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INTRODUCTION

Dynamics of Media and Terrorism

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Virtual or real, national or transnational, state-sponsored or executed by small groups, terrorism in all its forms remains a central concern for contemporary societies. It has not disappeared with the assassination of Osama bin Laden nor the emergence of a new narrative of democracy during the 'Arab spring' of 2011. Terrorism defines politics and international relations as well as social and cultural interactions in our globalizing world (Laqueur, 1977; Stepanova, 2008; Pape and Feldman, 2010; Foreign Policy, 2011; Schmid, 2011). According to the Global Terrorism Database compiled by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), part of the Department of Homeland Security, more than 87,000 terrorist attacks took place worldwide between 1970 and 2008, attributed to over 2,100 terrorist groups. The US government data shows that, in 2009 alone, 11,000 terrorist attacks occurred in 83 countries, resulting in more than 15,700 deaths – the largest number taking place in South Asia.

As Table 1.1 shows, the countries afflicted most by terrorism are located in the global South, and yet terrorism remains a major geopolitical concern in the West, especially since 9/11. Media representations of terrorism are also skewed in favour of Western perceptions of and perspectives on the global and open-ended 'war on terror'. As we mark the tenth year after the events of 9/11, this book provides an opportunity to examine, in a global context, what the 'war on terror' has meant for media and its study. It is an appropriate time to evaluate the media's relationship to a changed geo-political environment and to pose questions about media performance and influence. In the years since 9/11, the world has witnessed two major conflicts – Afghanistan and Iraq – both continuing despite American 'combat operations' in Iraq being renamed as 'stability operations'. The NATO-led bombardment of Libya in 2011 is a continuation of the policy of 'regime change', which the US has enunciated and mainstream Western media largely endorsed.

Table 1.1   Top ten countries affected by terrorism, 1970–2008

Country	Number of fatalities
Colombia	6777
Peru	6038
El Salvador	5331
India	4323
Northern Ireland	3770
Spain	3176
Iraq	2968
Turkey	2695
Sri Lanka	2591
Pakistan	2529

Source: START, n.d.

As soon as President George W. Bush announced the official Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) on 20 September 2001, barely ten days after the attacks on New York and Washington, than the phrase 'war on terror' was snapped up by the US media. Given the latter's global reach and influence, the phrase gained worldwide currency, legitimizing the phenomenon, though how a state can wage a war against 'terror', which is neither an organization nor a state, remains, to put it mildly, deeply questionable.

The news media have played a crucial role in developing the narrative of the 'war on terror' as an ever-breaking global story, thus projecting the 'war on terror' as the most serious threat in our collective imagination. The conflict has given the media world a 'global vocabulary war' (Halliday, 2011: xi), with new words and phrases such as 'waterboarding', 'Shock and Awe' and 'extraordinary rendition'. The term 'war on terror' continues to be widely used in the media, though it is now officially given a less aggressive title under President Obama as 'overseas contingency operations'. Yet its open-ended, pre-emptive and global remit remains unchanged.

In the post-Cold War, post-Soviet world, the 'war on terror' has had an Islamic connotation. Unlike the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or Euskadi ta Askatasuna – Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) (which are not labelled Catholic terrorists), or Sri Lankan Tamil separatists and Indian Maoists (not described as Hindu terrorist groups), the ubiquity and danger of 'Islamic' terrorism, exemplified by shadowy networks with their alleged links to 'rogue' states, are constantly invoked in the media. This view of Islamic militancy is undifferentiated: Islamist groups in different parts of the world – al-Qaeda (reputedly led by Osama bin Laden, himself partly a creation of the CIA which was also instrumental in his assassination in 2011) in Afghanistan/Pakistan, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, al-Shabab in Somalia, Chechen groups, Lashkar-e-Toiba in Kashmir and Jemaah Islamiyah in

Indonesia – are all too often presented in the mainstream media as part of a seamless transnational terror network which links terrorist activities in such diverse locations as Madrid, Mumbai and Moscow.

