

International Journal of Security Studies & Practice

Volume 3 | Issue 1

2023

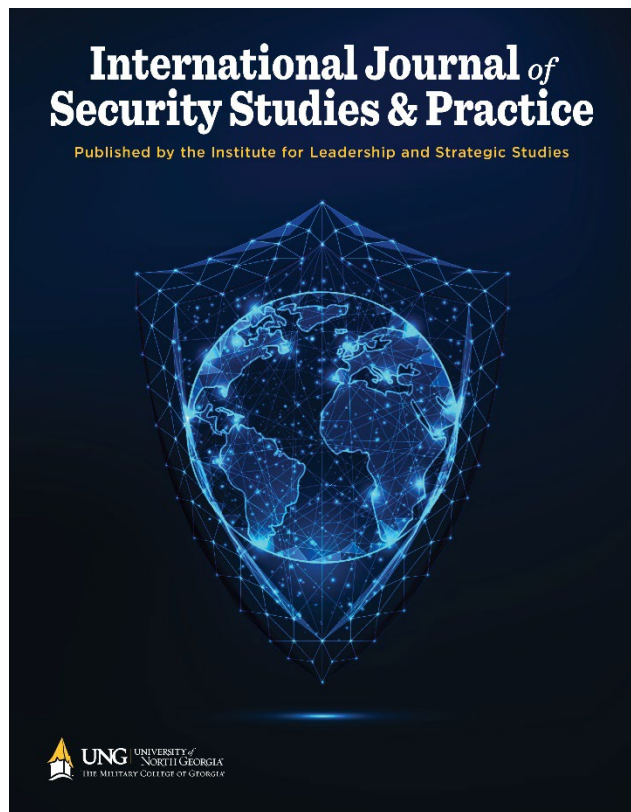
The Homeland, The Media and Terrorism in a World Adrift

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Recommended Citation

Pedron, S. and Da Cruz, J. A. (2023). The homeland, the media and terrorism in a world adrift. *International Journal of Security Studies & Practice*, 3(1). Article 7. <http://ijssp.ung.edu>

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The views expressed herein are the author's own and in no way reflect the official position of the United States Government, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Army.

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Abstract

Mass communication technologies fundamentally altered how people socially interact, receive information, and comprehend public affairs, and it is increasingly impacting the homeland. For most of the public not directly affected by terrorism, perceptions of extremist violence and radicalization or what constitutes an act of terror are often constructed by the media through ‘framing’—the process by which an abstract concept comes to be constructed and defined in society. This paper explores the complex dynamic between terrorism and the media, limiting how news media outlets and terrorist groups symbiotically interact in democratic institutions. Considering the evolution of digital forms of communication in recent years, the role of the internet and social media platforms are also examined in how terrorist groups leverage these online tools to achieve their goals. The proliferation of mainstream and non-mainstream news sources disseminating conflicting information about the same subject at diverse rates results in different social cohorts possessing inconsistent notions of terrorism that can affect policy outcomes, processes of radicalization, and, ultimately, individual behavior. To implement a proactive counterterrorism strategy, the actors most capable of shaping public perceptions of terrorism must recognize how they impact political communication processes and the potential security consequences that may result from extensive coverage of terrorist acts.

Keywords: Homeland, Terrorism, Media, Framing, Security, Political Communication

The Homeland, The Media and Terrorism in a World Adrift

In its various forms, the media has a complex relationship with terrorism. Newspapers, satellite television, radio, and other forms of coverage or online interaction have been seen as both enablers of extremism and violence¹ and as powerful instruments for neutralizing it.² Definitions of terrorism are naturalized through various institutions. Still, the news media serves as a central ideological vehicle for the vast majority of individuals not directly affected by acts of terror.³ The media can influence the public's understanding of terrorism and terrorist acts, together with like-minded individuals for an extremist cause, define and redefine security concepts and the issues the public considers most pressing or spread information to a broad audience.⁴ Rather than serving as passive third-party actors who deliver information regarding terrorist acts, the media is an active agent that aids in the social construction of what the public considers terrorism.

