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The Communication Of Evil: International Terrorist Organizations and Terror As A Method Of Communication

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Öz: Uluslararası bir güvenlik sorunu olarak terörizm esas olarak silahlı mücadele ile ilgilidir. Ancak terörizmin temel amacı seyirciler tarafından görülmektir. Bu nedenle, terör örgütleri çoğunlukla sıradan vatandaşın psikolojisini etkilemek olan hedeflerine ulaşmak için gerekli araçları kullanırlar. Bu örgütler, masum insanlara veya devletlere mesaj göndermek için kitle iletişim araçlarını her zaman kullanagelmıştır. Uluslararası terör örgütleri uzun yıllardır interneti ve avantajlarını militan devşirme, propaganda ve psikolojik savaş için profesyonel olarak kullanmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, terör örgütlerinin silahlı faaliyetlerinden ziyade genel olarak iletişim faaliyetlerine ilişkin yöntemlerini iletişimsel yaklaşımla anlamak ve göstermektir. Terör ve iletişim konusunda, genel bir bakış açısı sunmayı amaçlayan bu inceleme makalesi, aslında terörün bizzat kendisinin bir iletişim metodu olduğu savını pekiştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Günümüzde uluslararası terör örgütleri yalnızca ana akım medyanın kendilerine verdikleri yer ve süreyi yeterli görmemektedir. Bu uluslararası örgütler ortaya çıktıkları günden beri iletişimin kendileri için önemini kavramışlar, günümüzde dijitalleşmenin sunduğu imkanlarla kendi medyalarını da yaratmışlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Terörizm, Geleneksel medya ve terör, Dijital medya ve terör, Uluslararası güvenlik, Psi-Op

Kötülüğün İletişimi: Uluslararası Terör Örgütleri ve Bir İletişim Yöntemi Olarak Terör

Abstract: As an international security concern, terrorism is mainly related to armed struggle. But terrorism's primary purpose is to be seen by the audience. Therefore, terrorist organizations mostly use any means necessary to achieve their goal: to affect the psychology of the ordinary citizen. Those organizations always use mass communication devices to send messages to innocent people or the states. For many years, international terrorist organizations have used the internet and its advantages professionally for recruitment, propaganda, and psychological warfare. The primary purpose of this research is to understand and show the methods of communication activities of terrorist organizations in general rather than their armed activities with a communication approach. This review article, which aims to present a general perspective on terrorism and communication, actually aims to reinforce the argument that terrorism itself is a method of communication. Today, international terrorist organizations do not consider sufficient only the space and time given to them by the mainstream media. These international organizations have understood the importance of communication for themselves since the day they appeared, and they have created their own media with the opportunities offered by digitalization today.

Keywords: Terrorism, Traditional media and terror, Digital media and terror, International security, Psi-Op

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1. INTRODUCTION

When defining terrorism, we should start with the dictionary meaning of the word. The word, which has entered our language from Western sources, is used in 'intimidate, frighten,' 'startle, surprise, terrify, confuse, freeze,' and 'intense fear, worry, anxiety; something that causes intense fear, discomfort, and distress.' When we look at its Latin meaning, it similarly means 'excessive fear and anxiety or terror in the face of an unknown and unpredictable danger.' Terrorism is primarily a method used to create a psychological effect against the enemy. (Acar, 2012). In an inclusive definition, terrorism is a skillfully planned act of violence that aims to create a security problem, especially by hitting civilian targets, to influence public opinion by instilling fear, to force the political institution to reconsider its decisions and/or to achieve any of its objectives (Rodriguez Morales, 2012). The keywords here are 'violence,' 'civilians,' and 'political.' Terrorist organizations differ from political parties in that they always resort to violence. However, we cannot call them military organizations because they also often target civilians. But what distinguishes them from the average criminal gang is their political goals (Webb, 2017). Terrorism can have various forms of existence and different reasons for its emergence. These reasons can range from governmental structures to economic systems. In addition, factors such as oppression and exclusion can be catalysts for the formation of terrorist organizations. Marxist theorists argue that class differences and economic structures trigger terrorism. This idea has been supported not only by Marxist theorists but also by politicians from different countries.

