of conduct for the journalists covering terrorist acts and counterterrorist operations. The text was received with understanding in the UN, Council of Europe and the OSCE.

In recent years numerous forums and conferences on the subject took place, and a unified conclusion was that it is of crucial importance to determine the behaviour and professional conduct of journalists in extreme situations. At the international conference held in Dombay in 2002, organized by the ITAR-TASS under the UNESCO aegis, brought together representatives of regional international organizations and journalist unions of various countries, and they discussed the media's role in counterterrorist struggle.

The First International Counterterrorism Media Forum held in Moscow in 2004 formulated modes of struggle of civil society and the media against terrorism. Its resolution spoke about the journalist community's urgent need "to proceed, in its professional activity, from the principles of civil responsibility, protection of human values trampled down by those who would like to fan hatred and fear" (Yakovenko, 2005). The International Public Coordination Council for Opposing Terror and Drugs was also set up.

At the international conference "Journalists against terror", held in Israel in November 2004, journalists discussed the problem of terror coverage in the media. The participants resolutely condemned terror as one of the gravest threats to mankind and having recognized their own responsibility reached an agreement on drafting a new anti-terrorist charter. It was suggested (Yakovenko, 2005) that a standing Anti-terror Commission should be set up to unite all international organizations of journalists as well as lawyers and NGOs.

The world community has to resolve a very difficult task: find an answer to the question how to neutralize the emphasized terrorist orientation toward using the media for the purpose of raising fear and at the same time ensure freedom of speech – the key democratic principle. The transnational nature of contemporary terrorism calls for concerted efforts on the national and international level, in order to create new norms better suited to the challenges of the day (Yakovenko, 2005).

*"The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms"* of 4 November 1950 and *"The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights"* of 16 September 1966 contains basis international norms related to journalist activities in extreme conditions. Protocol 1, approved by the UN General Assembly and adopted on 8 June 1977, in its act 79 speaks of the measure designed to protect journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions. Furthermore, the declaration and recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe about the protection of journalists in situations of conflict of 3 May 1966 is one of the most profound and detailed international legal instruments in the media sphere (Yakovenko, 2005).

The World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva in December 2003, passed a declaration *"Building the information society: a global challenge in the new millennium"* (Yakovenko, 2005) which spoke of the need to prevent the use of information resources and technologies for criminal and terrorist purposes, while respecting human rights.

General conclusion from all those conferences is that it is of vital importance to bring concrete legal norms and moral-ethical standards by which the journalists should guide themselves when covering terrorist acts and counterterrorist operations. It is also believed that the media can and should play a greater role in counterterrorist strategy.

In the context of forming an international counterterrorist front, including the one in the information sphere, the Council of Europe positively responded to Russia's initiative in adopting a new code of conduct of states and the media in counterterrorist struggle. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 2 March 2005, adopted a declaration *"On the Freedom of Expression and Information in the Media in the Context of the Fight Against Terrorism"* that contains recommendations to be applied to the media coverage of terrorist acts and counterterrorist operations. The document is based on a balance between the freedom of speech and the media responsibility when covering crises. The declaration also took into account the interests and rights of the public that needs adequate information about terrorist acts and the requirement to refrain from jeopardizing the safety of the victims of terrorist acts as well as those involved in antiterrorist operations. The fact that 46 member-states of the Council of Europe adopted the declaration, according to Yakovenko (2005), speaks enough of the importance of this problem as well as of the European Community's desire to regulate guidelines for media behaviour in crisis situations.

In March 2005 Kiev hosted the 7th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media, and conclusions were made related to the future trends of activities of the Council of Europe and international cooperation in the mass communications sphere (Yakovenko, 2005).

In June 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation *"The Media and Terrorism"* which demands from the Committee of Ministers "to monitor the treatment of terrorism in European media in particular with regard to the Declaration mentioned above". It is also recommended "to prepare, under the guidance and in close cooperation with media professionals and professional organizations, and with UNESCO and other organizations working in the same field, a handbook for journalists reporting about terrorist acts and violence." The same document suggests that the member states should demonstrate more initiative in applying the additional protocol to the Convention on Cyber Crime by "setting up a framework for security cooperation between members and … for the prevention of cyber terrorism, in the form of large-scale attacks on computer systems … which relate to national security, public safety or the economic well-being of a state" (Yakovenko, 2005).