Manuel Castells has suggested that the 'war on terror and its associated images and themes (al-Qaeda, Afghanistan, the Iraq War, radical Islamism, Muslims in general) constructed a network of associations in people's minds. They activated the deepest emotion in the human brain: the fear of death' (Castells, 2009: 169). It is undoubtedly the case that Islamic militant groups – in Palestine, Chechnya, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India – have used terrorist activities (including suicide bombings) as an extreme manifestation of political protest. But what is the motivation which drives young men and women to sacrifice their lives? Is it extreme Islamist propaganda or, as Pape and Feldman have argued, that the rhetoric of Islamist extremist groups 'functions mainly as a recruiting tool in the context of national resistance' while the 'principal cause of suicide terrorism is resistance to foreign occupation, *not Islamic fundamentalism*' (Pape and Feldman, 2010: 20). Pape and Feldman's study of suicide bombings shows that 'over 95 per cent of the suicide attacks are in response to foreign occupation' (2010: 329). Hassan's extensive and comparative research on suicide bombers also points to the diversity of motives behind such acts and the specificity of a particular political situation in a given country (Hassan, 2010).

The vast majority of the world's one-billion Muslims have nothing to do with terrorism. Indeed, they are victims of this scourge and the 'war on terror' has brought misery and mayhem to large parts of the Islamic world. The death of Iraqis since the 2003 US invasion varies from an astonishing 1 million (as published in the *Lancet* in 2006) to the Iraq Body Count figure of more than 100,000 (Burnham et al., 2006). In other costs, the daily expenditure of the US military is estimated to be $1.75 billion, while the real cost of the Iraq invasion itself has been about $3 trillion, and arguably contributed to the economic downturn we are facing today (Stiglitz and Bilmes, 2008; Stiglitz, 2010). The US has increased its military spending by 81 per cent since 2001, and now accounts for 43 per cent of the global total, six times its nearest rival China, according to data from SIPRI (SIPRI, 2011).

Yet in a globalized world, the distinction between national and transnational terrorism has been disappearing. Traditionally, terrorists groups have depended on, and benefited from, the support – ideological, financial and political – from groups outside the national territory. There is a long history of such associations: from Russian socialist revolutionaries at the beginning of the 1900s (who planned attacks and procured material in France and Switzerland) to anti-colonial and other national liberation movements in the twentieth century which were internationalized. Cold War politics ensured that many socialist governments and European left-wing groups (such as Baader-Meinhof and the IRA) supported radical Palestinian organizations, while right-wing groups

like the Nicaraguan Contras were funded by the CIA. Furthermore, just as the Soviet Union trained anti-Western movements in Africa and Arab world, the US supported *mujahideen* in Afghanistan and UNITA in Angola (Cronin, 2009).

However, in the post-Cold War, post 9/11 world a particular version of terrorism has come to dominate policy and media discourse internationally. The Kremlinologists have been replaced by the proliferation of 'jihadi studies', one leading exponent of which has baldly suggested that the 'war on terror' is going to be a generational event: *The Longest War* (Bergen, 2011). For the US, dealing with terrorism has become a major post-Cold War strategic priority. Given the primacy of the US as the world's largest economy and its formidable media, military and technological power, this strategic priority seems to have become a global political priority. By virtue of its unprecedented capacity for global surveillance, as well as its domination of global communication hardware and software (from satellites to telecommunication networks; from cyberspace to 'total spectrum dominance' of real space, and the messages which travel through these), the US is able to disseminate its image of terrorism to the world at large. 'What are the connections between technological innovations and Western imperialism?' asks Headrick in his latest book. His answer is 'the desire to conquer and control other peoples; a technological advantage is itself a motive for imperialism' (Headrick, 2010: 5). 'The Great American Mission', to borrow a phrase from the title of a book about America's global modernization effort – 9/11 and its aftermath – has given the US a pretext to shape the world to suit its own geo-strategic agenda (Ekbladh, 2009). It is difficult to disagree with the observations of the historian of US imperialism Richard Immerman:

> The empire that America constructed in the twentieth century is the most powerful empire in world history. Its rival Soviet empire, and its antecedent British Empire, pale in comparison. Its global leadership, when measured in terms of technological innovation, manufacturing, gross domestic product, or any other frame of reference, far eclipses all competitors. Its military superiority is breathtaking, and it continues to grow. It has assembled institutions – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the Organization of American States, the World Trade Organization, and more – that provide potent mechanisms for global management. (Immerman, 2010: 12)

The majority of mainstream media enthusiastically take part in this global management process. Immerman notes that the phrase 'American empire' appeared more than 1,000 times in news stories during the six months prior to the 2003 Iraq invasion.