For example, after the attack on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, then US President George W. Bush stated that 'persistent poverty and oppression drive the masses to despair and unhappiness, and countries that fail in this regard are a haven for terrorism' (Krieger & Meierriecks, 2011). However, the argument that economic hardship alone is a trigger for terrorism has been debunked in the work of Latin American researchers such as Villamayor and Velazquez, or, at least, that it is 'only one of the causes of terrorism.' In this study, it was estimated that 42.9% of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean region were on the poverty line, while 18.6% were abysmal. Despite all this negative data, Colombia and Peru were excluded, and the area was found to be free of large-scale terrorist activity. However, scholars such as political scientist James Piazza argue that less developed countries with high poverty rates produce more terrorists but that on an individual basis, there is no demonstrable link between poverty, inequality, and terrorism (Piazza, 2011).

The phenomenon of terrorism and terrorism has been concentrated in almost every period of history for different purposes and in different ways. For example, Jean Baudrillard characterizes today's terrorism as the 'Fourth World War.' Baudrillard considers this situation the 'war of triumphant globalization against itself' and explains that he sees the 'Fourth World War' as the only real global war. He said the first two world wars were the classical form of war. The first eliminated the supremacy of Europe and colonialism, and the second eliminated the danger of Nazism; what he characterizes as the Third World War was not a classical war but the 'Cold War,' in which communism was ultimately defeated. The result of this war was the 'One World Order'. Today, this order is facing resistance. Naturally, the field of such a conflict that finds a place for itself in the global world order is 'everywhere' (Baudrillard, 2002).

In this study, we will take mostly as examples Al-Qaeda and Daesh (ISIS), which Manuel Castells has described as a 'global terrorist network.' The essential features that make these two terrorist organizations different from the others and that are important for our subject are that they are the organizations that wage the 'first global war of the information age' and that, due to their nature, make the most professional use of today's mass media. While terrorism itself is a form of communication, international terrorist organizations make maximum use of mass media to increase its impact. At this point, our study will make a descriptive analysis of the subject. It will first address the relationship between traditional mass media and terrorism and then the relationship between digital media and terrorism.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study involves a selective literature review supplemented by qualitative content analysis. Within that context the study preferred sources that have been accepted as authoritative within the field of terrorism studies. The literature review encompasses a range of scholarly works, including academic articles, books and reports, to provide a holistic understanding of terrorism and its communication strategies. Additionally, qualitative content analysis is conducted on a selection of traditional and new media materials, including, video games, and well known propagandistic images to examine how terrorist organizations utilize various media platforms for communication purposes. Before delving into the specifics of our study, it is imperative to delineate the foundational concepts surrounding terrorism. Drawing from diverse scholarly perspectives, terrorism is understood as a methodological tool employed to instill fear, manipulate public opinion, and exert political pressure.

3. TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND TERRORISM

According to economist Christoph Pfeiffer, the media is the 'oxygen of terror' (Pfeiffer, 2012). Contemporary media is the natural channel through which news about terrorist incidents flows. The media is also vital for terrorist organizations to express themselves. Without the media, the activity would be irrelevant because the main target is not the individuals being attacked but the masses, the general public, who must receive the message. Forcing states into political change requires influencing and intimidating societies. Today, terrorism focuses on the perpetrator's identity, especially religious beliefs, rather than the act itself. This is particularly evident in the US media. According to a study of broadcasts between 1980 and 1988, the word "terrorism" was used in 79% of terrorist incidents in which American citizens were victims, while the word "terrorism" was used in only 51% of attacks in which American citizens were not victims (Nacos, 2016). The media itself sometimes fulfills the requirements of today's "celebrity culture" in terrorist incidents. And the media helps the perpetrators of terrorist acts "show themselves." For example, close to his execution, the MSNBC Channel featured a segment dedicated to the Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh in a program called "Headliners and Legends," which talks about Hollywood and Broadway stars. McVeigh became an instant "celebrity" on television shows where "life itself is a medium of entertainment" (Nacos, 2016).