The dynamic between the media and terrorism has become so intertwined in recent years that terrorism itself has come to be seen as an 'act of communication' meant to send a message and instill fear in the broader audience.⁵ The media can amplify messages in terrorist demonstrations, which can spur or deter further acts of violence. For instance, Facebook posts may have played a critical role in inciting violence against the Rohingya people in Myanmar.⁶ Propaganda broadcasted on radio programs in the 1920s and the 1930s helped Nazis recruit new party members and incited anti-Semitic acts against Jews.⁷ Echoes of aggression over the radio also directed the Rwandan genocide.⁸ Innovations in communication technology and increased media attention to terrorism have economic, social, and political implications—from radicalizing specific groups to intimidating a target population.⁹ Thus, the news media has been discussed in the scholarly literature in several ways. This is due, in part, to both terrorist and media organizations sharing a mutual interest in circulating dramatic images.¹⁰ Some researchers view

them as actors that profit from terrorism and glamorize terrorist acts.¹¹ Others, as tools for modern information warfare, are partially responsible for shifting public interpretations of the current state of the world in both positive and negative directions.¹² A growing body of literature is also dedicated to analyzing the media's potential to construct counter-narratives to combat terrorism.¹³

The relationship between terrorist organizations and the media can thus be seen as “symbiotic,”¹⁴ where the former provides stories that grip an audience and stimulate discussion. In contrast, the latter offers terrorist groups a means of spreading their message and enhancing the impact of their actions. This paper explores that dynamic in-depth. The first part of this paper examines the role of the news media in framing terrorism with an emphasis on the way that information presented differently by news outlets can cultivate rival ideological frameworks that define what a terrorist is and the parameters for what is considered to be an act of terror differently for various groups. Conceptual debates concerning the interests of multiple actors involved are also considered. The second part analyzes the role of social media and the internet, including why some organizations use online tools and how they use social media platforms to their advantage. The third part provides recommendations for how the media might be used to combat terrorism and the potential challenges that media strategies focused on counterterrorism might have when applied. The conclusion provides an overview of the main points discussed.

The Role of the News Media: Framing Terror

The mass media plays several roles in democratic societies—they convey information and interpret events, educate the public, and influence the public agenda, which affects government decisions. They can create varied narratives through their presentation of specific circumstances. Understanding these media functions is necessary to grasp why it is the most utilized entity for terrorist groups. Modern terrorism is more than just senseless violence; it has social, ideological,

religious, economic, and political motivations. Acts of terror are meant to disseminate a particular message to a target population. Thus, coverage is essential for terrorists. This goal is most accomplished with the (conscious or unconscious) news media's assistance. In the article "Media and Terrorists," Professor Russell Farnen states, "Without widespread popular exposure, the very nature of the terrorist phenomenon would radically change... what we know as terrorism is a mass media creation; mass media define, delimit, delegitimize, and discredit events that we have not seen, but that we all instantly recognize as terrorist acts."¹⁵ The media can broadcast the message of terrorists to a global audience, and they do so because they are guided by industry norms that emphasize the need to report dramatic and sensational events.¹⁶ Due to this interaction, the characteristics of terrorism have evolved in recent years.

When people interact with one another, their experiences contribute to forming a collective consciousness that can meaningfully frame their diverse backgrounds.¹⁷ The collective consciousness provides a framework for individuals to operate in a typical way in each situation. The simultaneous existence of contradicting beliefs within the collective consciousness—and other social issues like whether one group has more political influence than another—affects how people view groups and situations during specific times. Several political ideologies compete for dominance in societies; the most prominent examples are political party identifiers or stances related to relevant social issues like climate change, abortion, and healthcare. Various elements impact the construction of ideologies and the individuals that align with them. Still, the group identity that emerges from their formation is used as the basis for collective action. This may be likened to the liberal-pluralist view of how political systems operate within democratic societies, which posits that various perspectives and philosophies exist simultaneously. This offers the public a more comprehensive range of choices—the most popular of which will be reflected in public

policy.¹⁸ The liberal-pluralist view does not consider the possible apathy of a large segment of society or the relatively high degree of activism of a small interest group that can get their legislative agenda passed. However, it underscores the existence of disparate perspectives, which is necessary for understanding how the media can influence how people cluster into communities. Should these views propagate, competing interest groups with united economic, political, and moral aims may be formed. With enough traction, these groups can then go on to affect policy outcomes.