The global reach and influence of American media are well documented: from traditional newspapers and news magazines (*New York Times*, *Time*), to news networks (CNN International) to online news aggregators (Google, YouTube) (Thussu, 2007). The US vision and version of terrorism is therefore extended to reach a global audience. In Russia, the government has tried to link its Chechen problem with international terrorism, with the former Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov claiming that 'the war in Chechnya is against international terrorism – not Chechens, but international bandits and terrorists' (cited in Gilligan, 2009: 6). The suppression of Muslim minorities in China's north-western Xinjiang region was also framed as China's war on terrorism (Wayne, 2009). In India – one of the countries worst affected by terrorism-related violence – large sections of the media and intelligentsia have bought into the US 'war on terror' discourse. Across the Middle East, often unrepresentative governments have used the pretext of terrorism further to strengthen their grip on the levers of security states as well as to curtail civil and journalistic liberties. For example, during the 2011 NATO-led bombing of Libya, the government of Muammar al-Qaddafi claimed that the rebels in the Eastern part of the country were supporters of al-Qaeda.

Terrorism discourse has impacted on international aid policy. It has been suggested that 'development and aid policy, institutions and operations have been affected' by the 'shifting global politics driven and legitimated by the global war on terror regime' (Howell and Lind, 2009: 1293). Fighting terrorism has also been accompanied by the massive expansion of the so-called private military and security companies. This privatization of state-sponsored killings and outsourcing to private security networks has been presented as being more 'effective' in dealing with terrorism (Singer, 2003; Stanger, 2009). Among other key benefits of such a conflict is how it fills the coffers of the world's arms merchants: world military spending reached $1.6 trillion in 2010, according to SIPRI. The US remains the world's largest exporter of military equipment, accounting for 30 per cent of global arms exports in 2006–10 (SIPRI, 2011). Terrorism, and efforts to challenge it, thus remain central projects inside the global geo-political environment.

Defining 'Terrorism'

Yet despite its primacy in contemporary politics there is a distinct lack of agreement on how to define terrorism. There are, as a SIPRI study argues, 'objective reasons for the lack of agreement on a definition of terrorism – namely, the diversity and multiplicity of its forms, types and manifestations' (Stepanova, 2008: 5).

When Major Nidal Malik Hasan, the main suspect in the 2009 shooting of 13 army personnel at Ford Hood, Texas, was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine (23 November 2009), the word 'TERRORIST?' was emblazoned over his eyes. Jared Lee Loughner, accused of critically wounding Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and killing six others in Tucson, Arizona, also made it on to the cover (24 January 2011) but this time the headline focused on 'Guns. Speech. Madness'. The *Wall Street Journal* also treated the two incidents in very different ways: '[Sen. Joe] Lieberman Suggests Army Shooter Was "Home-Grown Terrorist"' was how it covered the Fort Hood story on 9 November 2009 while on 10 January 2011 the WSJ's headline was 'Suspect Fixated on Giffords'. The line between acts of terror and insanity was drawn very tightly. It seems so obvious, after all, that a Muslim targeting American soldiers must be a terrorist while a 22-year-old white native of Tucson must simply be disturbed.

Interestingly, the FBI stopped publishing official data on domestic terror attacks after 2005 so it is very difficult to find out how many other similar incidents have been classified as 'terrorist' or not. Annual reports on terrorism are now required by Federal law but only in relation to international terrorism. However, even the director of START, notes that:

> the gravity of excluding domestic attacks can be felt when we consider that two of the most noteworthy terrorist events of the 1990s – the March 1995 nerve agent attack on the Tokyo subway and the April 1995 bombing of the federal office building in Oklahoma City – would remain unrecorded in most event data bases because both lacked any known foreign involvement. (Quoted in NCTC, 2009: 73)

Data on US domestic terrorism is still compiled and the Global Terrorism Database (hosted by START) records that, between 2006 and 2008, 62 incidents of terrorism were recorded inside the US with eight fatalities. Of those perpetrators identified, not a single one was related to Islamist organizations while all were drawn either from the Ku Klux Klan, other neo-Nazi groups or the Animal Liberation Front (START, n.d.). In Europe, the other alleged theatre of 'Islamic terrorism' activity, out of 249 terrorist attacks carried out within the European Union in 2010, only three were attributed to Islamic extremists, according to the Europol's Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (Europol, 2011: 9).