## Reactions on terrorism and media policy

Terrorist organisations constantly attempt to take advantage of the media in order to create and spread the atmosphere of fear and panic among a great group of people, since they are clearly aware of the importance and influence mass media have on them achieving their goals. Furthermore, their goal is to increase their

propaganda, publicly proclaim their ideas or force governments to make concessions or to pay ransom. In spite of the fact that mass media present in open societies, as we could see in previous chapters, are at many times subject to terrorist manipulation and exploitation, they can also give a priceless contribution to a successful struggle against terrorism. There is number of ways in which media might react on terrorism, and Wilkinson (2002:195-198) presents them through three main political options: *policy of laissez faire, media censorship or statutory regulation and voluntary self-restraint.*

Regardless of the severity of the situation and dangers coming from a certain terrorist act, the *policy of laissez faire* implies no specific measures to be taken related to media coverage of terrorism. There is a great possibility, suggests Wilkinson, that *laissez-faire approach* additionally triggers attacks which could endanger people's lives and property, because in the worst case scenario "the tame acquiescence of mass media, as an ally of a terrorist campaign, could help create a civil war situation or its outbreak, with a concomitant threat to the stability and survival of the democracy in question" (Wilkinson, 2002:195-196).

A second policy opinion on media response to terrorism is some form of *media censorship or statutory regulation.* Despite the fact that free access to mass media is one of the basic postulates of a democratic society, some democratic countries, facing a serious terrorist campaigns and threats, attempted to limit or completely ban media access to terrorist organizations.

In recent history there were several examples of such attempts. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher demanded from the British government to enact a law which would deprive terrorists publicity, and which would ban broadcasting declarations and statements which were placed in the media by terrorist spokespersons. The Republic of Ireland also banned interviewing of IRA, Sinn Fein or any other terrorist organisation spokespersons through the Media Law of 1960. It is believed that those bans, recalled immediately after ceasefire was signed, indeed did decrease support Sinn Fein had with the voters, and diminished the legitimacy they gained while appearing in the media, especially on television.

Similar laws were brought in several other countries. In 1976 the Federal Republic of Germany brought in the Anti-Constitutional Advocacy Act, making an offence of publicity advocating and encouraging others to commit an offence against the stability of the Federal Republic and therefore is a criminal deed. Spanish government enacted a law in 1984 proscribing that support or glorification of all activities, actions, celebrating anniversaries or any type of proclamations and advertising of terrorist organizations are criminal offences, and Spanish courts had the right to close down radio and TV stations which broadcasted such proclamations. Australia went further and, after terrorist attacks in Dunblane and in Tasmania in 1996, banned all scenes of violence on film and TV, and gave clear instructions for film censorship, believing in direct relationship between electronic and real violence.

Still, democratic countries did, regardless of the level of danger form terrorism, hesitate with implementing any type of media censorship, mainly because freedom of media is one of the key principles of a democratic society. Also, any type of censorship would at the same time undermine public trust in the credibility of the

released information. Irrespective of the importance of avoiding a possibility of any form of terrorist control over mass media, sacrificing free media would imply allowing terrorists to destroy one of the key principles of a democratic society (Wilkinson, 2002:197).

Nevertheless, free media does not imply unconditional freedom of speech, and banning stoking or encouraging hatred or any form of violence in the media are regulated by criminal laws of every democratic country.