Through their reach, media outlets can embed narratives in the collective conscience; they do this through a process known as *framing*. Framing is based on the notion that individuals actively classify and interpret their social encounters to comprehend their significance, understand the meaning behind communicative action within a given situation, and appropriately navigate their interactions with others. In his book *Frame Analysis*, Sociologist Erving Goffman adopted the term ‘frame’ to demarcate social interactions into manageable chunks.¹⁹ Through framing, individuals can separate one occurrence from another to organize social encounters, separate situational meanings, and guide action.²⁰

Framing theory limits the importance of situational meanings in interactions. When individuals use frames to divide their personal experiences, they can better grasp the purpose of a specific situation. Thus, framing is intrinsically tied to an individual's (current and past) experiences and can be used to examine an individual's social construction of reality.²¹ Many scholars highlight the political function of frames in mass communication,²² specifically focusing on the social structure of social phenomena. Prior research suggests that how information is presented influences how individuals process it. Still, because frames focus an individual's attention on specific instances, media outlets can make certain themes more salient depending on

the frequency and consistency with which they use a particular frame. This may obscure other significant discourses or aspects of reality. For instance, journalists frequently frame ethnic minorities as either victims or threats to the status quo.²³ Muslims, in particular, are consistently portrayed negatively. For example, a study examining news coverage of all terrorist attacks in the U.S. between 2006 and 2015 revealed that attacks where the perpetrator was a Muslim received significantly more attention than attacks committed by non-Muslims.²⁴ The overrepresentation of Muslims as terrorists can twist public perception regarding their social legitimacy and even incite acts of violence against them.²⁵

Several factors, including in-group and out-group dynamics, prior cultural themes, media performances, ideological suitability with a specific news outlet, and the personal interpretations of the conveyor and the receiver of the information, influence the construction of frames. Understanding in and out-group relations is vital for grasping the dynamics involved in news stories that focus on minorities. Individuals typically view outsiders less favorably and evaluate members of their group as superior.²⁶ When considered in tandem with the ethnic background of a specific reporter, the perspective they put forth may be biased. Specific frames also have greater prominence because they tie into an established repository of structures within a particular culture. For example, Americans generally tend to have confidence in government officials and journalists because they believe they have greater access to information. Hence, they can speak about subjects with a level of inherent authority.²⁷ News headlines portraying all Muslim countries as potential security threats to the U.S. may quickly become part of an overarching threat narrative because of prior stereotypes prevalent in U.S. society following 9/11. Other assertions suggesting that Russia is the most significant threat to American democracy may also be more readily accepted due to

past cues like the “death stare” image between Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin that previously dominated headlines or key stories involving the 2016 U.S. presidential election.²⁸

Media performances and ideological suitability also impact how news outlets frame issues.²⁹ While competing perspectives are often presented in the same news account, spokespersons might demonstrate that they believe a specific viewpoint to be more fitting, such as when they opt not to challenge an interpretation of an external actor with whom they must maintain an amicable relationship. Due to the growing number of media sources and their various organizational characteristics—which influence the terminology they use and the issues they focus on—a sundry of perspectives regarding the same topic may circulate among the public. This can result in increased confusion, hostility between groups, and a delayed governmental response to terrorist acts.³⁰

Shanto Iyengar argued that how media frames guide individuals' thought processes regarding particular issues can affect how the government will respond.³¹ Iyengar differentiated between thematic and episodic news frames.³² The former consists of reports considering general trends or public policy, impersonal subjects that the public might feel more abstractly. The latter, in contrast, consists of personal examples that illustrate an issue. Iyengar found that this difference in framing can influence who is responsible for a problem. The more that news is framed thematically, the more the public deems society accountable. In contrast, the more information is framed episodically, the more the public considers a specific individual responsible.³³ This suggests the context in which the news media frames political issues is critical. Topics such as terrorism, what constitutes an act of terror, and what a terrorist ‘looks like’ are susceptible to framing effects.