When using television, radio, and print media, terrorists have four main objectives:

1. To disseminate actionable propaganda and create intense fear among target groups.
2. To seek broad support among the general population that their purpose is justified, to spread that their aim is right, and to spread that their victory is the end.
3. To disrupt the government and security forces in their fight against terrorism.
4. Keep the support of potential and existing supporters alive and increase the number of new people joining (Wilkinson, 1997).

The violence shown in the media during the time slot known as "prime time" and this habitual violence continues to increase, leading terrorists to resort to more theatrical ways to influence the public. Terrorists now have to think like movie producers. The logic of "if there is blood, it sells" in the media and the fact that terrorism serves this situation brings about a symbiotic relationship between them. For example, we see this situation in the movie industry, as Baudrillard observes. According to him, the terrorist attack is not "real" but, even more horrifyingly, symbolic. In the 20th century, two mass fascinations worked together: "the white magic of cinema and the black magic of terror; the white light of the image and the black light of terror" came together in a Manhattan disaster movie (Baudrillard, 2002). However, with the increasing frequency of television broadcasts on terrorist incidents, television viewers are becoming more "hawkish." Media is a passive channel through which information is shared and the essential element shaping people's perception of reality. Terrorist incidents involve three groups

other than the victims. The first is the government, the second is the perpetrators, and the third is the media. The media has the power and influence to multiply the impact of terrorist incidents and amplify the terrorists' messages in ways they cannot predict. The media must reflect and publicize terrorist incidents. However, such incidents generate ratings. When we look at the case of Türkiye, a country that has suffered from terrorist incidents, the life stories of the victims and their families, emotional images at the funerals of martyrs, messages of condemnation from government officials, and the news sequence of public outrage over terrorist acts are the way the media usually covers terrorism news (Baybars-Hawks, 2010).

Various forms of media play a leading role in moments of political conflict. Traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers can either incite political violence or help to reduce it. It can be used as a propaganda tool or serve as a megaphone addressing a broad audience. There have been various times when the media has been used as a political weapon. The Nazis' use of radio is an example of this. Similarly, during the Rwandan genocide 1994, local radio stations encouraged Hutu extremists to massacre Tutsis. A recent example of media and violence concerns the conflict in Syria. While the Syrian state media legitimized its interventions by characterizing the rebels as terrorists, almost all global media outlets created a "portrait of Assad as a dictator and illegal leader" through anti-Assad coverage, thereby legitimizing interventions against him. This has fueled and sustained the war on Syrian soil (Alkhalifah, 2018).

Several studies are showing the symbiotic relationship between terrorist organizations and the media. Alicja Stanco-Wawrzynska's research puts forward six hypotheses on the subject:

1. Contemporary media, particularly television, often prefer to bring shocking/sensational news to the screens and pages. Consequently, terrorists target public spaces as sites of attack, and among these, especially those that have symbolic meaning for states and the public.
2. The space and style in which terrorist attacks are staged are designed to attract media attention. This style should be a kind of spectacle. The power of the image should have a shocking effect on the receiver, mainly since terrorist attacks are explained "in images" rather than "in words" on television screens. Image and sound stimulate the perception and emotional response of the receiver. The dramatic nature of the image brings more attention to the story presented. Therefore, "terrorist activity" should be a "staged spectacle" like other media spectacles.
3. Some terrorists who frequently appear in the media also become "celebrities." Sometimes even the name of a terrorist organization is identified with its founder. By using the name of the leader of the terrorist organization, the media often identifies that organization with that person. As a result, a person becomes a brand, as in the case of Osama Bin Laden.
5. Due to the logic of the media, the goals and messages of terrorist organizations are often simplified. The media tends to express their messages in simple slogans. This leads to the transformation of the messages of terrorist organizations into symbols of the organization. Generalized and simplified messages are easy to understand.
6. In the American and world media, terrorist incidents are presented as the first, second, or third news (Stanco-Wawrzynska, 2017).