This is where definitions matter and where the influence of the media in making things 'obvious' is particularly stark. By privileging certain associations – for example, of Islam as a 'violent' religion, of the West as a 'victim' of terrorist attacks, of terrorism itself as a form of violence carried out against 'democratic' states – the media assist in the naturalization of particular interpretations of terrorism and thus legitimize specific strategies used to confront terrorist actions. Such strategies might include passing domestic anti-terror legislation,

curbing civil liberties in order to reduce the threat of terrorism and invading, occupying and bombing countries that are said to host terrorist elements – all in the name of a 'war on terror' conducted by a 'civilized' West against a less civilized 'other'.

The problem is that there is no single, commonly accepted definition of terrorism on which to base such associations and therefore no independent and reliable way of assessing what constitutes a terrorist act; hence the old adage that 'one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter'. There are instead interpretations: socially constructed understandings of events based on 'conscious efforts to manipulate perceptions to promote certain interests at the expense of others' (Turk, 2004: 490). Nevertheless, we have seen the emergence of an entire industry dedicated to defining terrorism that is populated by academics, government officials, judicial personnel, defence experts, security consultants and even the United Nations. After hundreds of thousands of pages and many dozens of competing definitions, there is still no consensus. For example, the US government's National Counterterrorism Centre still maintains that it is difficult to distinguish between terrorism and other forms of violence, such as sectarian attacks or hate crimes (NCTC, 2010: 4–5), while, in his 52-page report carried out for the UK government as the 'Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation', Lord Carlile freely admits that '[h]ard as I have striven, and as many definitions as I have read, I have failed to conclude that there is one that I could regard as the paradigm' (Carlile, 2007: 4). This is only the latest defeat in the desperate search for the perfect definition, a failing that was initially identified by Walter Laqueur in his 1977 study of terrorism in which he insisted that 'a comprehensive definition of terrorism … does not exist nor will it found in the foreseeable future' (Laqueur, 1977: 5).

Of course, this lack of precision has not stopped interested parties from adopting their preferred perspectives on terrorism in order to justify their actions (in engaging in, responding to or simply trying to understand terrorism) nor has it prevented encyclopaedic efforts to map the multiple definitions that are used. Schmid and Jongman (2005) famously identified 109 separate definitions and also extracted data on the most common elements used in these definitions, of which 'violence', 'politics', 'fear' and 'threat' respectively dominated the top four (2005: 5). Michael Hoffman, from the US Military Academy at West Point, spends the first 40 pages of his influential book *Inside Terrorism* discussing definitions of terrorism and concludes with his own version: terrorism 'as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change' (Hoffman, 2006: 40).

This definition may be admirably concise in its linking of acts of terror and the generation of fear but it omits two rather important factors: the subjects and objects of terrorism. In relation to the latter, many definitions emphasize that the targets of terrorist violence are 'non-combatants'. Yet any historical

guide to terrorism shows us that targets of terrorist attacks have included tsars, archdukes, presidents, generals and occupying soldiers, as well as civilians, so that the question of what constitutes a 'legitimate' target remains very much a subjective one. In part, this requires an appreciation of how what is described as 'terrorism' has been understood differently in different historical periods (Laqueur, 1977; Carr, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007; Hoffman, 2006; Rubin and Rubin, 2008; Law, 2009). Laqueur, for example, discusses the operations of terrorist groups in the Roman and Persian Empires and argues that terrorism only 'became a term of abuse with criminal implications' (Laqueur, 1977: 6) following Jacobin rule in the French Revolution. This form of 'state terror' is quite different to the 'propaganda of the deed', targeted assassinations of powerful political figures that were pursued by anarchists in the nineteenth century, or the use of violence by nationalist groups against occupying forces in the following century. As Laqueur notes:

> No definition of terrorism can possibly cover all the varieties of terrorism that have appeared throughout history: peasant wars and labour disputes and brigandage have been accompanied by systematic terror, and the same is true of with regard to general wars, civil wars, revolutionary wars, wars of national liberation and resistance movements against foreign occupiers. (1977: 7)

But while the history of terrorism suggests that terrorist acts emanate from a range of both state and non-state actors, contemporary definitions increasingly limit the agents of terrorism to the latter, for example 'an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure' or a 'small collection of individuals' (Hoffman, 2006: 40). This is precisely the definition used today by the US State Department that is based on Title 22 of the US Code, section 2656f(d)(2): 'The term "terrorism" means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents usually intended to intended to influence an audience.'