Media attention to terrorism varies widely. Expectedly, news outlets sensationalize some attacks and overlook others.³⁴ Prior research suggests that terrorist attacks receive more coverage when they harm or kill victims and when the selected target is linked to a Western nation.³⁵ A recent study by Michael Jetter found that coverage by the *New York Times* was affected by the geographical distance of the country relative to the U.S., the country's economic circumstances, whether a leftist administration governs the country, and whether the act committed was a suicide mission. Suicide missions received significantly more coverage than any other terrorist tactic, which could explain the increase in suicide missions in recent years.³⁶ Intensive coverage of specific acts may have psychological consequences that may be more significant than the act itself.³⁷ For instance, according to a 2019 Gallup Poll, 46% of Americans were concerned about personally being a victim of terrorism. Yet, the probability of being involved in a terrorist attack is extremely low.³⁸ The disproportionate concern about being victimized coincides with prior studies that have found that exposure to media coverage of terrorism can increase feelings of fear and anxiety.³⁹ This has implications for foreign and domestic policy because a surge of fear among the public can substantially influence voters' political attitudes and their support for using force in combatting terrorism.⁴⁰

Terrorist organizations typically use the media in two distinct ways to convey their ideology successfully. First, they use them to disseminate propaganda, such as video recordings of atrocious acts that elevate them in the eyes of their supporters and intimidate target populations. Second, they use them to repeatedly broadcast public demonstrations that can strengthen their power and legitimacy to an uncritical public. They may also do so to garner sympathy for their cause. However, prior research regarding a link between prolonged coverage of terrorists by the media and increased public approval is mixed.⁴¹ The media, in contrast, cover terrorism partially

because of economic considerations. However, professional media norms⁴² like objectivity may limit media outlets' willingness to exploit terrorism to amass a greater audience. Some researchers posit that media norms lead reporters to devote substantial attention to the government's views regarding terrorism rather than focus on the act itself.⁴³ Others have found that it is not norms but rather the media's close attunement to the preferences of the public that limit them from reporting about terrorism.⁴⁴ The value of a story is based on the amount of interest it generates; reports about terrorist attacks and public interest have an inverse relationship. In other words, media outlets self-limit their attention to terrorism to sustain their audience. This, however, may provide an incentive for terrorists to invent new strategies for the sake of gaining attention. The proliferation of news outlets also complicates this relationship because it creates competition over audiences, leading to increased overall coverage.⁴⁵

Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, in their work, "Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse,"⁴⁶ provide an exceptional analysis of the problematic character of information circulated via television and its failure to deliver critical accounts of current events. They make a compelling case about the dependence of television on terror, which media outlets cannot break away from due to the benefits they reap from the coverage of acts that involve violent and shocking images. Consequently, the media find themselves in an ethical dilemma concerning terrorism. Censoring or stifling the range of a terrorist act may fuel distrust or even be viewed as undemocratic because it infringes on the public's right to know about a crucial public policy issue. Still, coverage of the act would fulfill the aims of the terrorist group responsible and undermine the sense of personal security felt by the public. Increased exposure by media outlets could also potentially encourage further attacks.⁴⁷

Governments in democracies are, in many ways, dependent on the news media to garner public support for their policies. In the U.S., the freedom of the American press is backed by the U.S. Constitution. The media exists not only to inform the public or stimulate discussion but also to hold officials at all levels of government accountable. However, various factors affect how the media makes news decisions regarding what to cover or how to frame topics. In the article “How the Media Frames the Immigration Debate: The Critical Role of Location and Politics,” Stephanie Fryberg and co-authors state, “While the media should ideally report events as they occur and provide a balanced account of all the issues... [they instead provide] a particular framing of reality and thus a partial or biased account.”⁴⁸ This is recognized by other scholars who have developed models to analyze how the news media makes gatekeeping decisions. The Propaganda Model developed by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky posits that political and economic elements influence the media’s actions.⁴⁹ Mass media companies are structured in such a way that they disseminate elite interests. Put another way, they serve propaganda functions by advertising, concentrating on the opinions of a select few people (i.e., the elites in society), or by focusing on programs and stories that align with the specific ideologies of the owners of their company. Lance Bennett’s indexing theory considers the media’s propensity to select topics according to their assessments of the power dynamics in political institutions.⁵⁰ The convergence of domestic and international politics in recent years complicates these models about terrorism because the actions of terrorist groups inside and outside of a nation-state’s territorial jurisdiction affect policy at all levels.