Our ordinary everyday lives are built as the antithesis of chaos. So no one wants to live an ordinary working day imagining that an airplane is going to crash into the place where they work. But this is precisely the function of terrorism: The evolution of everyday lives into fear and anxiety due to chaos. Research on why terrorist organizations cause so much fear exemplifies this situation. In order to gain

media coverage and to create a buzz, a life of tranquillity needs to evolve into chaos and tragedy. This is achieved through attacks on iconic sites (such as the Twin Towers and the Pentagon), important events (such as the Boston Marathon, the Bastille celebrations in Nice, France, the Christmas celebrations in San Bernardino, California, and the Christmas market in Berlin), and everyday entertainment venues that attract media attention (such as the Eagles Death Metal concert at the Bataclan Theater in Paris). In this way, the communicative value is increased, the media is given the opportunity it has been waiting for and the masses are psychologically destroyed (Cui & Rothenbuhler, 2017).

At this point, we must look closer at the relationship between traditional mass media and terrorism. According to researchers such as Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf, "terrorism itself is a method of communication. For a terrorist, it is the message that matters, not the target". They are, therefore, in Schmid and de Graaf's terms, "message producers". Terrorism as a non-verbal communication method is based on images and imagery. Most major acts of terrorism are likened to "a carefully choreographed theater play" by scholars and writers on the subject (Archetti, 2013). Yuval Noah Harari, while talking about terrorist activities, states that terrorist organizations are too weak organizations to wage an all-out war, so they aim to capture people's minds by staging a theatrical show. In Hariri's words, by "killing a handful of people, they succeed in putting millions in fear of death". This is why terrorists think more like theater producers than army generals, Hariri argues. He explains why today's societies, in relative security, are so influenced by the power of terrorist activities with the following analogy: "the sound of a small coin in a large empty jar" (Harari, 2018).

On the other hand, as Guy Debord points out, what we call democracy has created its own enemy, namely terrorism. According to Debord, (2014) the history of terrorism has been written by the state. Societies confronted with terrorism, or "bystanders" as Debord calls them, cannot know everything about terrorism. However, they are expected to understand in this situation to be convinced that any path other than terrorism is rational and more democratic.

In the early years of television, terrorists tried to use this mass media tool. In 1970, when the Palestine Liberation Organization hijacked three planes to Jordan, they wanted television journalists to be there. Nicholson, a reporter for the British channel ITN, was one of those present, along with a local reporter. When all the hostages on the plane were released, Nicholson asked the cameraman to turn off his camera. But the cameraman did not do as Nicholson told him and managed to film the moment the planes exploded. Nicholson asked the cameraman how he knew this, to which the cameraman replied: "I am one of them". So the local cameraman was also a PLO member and had filmed their actions himself (Çaplı, 2007). Similarly, the events at the Munich Olympics in 1972 gave terrorists an extraordinarily good opportunity, as the Olympics were broadcast live. Bülent Çaplı notes that news formats changed in the 1990s with the emergence of private channels alongside public broadcasting, and simultaneously terrorist acts became increasingly violent and sophisticated. With its shocking impact, terrorism became "favorite news" for commercial television (Çaplı, 2007). Hezbollah's 1984 hijacking of a Rome to Cairo flight is a case in point. The hijackers demanded the release of 776 Shia prisoners held in Israeli jails. The hijacked plane flew to Beirut, Algeria, and back to Beirut. Each time the plane landed, first non-American citizens were released and then the women and children on board. As a result of these releases, only thirty-nine American male hostages remained on board. The three major American television networks extensively broadcasted this seventeen-day adventure. ABC, NBC and CBS devoted almost two-thirds of their afternoon newscasts to the hostage crisis (14 minutes out of 21). However, their pre-programmed coverage was interrupted by breaking news and new developments eighty times more often than before during these seventeen days. In the process, reporters went from being merely anchors or producers of the news to negotiators at the negotiating table with terrorists. On ABC's Good Morning America, one of the leaders of the Lebanese group was even asked, "Do you have any last