In the post 9/11 era, terrorism has all too often been reduced to acts of fanaticism and random brutality carried out by 'clandestine' groups against democratic states – this is the 'irregular warfare' that is distinct from the 'regular' military action (including the use of air strikes, psy-ops, rendition and waterboarding) conducted by elected governments. By definition, the former is illegitimate, the latter legitimate; the action is 'terrorist', the reaction is 'counterterrorist'. Conceived in this way, terrorism refers to acts of indiscriminate violence carried out against those with the power to define it in this way or, as Noam Chomsky put it, that 'the term applies only to terrorism against us, not the terrorism we carry out against them' (Chomsky, 2002: 131). Yet as Miller

and Sabir argue in their chapter in this book, we should attempt as far as it is possible to adopt a 'literal' understanding of the concepts we use so that terrorism is defined not by the identity of the perpetrators but the nature of the deeds. When they argue that terrorism should be understood in relation to 'actions involving the creation of terror and usually the harming or perhaps deliberate targeting of civilians and non-combatants', this must necessarily involve both state and non-state actors, those of democratic and non-democratic regimes, small groups of people and official standing armies. The definition, they suggest, must be applied without discrimination.

However, without agreement on what terrorism refers to as well as the identity of its protagonists and victims, the use of such a slippery term is likely to have serious policy consequences. As Edward Said remarked following the events of 9/11, terrorism

> has become synonymous now with anti-Americanism, which, in turn, has become synonymous with being critical of the United States, which, in turn, has become synonymous with being unpatriotic. That's an unacceptable series of equations. The definition of terrorism has to be more precise, so that we are able to discriminate between, for example, what it is that the Palestinians are doing to fight the Israeli military occupation and terrorism of the sort that resulted in the World Trade Center bombing. (Quoted in Barsamian, 2001)

If 'terrorism' continues to be deployed in a 'propagandistic' way, as Miller and Tabir suggest it is all too often, then it follows that those who have definitional power in the West will continue to conflate many different political responses to perceived injustices – failing to distinguish, for example, between the attacks in London on 7/7 and the resistance to the occupation of Iraq – as 'terrorist' (and therefore illegitimate) and the West's attempts to pre-empt or challenge them as necessarily justified acts of 'counter-terrorism'. If this is the case, many countries in the West will be set to repeat the major foreign-policy mistakes of the last ten years.

Terrorism as Communication

We are concerned above all in this book to draw attention to the way in which existing definitions of and approaches to terrorism are naturalized through a range of institutions including, most centrally for us, the media. For the majority of people who are not directly subject to its violence or intimidation, terrorism has to be 'made to mean' and the media are crucial ideological vehicles

in systematizing and organizing disparate 'acts of terror'. Indeed, media are not simply external actors passively bringing the news of terrorist incidents to global audiences but are increasingly seen as active agents in the actual conceptualization of terrorist events. They are credited, in other words, not simply with definitional but constitutive power: we now have 'mediatised terrorism' (Cottle, 2006), 'media-oriented terrorism' (Surette et al., 2009), 'media-ized warfare' (Louw, 2003) and 'mass-mediated terrorism' (Nacos, 2007).

In part this goes back to older debates about the symbolic character of the terrorist act: that it is aimed not simply to terrorize the immediate target but to create fear amongst wider groups through the re-circulation of the original event. 'Terrorism is a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior through extra-normal means' famously wrote former National Security Council member Thomas Thornton nearly 50 years ago (1964: 73). Yet the growing impact of electronic and, more recently, digital media has intensified the spectacular capacities of terrorism so that it has come to be described not simply in relation to media but, in itself, as a 'communicative act' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2007: 9) and a 'symbolically organized event' (Blain, 2009: 24). When leading terrorism theorists Schmid and de Graaf first wrote in 1982 that 'an act of terrorism is in reality an act of communication. For the terrorist, the message matters, not the victim' (1982: 14), this was a clear demonstration that the symbolic character of the terrorist act had fused with the amplifying potential of new information and communication technologies to create a new and highly visible form of political struggle.

In an era of widespread media literacy, 24-hour news, satellite television, social media and decentralized online networks like WikiLeaks, entire sections on 'terrorism as communication' are now very familiar in contemporary studies of terrorism (cf Turk, 2004; Hoffman, 2006; McAllister and Schmid, 2011). As we have seen above, the State Department definition of terrorism actually highlights the notion that terrorists are communicating to specific audiences, a point reinforced by Louw's argument that 9/11 was purposefully aimed at three sets of audiences: Americans, al-Qaeda sympathizers and Muslims more generally (Louw, 2003: 214). For Kellner, 'September 11 could also only be a mega-event in a global media world, a society of the spectacle where the whole world is watching and participates in global media spectacle' (2002: 152).