There are positive aspects to media coverage of terrorism. In the same way, the media shapes public perceptions of terrorism, they can foster an environment that mitigates the effectiveness of terrorist acts by raising public awareness about the issue to spur lawmakers into

action. The media can also educate the public on terrorism through communication campaigns that counter extremism. For instance, the Voices for Peace program⁵¹ that promotes locally-driven information campaigns centered on peace and tolerance in West Africa actively engaged communities with narratives of social cohesion to counter the region's increased radicalization and violent extremism. Several studies dedicated to examining other radio communication campaigns in Africa also found that these programs had a positive long-term effect on the attitudes and behaviors of citizens.⁵² Understanding how particular actors produce dominant narratives and how that intertwines with a given society's complex social and cultural processes is key to combatting the threat of terrorism.

The Modern Radicalization Toolkit: Social Media and the Internet

Since the 1970s, increased interconnectivity between nation-states due to globalization has broadened the possibilities of widespread organization for like-minded individuals. While the news media is guarded by gatekeepers that regulate the flow of information, no such controllers exist in specific online social networks. Consequently, technological advances in communication have improved the capabilities of extremists to mobilize and fund their overseas activities via illicit transactions. State borders no longer obstruct messages of hate and terror. While nation-states in the past may have had the ability to control the flow of information to undermine terrorist organizations, these radical groups can now leverage other forms of mass communication to suit their interests.

The internet, in particular, grants terrorists the means to spread their ideology for purposes such as recruitment efficiently or to strengthen cohesiveness without the aid of news outlets, allowing extremists to reach more individuals in a less time-consuming and costly manner. Accessibility is arguably the internet's greatest strength and weakness; there is a space for

everyone to build a network online. As evidence of this, virtually every terrorist group hosts a website, from white extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the World Church of the Creator to Islamic terrorist organizations.⁵³ While the websites differ in design complexity and sophistication based on the target audience, they all share a common purpose—broadcasting the group’s ideology. The internet enables violent radicalization by allowing users to immerse themselves in fanatical content, an issue social media platform development has exacerbated.

The advent of social media transformed the way people communicate with one another by bridging individuals across vast distances and allowing anyone to publish content immediately. Individuals worldwide utilize at least a single social media platform; even official government agencies and public officials maintain a social media presence. As a result, these platforms have evolved into virtual hubs where people go for everything from cooking recipes to advice about relationships and trading stocks. Furthermore, social media significantly influences how voters learn about and understand public affairs. This makes social media appealing to terrorist groups seeking to manipulate online content to further their goals. It should be noted that the exploitation of social media to influence public perceptions is not a distinct characteristic of a terrorist organization; many legitimate institutions in society do so through methods such as advertising or online campaigning. But what differentiates terrorists is often their perpetuation of hate against a specific group for provocation⁵⁴ and the blatant disregard of information from moderate, credible sources in favor of radical content that more closely aligns with their views (i.e., echo chamber).⁵⁵

In part, diminished trust in mainstream media sources due to stories of misinformation combined with the rise in social media platforms that utilize algorithms that prioritize related material that a user has previously interacted with can radicalize vulnerable persons and even push them into committing violent acts. Traditionally, radicalization occurs through an individual’s

network. Those connected to persons with extremist viewpoints tended to adopt similar perspectives, especially if they were part of a tightly-knit community with persons who shared the same beliefs.⁵⁶ In contrast, radicalization via social media does not require a personal connection. Instantaneous communication can help terrorist groups develop a personal relationship to deploy radicalization strategies that gradually push an individual toward committing violent acts.⁵⁷ By building a social media presence and interacting with the individuals (both locally and abroad) within those virtual spaces, terrorist groups can create entire online communities to introduce extremist content gradually over time.⁵⁸ For example, a study about the radicalization of Indonesian female migrant workers in Hong Kong found that most women were first exposed to Islamic extremism on social media.⁵⁹ The algorithms of specific social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook fuel terrorist activities by privileging related content that a user has previously interacted with,⁶⁰ strengthening extremist viewpoints, and feeding into a vicious loop of misinformation that can have potentially harsh consequences.