words for President Reagan this morning?" In those seventeen days, the terrorists had found such a channel through which they could explain themselves that even jokes were made about American television. The famous ABC (American Broadcasting Corporation) television was renamed Amal News Company and NBC (National Broadcasting Corporation) television was renamed Nabih Berri Company (Hoffman, 2006, s. 176-177). The relationship between terrorist organizations and the media is so intense that, in many cases, terrorist organizations create their own media structures and operate freely within the borders of countries that provide them with explicit or implicit support.

An example of this is the PKK's television channels that broadcast / have broadcast from Europe. The terrorist organization has made and continues to make extensive use of the print and audiovisual media and mass media in order to achieve its goals and objectives. The establishment of MED-TV, which broadcasts via satellite, is an example of this. The first center of the channel was established in London, the capital of England. However, after a certain period of time, when there was indisputable evidence of direct links between this channel and the terrorist organization, the UK could no longer resist the pressure and the channel's headquarters was moved to Brussels. When Belgium faced a similar situation and found itself in a difficult situation by being labeled as a "country supporting terrorism", MED-TV was closed down. Likewise, the same polemics continued regarding Roj-TV, which has been operating in Denmark since 2004 (Fernandez Bermejo, 2006). The PKK terrorist organization, which is seen to actively use traditional tools in organizational activities nowadays is using new media / digital media tools such as internet sites, blogs, IP TV, digital journals, social media platforms and online games (Ergün, 2024, s. 32).

The attack on the twin towers was the most high-profile act of terrorism that was broadcast live on television. Because the World Trade Center was symbolically a symbol of both capitalism and modernity, its propaganda value was very high. The September 11 attack by al-Qaeda was asymmetrical in the classic sense. The sixteen minutes between the attacks on the first and second towers were enough for newsrooms in New York to get their helicopters in the air and broadcast the terrorist event live. This has become the most well-known example of propaganda in action. In Afghanistan, the Taliban was one of the organizations that understood the importance of 24/7 television broadcasting. They especially understood the importance of the Qatar-based Al Jazeera, known as the Arab CNN. Terrorist organizations were so adept at using traditional media that Western TV channels refrained from airing Bin Laden videos "for fear that they might transmit a secret message to sleeper cells" (Taylor, 2003).

Some researchers even think that there would be no such thing as terrorism if the media did not exist or did not transmit their messages to the public. Terrorism differs from conventional warfare in its power to subjugate the will of an opponent or enemy. Targeted killings, kidnappings, bombings and other means are all meant to make opponents bend to the terrorists' will. Another aim of terrorism is to show that authorities, institutions, and symbols are vulnerable to attack at any time and incapable of protecting themselves. Terrorism aims to create a sense of powerlessness and defenselessness in the target audience. The September 11 attacks can be considered within the scope of terrorist attacks that serve this purpose, as they were carried out against symbols of America (Ben-Zedeck, 2007).

By showing that even the United States was vulnerable to attack, these attacks not only instilled fear in the target audience (ordinary citizens) affected by terrorism, but also helped to provide financial and manpower support to the terrorist organization. Regarding the September 11 attacks, we need to open a parenthesis. Baudrillard asks the question "Why the Twin Towers?". According to him, all the tall buildings in Manhattan were competing vertically and produced an architectural panorama reflecting the capitalist system. This famous image of a pyramidal forest was visible from the sea. With the construction of the World Trade Center in 1973, this image was transformed. The depiction of the system was no longer an obelisk or a pyramid, but a punched card and a statistical graph. This architectural imagery also heralded the replacement of competitiveness by digitization and

countability/accountability. The image of the twin tower, the doubling of the signifier, was also an expression of networking and monopoly. According to Baudrillard, monopoly would not have been perfectly embodied if there had been only one image. The two towers were literally designed as "twins" of each other.