Wilkinson points out that the more responsible media organisations prefer the so called *voluntary self-restraint*, through which they themselves attempt to avoid possible manipulation and exploitation that terrorist organisations are trying to conduct. For that purpose handbooks have been drafted and guidelines have been given on how to act and work in situations of crisis cause by some terrorist act. Many major media organisations have adopted guidelines for their staff which commit to "thoughtful, conscientious care and restraint' in its coverage of terrorism, avoiding giving an excessive platform for the terrorist/kidnapper (though live on-the-spot reporting is not limited thereby), avoiding interference with the authorities' communications, using expert advisers in hostage situations to help avoid questions or reports that might tend to exacerbate the situation, obeying all police instructions and attempting to achieve such overall balance as to length that the terrorist story does not unduly crowd out other important news of the day.[10]

Determining such guidelines and applying them could help in enabling terrorists to achieve their goals so we are of opinion that every media company should train their employees in that direction. Wilkinson (2002:198) concludes that "the mass media if they really want to demonstrate necessary caution and responsibility in covering such a delicate topic, should try harder in creating measures of self-control which would be both appropriate and efficient" and he quotes Margaret Thatcher that the media should consider "do the actions of those who use freedom to destroy freedom, as terrorists do, deserve such publicity."[11]

## Conclusion

The information revolution which reached its peak in the second half of the 20th century exerts influence on all spheres of global society and prompts their transformation. Information technology has radically changed people's lifestyles, in communication, business activities and leisure time and in various other aspects of everyday life. One of the consequences of society thus transformed is its openness as well as ever faster and greater availability of information. One may conclude that today's social movements are to a considerable extent under the influence of information that is taking on new meanings. One of the direct consequences of these processes are new possibilities mass media offer in fast information communication and their global spreading.

Without the assistance of media, terrorist rhetoric would influence only those in the immediate vicinity of terrorist violence. Conversely, with the assistance of media, terrorism reaches a much broader, sometimes global audience. Most people get their political information from media, so in that way mass-mediated depic-

tions of terrorism can have a profound effect upon the way people think about and engage in discourse about terrorism.

It is undisputable that terrorism and media are interrelated in a specific way. However, the real question is not their relationship but the fact if it has influence on public opinion and governmental decision making that would be in favour of terrorists. Numerous governmental officials, scientists and media critics are of opinion that media are "terrorists' best friends" or, as Margaret Thatcher named them "the oxygen of publicity they live from". Media are accused of "making the job easy to the terrorists" or that they have "involuntarily or in certain cases voluntarily become an amplifier of a terrorist campaign for gaining publicity" (Hoffman, 2003:128).

Based on these statements it can be concluded that depriving terrorist publicity would significantly diminish their disastrous influence and frequency of their actions. However Hoffman (2003:128) points out that it is often ignored that media attention is rarely positive. He also points out that even scholars like Laqueur, who in one breath criticizes the media for its unstinting coverage of terrorism, concedes in the next that this has not led to more favourable public attitudes towards either terrorists or their causes.

American company RAND carried out a study in which it tried to empirically study the ways public perceive terrorism and terrorists and analyse the influence terrorist acts have on public opinion. Despite a continuous and frequently intensive attention that the media gave to terrorist activities during the course of many years, RAND's study showed that public commitment to terrorists was non existent (Hoffman, 2003:129). There are, however, two special areas in which the symbiotic relationship between media and terrorism has a negative influence on public and governmental decisions. The first is the public notion in terms of personal danger from terrorism, due to which, for example, arises a certain fear of travelling and tourist arrangement are being cancelled. Second are the pressures the media imposes on the governmental decision making, especially in crisis situation (Hoffman, 2003:133).

Media today not only shape public opinion but they also conduct politics, and journalists, besides reporting, deal with defining a great number of various operations which are on disposal to the government, and with predicting possible public reactions on certain government moves. Hoffman for that reason thinks that analytical journalism in connection with electronics has essentially altered the context and contents of the news, and that it sometimes has a wrong influence both on public opinion and on political decisions making. It is this manner, in this era of mass communication media, that the terrorists get a chance for such a manipulation and influence they have never so far had, because "what was not released in the media, did not happen at all!" (Hoffman, 2003:137)

In order to make the struggle against terrorism successful, counterterrorist organisations need also to adjust to its actions, on organizational, strategic and technological level. Based on the thesis given in this study it can be concluded that the new paradigm of terrorism is the result of information technology development, which is manifested in particular by the recognition by terrorist organisa-

tions of the importance of mass media in achieving their objectives. Thus, contemporary terrorism may be regarded as a special form of communication.