The public acknowledges that online social hubs or virtual communities form when individuals with shared interests and beliefs network within a communal space.⁶¹ Prior virtual interactions and common viewpoints solidify an abstract collective identity. Depending on the nature of the community, members may be encouraged to participate in real-world action. Terrorist groups grow and function like other virtual communities within social media. However, they specifically focus on radicalizing the users within their network because belief in their ideology is a precondition to committing terrorist acts.⁶² Terrorists, thus, have an excellent reason to use social media. In addition to being a cost-effective option, it is widely used and accessible by many of the world's population. Yet, not all terrorist groups utilize these platforms to meet their objectives. Those who make a conscious, strategic choice to do so based on the perceived ease of use of the

technology, public availability, and usefulness.⁶³ For example, a jihadi online forum outlined the decision to use Facebook. The user stated, “If you have a group of 5,000 people [on Facebook], you can send them a standardized message. I implore you, by God, to begin registering for Facebook as soon as you [finish] reading this post. Familiarize yourselves with it. This post is a seed and a beginning to be followed by serious efforts to optimize our Facebook usage.”⁶⁴ The world is constantly evolving, and to keep pace, terrorist organizations adopt new methods that help them stay relevant and reach their goals. Social online networking allows terrorists to reach out to people and distribute propaganda directly. Their migration to social media has also resulted in “lone wolf terrorism”—attacks by individuals who are not a part of any terrorist group.⁶⁵

Generally, institutions have attempted to reduce harm and misinformation on social media platforms in three ways. The first approach involves the development of programs that automatically detect, filter, and remove inappropriate content. For instance, in 2017, Google introduced a ‘fact check tag’ that signaled to users that the information in a search result might be misleading. Being the most used search engine in the world, this was a crucial step forward. Nevertheless, such programs are intrinsically limited due to the ambiguity of language and the fluid dynamic of human culture. The second approach attempts to bolster the first by adding people; employees manually sift through inappropriate material online. While this can make up for machine error, it can affect the employees’ mental health.⁶⁶ The third approach involves actively educating internet users about critically investigating the content they interact with and having them participate in trending online social movements that can reduce incendiary content posted online. Trending topics transcend networks. They can spread information across vast social communities and even into different platforms. For example, the No Hate Speech Movement⁶⁷ in

Germany, which reached over half a million people on Facebook when it launched, generated various online and offline campaigns that sought to circulate alternate narratives to counter hate speech.

The internet plays a significant role in the everyday lives of individuals. Social media platforms are more than just entertainment; they are the primary means of communication and an essential news source for millions of users. Hence, they can be exploited by terrorist groups that seek to manipulate public perception to radicalize individuals (geographically near and far), spread propaganda, promote hostile rhetoric, and mobilize their supporters into committing violent acts. This is especially pertinent in today's digital age—when terrorists have demonstrated proficiency in operating new mass-communication technologies. A firm understanding of the security risks of the internet and social media is critical for policymakers seeking to develop adequate countermeasures for combatting terrorism both online and offline.

Countering Terrorism: A Proactive Approach

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, public officials across institutions have disagreed over the most significant threat to public safety, how they should combat those threats, and who should lead these responses. The growing reach of the internet and the devices used to access it demands that lawmakers and security officials constantly adjust their strategies to ensure that they keep pace. Current counterterrorism strategies linger behind terrorists' manipulative use of novel mass-communication technologies. Below, we outline specific ways that the media might be used as a tool to combat terrorism. Due to the nature of the media, the authors focus on proactive strategies that aim to reduce the supply and demand for extremist content online.

Mass media companies are privately owned and operated. Therefore, broad, multilateral cooperation to stop terrorism before it can occur is crucial. Consequently, it is essential to note that

proactive strategies will always be time-consuming and politically fraught. While migrating terrorist groups to social media grants them new opportunities, it also exposes vulnerabilities such as decreased anonymity that can be exploited. One method is for the government to reduce the supply of extremist content online by integrating distinct policy domains and jurisdictions to create a standardized process for dealing with criminalizing terrorists, identifying red flags, tracing the spread of propaganda, monitoring online histories for the sake of intelligence-gathering, and making violent and inappropriate content more difficult to access. This would, however, pose a significant challenge to the balance between security and civil liberty. Filtering online content goes against the basic tenets of a democratic society, and publicly prosecuting individual terrorists or groups can increase the saliency of their philosophies. Furthermore, the constantly shifting aspects of human culture and society blur the line of what is considered appropriate content. Pressuring media organizations to help government agencies engage in online monitoring might also strain partnerships. Instead, public officials should cultivate these relationships so that mass media organizations can better understand and respond to national security threats and changing patterns of political communication.