Terrorism has thus come to be discussed inside media theory in a whole number of ways including the dynamics of its discursive construction (for example, Hodges and Nilep, 2007; Blain, 2009), the framing devices needed to 'furnish consistent, predictable, simple, and powerful narratives that are embedded in the social construction of reality' (Norris et al., 2003: 5) and that have contributed to a 'new model of the relationship between

government and the media in the foreign policy process' (Entman, 2003: 416), and the mutual interest of both terrorists and media organizations to circulate dramatic images (Nacos, 2007). Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2007) write powerfully about how television in particular has become structurally fixated on terror and that broadcast news 'modulates' terror in the sense of simultaneously exaggerating its potential and containing representations of its threats. Television has become so dependent on terror in recent years that they ask the question: 'Is there a more effective means of spreading terror than through the news media's inability or unwillingness to prevent itself from being the principal publicity of those acts it abhors but which are key to its own economy?' (2007: 102).

These various approaches can all be valuable in opening up the relationship between media and terrorism but there is a significant danger in focusing too much on the mediated nature of terrorism and, in particular, on the idea of terrorism as the most spectacular form of modern political struggle: that we pay attention to only one, highly visible, form of modern terrorism, such as the attacks on the Twin Towers or the storming of the Taj hotel in Mumbai in 2008. According to James Der Derian, for example (2005: 24), 'Thanks to the immediacy of television, the internet and other networked information technology, we see terrorism everywhere in real time, all the time. In turn, terrorism has taken on an iconic, fetishised and, most significantly, a highly optical character'.

This emphasis on the 'optical' character of terrorism is certainly relevant to the major 'media events' of 9/11 and 7/7 but what about the less visible, far more mundane but no less terrifying bombing campaigns of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan that were not accompanied by live pictures and Fox News commentaries? What of the individuals who 'disappeared' in Latin American and the Middle East without the aid of a media spotlight (let alone the refusal by President Obama to release pictures of the assassination of Bin Laden)? Of course 9/11 and other acts carried out by small groups who wish to use the amplifying powers of the media are evidence of a mediated form of terrorism but certainly not all forms of terrorism take place in and through the media.

Indeed, Schmid and Jongman – purveyors of the 109 definitions of terrorism – acknowledge this to be true: 'While insurgent terrorists and the media often seek each other out, state terrorists generally avoid publicity and attempt to conceal the regimes' repressive activities by media censorship and/or disinformation' (Schmid and Jongman, 2005: 164). The traditional view was that terrorism would be more likely to take place in liberal democratic countries – 'in societies which have no censorship' (Laqueur, 1977: 110) – where, therefore, terrorists would be able to guarantee retransmission of their activities. But which country in the world today can claim – in the light, for

example, of the hysterical reaction to WikiLeaks' release of diplomatic documents – to have no censorship or disinformation systems? Nacos solves this problem by simply excluding state terrorism from her analysis of 'mass-mediated terrorism' (Nacos, 2007), precisely because governments do not want to publicize violence against non-combatants and 'would rather limit media attention and even suppress public disclosure' (Nacos, 2007: 28). The bombing of Libya in 1986, as well as the invasion and occupation of both Afghanistan and Iraq in the subsequent decades, are thus seen collectively as 'counterterrorism' and not terrorism.

Media theorists need fully to contextualize terrorism: to recognize the ways in which media have been implicated in transformations of terrorist acts but also to acknowledge that terror is an essential part of unequal societies and an imbalanced world. We run the risk of mediatizing – and restricting – terrorism into an adjunct of symbolic systems rather than (geo)political conflicts. Of course terrorists understand the power of media which is why some of those who resort to terror do everything they can to stay beneath the media radar (to the extent that it exists and that all journalists are anxious to reveal terrorist activities especially when they may involve their own governments). It does not mean that terrorism requires a sophisticated understanding of framing and mediation for terrorist acts to take place. Perhaps we have been so stunned by the images of 9/11 that we focus on the spectacular and marginalize the banalities of the terror we do not, or are not allowed to, see.