Shaped as a pure computer image of the banking and financial system, they represented the "brain" (the brain of global capital), and attacks on these buildings represented a symbolic attack on the brain and its nerve center. The attack on the first building could be characterized as an "accident". But with the attack on the second building, it became clear that it was an act of terrorism. If a single building had been attacked, it would never have had the same symbolic impact. The architectural object was destroyed, but it was the symbolic object that was to be destroyed. According to Baudrillard (2002), even if the White House itself had been destroyed [perhaps] it would not have had the same effect because political power no longer meant much. Real power lay elsewhere. It also led to sympathy for al-Qaeda among the masses who felt hopeless in the face of an "invincible world power". In explaining "why the twin towers were so important", Harari offers an explanation similar to Baudrillard's. As we know, on the same day that the twin towers fell, the Pentagon and a third target were attacked. So why was the attack on the twin towers, and not the militarily important attack on the Pentagon, engraved in our memories? Harari explains this in the following words:

"Because the Pentagon was a relatively flat and unpretentious structure, whereas the World Trade Center buildings resembled tall phallic totems, and their collapse had a tremendous audiovisual impact. No one who witnessed the collapse of the towers can get this image out of their minds. Because we know that terrorism is theater, we evaluate its emotional impact, not its material impact." (Harari, 2018). We have already mentioned that there is a symbiotic relationship between terrorist organizations and the media. In fact, the relationship between terrorism and the media is no different from any other media-source relationship. Journalists want to get a story, data, color or news, while terrorist organizations are given the time, place and opportunity to be heard by the public.

As a result of 9/11, the demonization of Muslims has left Western nations shocked, outraged, and feeling the need for revenge (Chomsky, 2002, s. 18). The September 11 attacks were the first shocking act on American soil since the Anglo-American War of 1812. The attacks on two important symbols, one military and the other economic, which shook the "sacred character" (Valantin, 2006) and the "allmighty" image of American soil, also signaled the beginning of a new era. In his book on the link between Hollywood and the Pentagon, Valantin also points out that the September 11 attacks increased the traditional tendency of Hollywood to form a bloc with Washington in the process of the already existing "National Security Cinema". In a meeting between Hollywood representatives and White House representatives, the movie industry was asked to support the political stance called the "war on terrorism". However, an important element in this support is to avoid Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis and to underline that the war is not against Islam but against terrorism. For this reason, the new type of national security cinema emphasizes scenes in which "good" Muslims put their lives on the line "to eliminate the terrorist threat" (Valantin, 2006).

Nevertheless, figures such as Osama Bin Laden, for example, and Anwar al-Awlaki, John the Jihadist, Charlie Manson, or Carlos the Jackal, who have already committed acts of terrorism, have been used by Hollywood in one way or another. And a "culture of narcissism" has taken hold in the West, transforming the "hero" into the "famous person", as Gerard Rabinovitch puts it. And the "assassin", especially in the 70s, has assumed the pose of someone glamorized through violence. This person displays a pleasant idle attitude and gleefully exposes this trait, which is a remnant of the brutal attitude (Rabinovitch, 2013).

At the same time, the most crucial indicator of the US "War on Terror" mentality is the image of the American citizen watching "famous" terrorist acts and the response to these acts on television. The photo of then-US President Barack Obama and his staff in the White House Situation Room watching the US Special Forces raid on Osama Bin Laden's hideout in Pakistan (Little, 2014) via live TV via a drone is probably etched in many memories.