More practical countermeasures would be to reduce the demand for extremist content through direct investment in the public. Social cohesion can be bolstered by partnering with local media outlets to create awareness about terrorism and managing resources to utilize the advantages of social media platforms more effectively—for example, increased funding for programs that strengthen the digital literacy of the public. Initiatives aimed at educating vulnerable groups, providing perspectives from quality sources, improving the critical consumption skills of communities, and deconstructing extremist messages would also be game-changing for news outlets and non-governmental organizations trying to disseminate counter-messages against

extremism. The government might also enlist the help of the media to raise interest in their outreach initiatives and make clear their strategies, including the resources they direct to help create counter-narratives against terrorism. Increasing transparency can also generate greater public trust in their efforts.

Lastly, policymakers and the news media must acknowledge their unique roles in promoting rhetoric and shaping abstract concepts that affect public perception. While such an acknowledgment might seem basic, the first step to passing legislation and creating an adequate counterterrorism strategy comprised of many actors is to ensure that the standpoints of those involved are concordant. Strategies aimed at reducing supply and demand mainly rely on the involved actors first comprehending terrorism and how it interacts with technology and culture, knowing traditional and modern radicalization processes, and grasping the reality that terrorism can be a domestic and foreign threat.

There is no universal counterterrorism strategy. Likewise, there are no specific tools designed to fight terrorism—there only exist tools of the national system.⁶⁸ All strategy tools can contribute to the fight against terrorism. Political tools, for instance, involve diplomacy and synchronizing international responses. Economic instruments can put pressure on governments to stop state-sponsored violence. Ideological tools can work in tandem with communication tools to delegitimize terrorist groups and reduce the impact of their attacks. While the authors highlighted apparatuses related to the media and communication, applying a broad security strategy that engages all of these tools so that they can reinforce each other and mitigate harmful consequences is necessary.

Conclusion

Mass communication technologies fundamentally altered the way people comprehend public affairs. For most of the public not directly affected by terrorism, the media often constructed the concept of terrorism and what constitutes an act of terror. Through framing, organizations and individuals with wide enough reach can entrench narratives of terrorism, what constitutes a terrorist act, and even images of what a terrorist should look like in the public's minds. This can affect more than just policy outcomes and present debates; it can even influence the behavior of persons toward certain ethnic groups, which can profoundly change their social identities and positions in society. News frames presented by the media influence the public's understanding of global terrorism and its threat, which has implications for foreign and domestic policy. However, due to the sheer number of media outlets disseminating information about the same subject at diverse rates and using different terminology, different groups within the same society may have conflicting versions of reality that can affect public officials' responses. Hence, there is a need for actors who can shape public perception of terrorism to acknowledge their role in security strategies and how they impact political communication processes.

One of the most significant challenges to counterterrorism strategies is the rapidly changing technological landscape—the internet's increasingly important role in daily life has resulted in terrorist groups adapting and refining their techniques. Social media platforms are attractive tools for terrorist groups because they are easily accessible and can be used cost-effectively to spread propaganda, raise funds for terrorist activities, reach a demographically diverse audience, and coordinate violent acts. To develop effective countermeasures against terrorism, the government might consider adopting a proactive approach that augments its relationship with news media agencies and the creators of relevant social media platforms. Investment in public awareness

campaigns that build counter-narratives against terrorism and extremist rhetoric and initiatives that improve digital literacy and critical-thinking skills are essential to curbing the radicalization of individuals—especially youth—virtually and offline because they offer alternatives to negative constructions and hostile discourse. Moreover, empowering citizens through communication campaigns and educational initiatives that actively engage with local voices could mitigate the emotional consequences felt by citizens inundated with news of domestic and international violence.

Terrorism in the modern age is not unconquerable, but it does present a new set of challenges that cannot be solved through a unilateral government response. A counterterrorism strategy considering the distinct positions of media organizations and other third-party actors is crucial for tackling this local and global phenomenon. Policymakers, however, should exercise caution so that their security measures do not take the form of draconian policies that undermine the basic principles of a free and open society.

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