Framing the 'War on Terror'

Media thus play a crucial role in perception and expectation management, particularly during a conflict such as the 'war on terror' that relates to a distant and ill-defined enemy (Hess and Kalb, 2003). As Baum and Groeling note: 'The credibility of media *messages*, their *sources*, and the *messengers* communicating those messages, as well as the *context* within which the messages are delivered, all mediate the influence of news on consumers' (Baum and Groeling, 2009: 3, italics in original).

How these sources and their messages cultivate an ideological framework, within which conflicts are defined and information about these disseminated, remains a crucial arena for media research. In his study of US media coverage of the Vietnam war, Hallin noted that anti-communism was an ideological trope, ensuring that 'journalists and government policymakers were united' behind the US policy of combating communism in Asia (Hallin, 1986: 24). Is the 'war on terror' (whatever its official title might be) a current ideological trope which unites policymakers and journalists?

Winning 'hearts and minds' of 'terrorists' is a key recommendation of the US military's Counterinsurgency Field Manual (COIN FM), released in 2006 (Kahl, 2007). This chimes with the message coming out of the official propaganda channels of the US government, including Al-Hurra, in operation since 2004 and funded by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), a federal agency that supervises all non-military international broadcasting. BBG's propaganda networks active on the 'war on terror' include Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN). Their content is also regularly carried by local transmitters in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan on TV, FM and AM radio; in 2010, there were 360 affiliates for VOA and 62 for RFE/RL (BBG, 2011). The BBG is unambiguous in its goal: 'to create an increasingly effective and modern international broadcasting system that reaches significant audiences where most needed, in support of US strategic interests' (BBG, 2011: 7).

Apart from the official framing of news, the US entertainment industry too plays an important role in shaping global perceptions about terrorism. The Hollywood-dominated 'Military–Industrial–Media–Entertainment Network' has a major contribution in making the 'war on terror' an entertainment genre (Der Derian, 2009). As Shaheen has argued, the representations of Islam, and especially of Arabs, in most Hollywood films is deeply problematic in terms of racist stereotypes which contribute to a discourse where Muslims are projected as a threat to Western ways of life (Shaheen, 2008; see also Chapter 7 by Boyd-Barrett et al in this volume). Terrorism is also the prime subject of several popular American television series like *24*, *The Unit* and *Sleeper Cell*, which are all examples of intersections between popular entertainment and politics (Kellner, 2009).

The relationship between US entertainment industries and the military is also in evidence in the genre of video games. In 2004, the Institute for Creative Technology, affiliated with the University of Southern California, licensed *Full Spectrum Warrior*, which encourages gamers to coordinate military missions in an urban guerrilla situation in a fictional Arab country. Other popular games developed with a terrorist theme include *Conflict: Global Terror*, released in 2005 and the 2010 *Medal of Honour*, set in Afghanistan. The genre has also been popular as an app for smart phones; one example is *Arcade Super Sniper – War on Terror*, designed for iPhones and in operation since 2009. This 'militainment' has redefined terrorism as an object of consumer play, deployed by the Pentagon in association with the gaming industry (see Toby Miller's Chapter 6 in this book). As one commentator notes: 'Video game is increasingly both medium and metaphor by which war invades our hearts and minds' (Stahl, 2006: 127). It has been suggested that al-Qaeda too has taken a page from the Hollywood handbook. 'Its real expertise is not military damage,

but media manipulation through sensational acts of special-effects terror that rivet attention …'(Gardels and Medavoy, 2009: 5).

Looking beyond the 'War on Terror'

Despite systematic and largely successful attempts to manage 'official' representations of terrorism, dissonances keep appearing. This is partly to do with the fact that, ten years after 9/11, the 'war on terror' narrative is simply harder to rationalize. The idea, for example, that the US and UK presence in Afghanistan is needed to make the world a 'safer' place is even tougher to justify after the killing of bin Laden in Pakistan. As the documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis put it in his response to bin Laden's death: 'One of the main functions of politicians – and journalists – is to simplify the world for us. But there comes a point when – however much they try – the bits of reality, the fragments of events, won't fit into the old frame' (Curtis, 2011: 29). The 'war on terror' frame is hardly convincing when significant parts of the Arab world are spilling onto the streets demanding democracy and not jihad.