Therefore, contemporary democratic societies should respond to new terrorism by a new counterterrorist strategy which will take into account the role of mass media in contemporary society, but also their role in terrorist strategies. Including mass media could significantly contribute to a successful struggle against terrorism.

## ENDNOTES:

[1] That term was used by the former British PM Margaret Thatcher.

[2] Term symbiosis refers in sociology to a mutual dependence between different society groups, when groups are not alike, but their relationships are complement. (Wilkinson, 2002:45)

[3] Hoffman is of opinion that launching the American satellite would be the first step towards world domination of the American media and that at that point commences the development of their technical possibilities which could help reach the greatest number of people in the world. For Hoffman that is one of the reasons why terrorists attack American targets or targets which are of greatest interest to the American Media (Hoffman, 2003:123).

[4] "CNN has a ten-minute head start before NSA" (National Security Agency). (Hoffman, 2003:135)

[5] American hostages were passengers on the flight TWA 847, flying from Rome to Cairo. (Hoffman, 2003:135)

[6] Hostage crisis lasted 444 days during 1979/80. (Hoffman, 2003:120)

[7] Example for that is the Communist Khmer Rouge which practiced terrorism on its own people during their ruled the country of Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. The absence of news media, which might have been critical of the party, or at least might have documented its activities, benefited the Khmer Rouge by ensuring little or no opposition from within Cambodia. The next example is the Nazis propaganda in Germany which was extremely successful on their own people, but was not very successful in using mass media to persuade countries outside Germany. The same may be said for the state-sponsored propaganda in the former Soviet Union, which can presented only the official Soviet view of news, while also muting and avoiding any criticism of the state's actions. This was a pattern also followed, and continued to this day in Communist China. (Tuman, 2003:120)

[8] Galtung and Ruge (1970) have singled out 12 factors (for example, intensity, surprise, clarity, rarity, connection with the elite, personalization, negative character etc.) and concluded that the higher the level of the factors the more possibility for an event to become "the news". (Tuman, 2003:120)

[9] Media not only shape public opinion, but its anchors and analysts try to define and predict a number of operations which a government could conduct and what might be public reactions to each of those. The so called "CNN Syndrome" was criticized by the British Prime Minister John Major who said that: "I think it is bad for government. I think the idea that you automatically have to have a policy for everything before it happens and respond to things before you have had a chance to evaluate them isn't sensible". In history so far there have been numerous examples of making a decision based on initial impressions and partial information. (Hoffman, 2003:133)

[10] Guidelines of CBS. (Wilkinson, 2002:198)

[11] Statement published in "The Times" 30th April 1988

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**Anita Perešin**

# Masovni mediji i terorizam

## SAŽETAK

Nova paradigma terorizma dijelom je posljedica naglog razvoja informacijske teh-nologije, što se posebno očituje u činjenici da su terorističke organizacije prepo-znale značaj masovnih medija za izvršenje svojih ciljeva. Između medija i terori-zma postoji interaktivan (simbiotski) odnos jer se trendovi medijske industrije i zakonitosti proizvodnje medijskog sadržaja kreću u pravcu preferiranja sadržaja senzacionalističkog tipa, zbog čega terorističke organizacije svojim djelovanjem mogu osigurati maksimalnu prisutnost u medijima. Terorističke organizacije pri-tom neprestano nastoje manipulirati i eksploatirati slobodne medije u vlastite svrhe. Upravo masovni mediji daju terorizmu globalni doseg, utječu na način na koji javnost percipira terorizam i opasnost od njega, utječu na političke odluke ko-

jima se odgovara na terorizam, ali i na odnose koji su oblikovani nacionalnim i međunarodnim politikama.

Međutim, mediji ne moraju postati instrument terorizma. Promišljenim pristupom, mediji se u zapadnim liberalnim državama mogu pretvoriti u oružje koje se može upotrijebiti kao važno sredstvo za poražavanje terorista, a njihovi pozitivni doprinosi mogu premašiti nepovoljne posljedice mogućeg neodgovornog postupanja dijela novinara i medijskih kuća.

Ključne riječi: masovni mediji, terorizam, antiterorističke strategije