Additionally, in the new digital media landscape where alternative messages travel globally and instantaneously (Nye, 2011; Shirky, 2011), the opportunities offered by Web 2.0-enabled mobile media will mean that the mediation of terrorism is likely to become more multi-layered and multi-lingual. Within international relations, pleas have been made to take blogs and social networking sites more seriously as new platforms for global communication (Carpenter and Drezner, 2010). For optimists:

> This global public square is the new space of power where images compete and ideas are contested; it is where hearts and minds are won or lost and legitimacy is established. It is a space both of friction and fusion where the cosmopolitan commons of the twenty-first century is being forged. (Gardels and Medavoy, 2009: 1)

However, a word of caution is in order. Apart from global media conglomerates such as Google and Facebook, with their formidable power over the aggregation and distribution of information, governments are determined to ensure that they control the global commons. The US Broadcasting Board of Governors, among others, is devising information technologies for 'maximized opportunities to spread content via viral marketing and use of social networking sites' (BBG, 2011), while the Obama administration's promotion of '21st Century Statecraft' depends on using social media to 'help individuals

be empowered for their own development' (Clinton, n.d.). The 'virtual revolution in diplomatic and military affairs' which is 'enabled by networks not actors' demands new ways of looking at the framing of terrorism (Der Derian, 2009). As the phenomenon of the so-called CNN effect is supplemented by those of Al-Jazeera and YouTube effects, and mainstream media compete with subaltern media flows in a global theatre of images and ideologies (Thussu, 2007), the mediation of terrorism is likely to become increasingly contested. The advent of WikiLeaks – which has made international diplomatic and journalistic communication porous but also problematic – is a harbinger of what is to come (Davis et al., 2010; Keller, 2011). The civic and social media sector as witnessed during the anti-government demonstrations across the Middle East – the 'Arab spring' of 2011 – offers unparalleled opportunities for democratizing political communication. How is this feast of mobile videos and networked media to be harnessed? Who will distinguish facts from fiction, and half truths from rumours, and discriminate against both mediated hate and hagiography? The art of what Kovach and Rosenstiel term 'verification' (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2010) is needed to ensure that, in the context of substantial pressure from propagandists on all sides, responsible media continue to sift through discourses of disinformation and work towards reconciliation and resolving the scourge of terrorism.

In geo-political terms, the diminished economic power of the US will make its version of terrorism discourse increasingly contested. As one leading US foreign-policy commentator notes: 'The rising power of China, India and other non-Western states presents a challenge to the old American-led order that will require new, expanded, and shared international governance arrangements' (Ikenberry, 2011: 31). In those altered governance arrangements how will terrorism, in all its versions, be framed? Both China and India represent civilizations whose roots are not in the Abrahamic religions and their perception of Islam therefore is less likely to be influenced by discourses that refer to the Crusades and the 'clash of civilizations'.

The other point worth keeping in mind is that if terrorism is essentially a political problem, as we have argued, it will eventually and inevitably have a political solution. The British experience of dealing with the IRA, the Peruvian government's dismantling of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) guerrilla group and India's incorporation of the separatist Khalistan movement into democratic polity demonstrates that if underlying injustices are addressed terrorism-related problems can be resolved. It is also important not to discount the possibilities for political liberalization in the Islamic world, already exemplified by the cases of Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia, among others (Hafez, 2010), let alone the emerging democracy movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain and elsewhere.

This book aims to provide a broader perspective on the relationship between media and terrorism: to recognize and discuss the ways in which media technologies and practices have helped to transform our understanding of terrorism (as well as the manner in which it operates) but also to highlight the full range of contextual factors that shape media's relationship to terrorism. The chapters that follow are divided into four parts, each with an introductory note.

Part 1 provides a historical and political context to the relationship between media and terrorism, from both Arab and Western perspectives. Part 3 links regional perspectives to global terrorism discourse with contributions covering South Asia, Russia, the Arab world and Scandinavia. The focus of the Part 2 is on representations of terrorism in the media. Two chapters in this section examine how popular culture – Hollywood and gaming industry – represent the 'war on terror'; two other chapters deal with how terrorism discourse has had a domestic impact on multiculturalism in Britain and France; while the final chapter in this section is based on a case study of the reception of the coverage of the 2008 Israeli attack on Lebanon. The final part of the book contains four essays that assess the relationship between journalism and the 'war on terror', two of which are written by working journalists with first-hand experience of reporting on terrorism. In addition, the section includes a chapter on news narratives on the war on terror and another on its impact on debates on migration and multiculturalism in Australia.

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