Human beings, or at least the television viewing audience, try to minimize the risks of being driven to anxiety by the salience of death and mortality by being selective in entertainment media (e.g. finding escape in Survivor during a period of intense martyrdom news): Finding escape in Survivor during a period of intense martyrdom news, etc.). According to studies, the average American spends more than three hours in front of the television. The "concern about the lack of justice against evil and terrorism" also reveals that the majority of these viewers watch "crime-themed series/movies/reality shows" while "fleeing from death". This is because programs with the themes of rights and justice eventually turn into an arena where justice is achieved, and viewers derive great satisfaction from the establishment of justice (Taylor, 2012). In fact, the main reason why photos of then US President Barack Obama and his staff watching Operation Geronimo or the operation to Osama Bin Laden's hideout was released to the press was to ensure a state of catharsis in public and to keep alive the belief that "justice will be served sooner or later".

However, some studies show that terrorists have achieved their primary goal of "spreading fear" through the media. For example, between October 16 and September 15, 2001, a group of scientists conducted a telephone survey of 1008 adults living in the Manhattan area of New York City. According to the results of this survey, 14.7% of those who watched "people falling or jumping out of the windows of the World Trade Center" on television continuously developed post-traumatic stress disorder and 17.4% developed depression. In those who did not follow these images in the media, these rates were 6.2% and 5.3%, respectively (Ahern, 2002). Another study, this time conducted in 2004 under the leadership of psychiatrist Jennifer Ahern, reveals the shocking effect of television on the audience. On September 11, 2001, the images of people trying to escape from collapsed buildings and the dust cloud were repeatedly shown on television in the US and around the world. A study revealed that 98% of the US public watched at least one hour of television a day on September 11 and afterward. This resulted in 111.9 times, especially in the week following the explosion, the images of the plane crashing into the World Trade Center, the collapse of the buildings, people running away screaming amidst the dust and smoke and, to a lesser extent, people jumping out of the buildings.

Jennifer Ahern states that reducing post-disaster images may also lead to a reduction in fear and post-traumatic stress. In addition, the effects of televised news/programs about various disasters on children are also being researched. News reports on disasters often intensely pump a sense of suffering and personal vulnerability. Repetitive media coverage of disasters/terrorism can be psychologically devastating, especially as it re-traumatizes people in the region where the event occurred. There are several examples of this situation. In the early 1990s, children affected by the Iraq invasion re-watched the images of death and war on television, which led to post-traumatic stress. Again, for children who watched television images again after the Oklahoma terrorist attack in 1995, this situation created a reminder effect. This situation reveals that television screens have a secondary traumatic impact on children regarding terrorism, war and disasters (Ahern, 2004).

4. DIGITAL MEDIA AND TERRORISM: VIDEOGAMES AND E-FATWAS

When we talk about new media, we need to draw attention to the features that distinguish it from traditional media. These can be listed as follows:

- New textual experiences: New genres, texts, entertainment platforms and forms of media consumption (computer games, simulations, movie experiences with special effects, etc.).

- New ways of depicting the world: Although these ways are not fully articulated, they offer new experiences and possibilities. (Three-dimensional virtual environment, screen-based interactive multimedia, etc.)
- New connections between consumers and users and new media technologies: All the changes in the use and reception of images and communication in our everyday lives.
- New experiences in the relations between embodiment, identity and community: Shifts and changes in time and space through which we experience ourselves and our place in the world.
- The redefinition of our biological body through technological media: The struggle of differences between artificial and human, nature and technology, body and artificial limbs, real and virtual.
- New models of organization and production: Large-scale reorganization and integration in media culture, industry, economics, access, ownership structure and regulation (Lister, 2013).

Islam and Islamism also find a place in this new media environment in various ways. Video games, for example, offer the possibility for any user to assume a risk-neutral, anonymous and virtual role. The concept of risk neutrality should be considered as "a risk that exists at that moment". But of course, there are many risks associated with violent video games. In 1976, the debate on this issue began with the release of *Death Race*, a video game involving death. In the 1980s, Western games such as *Missile Command*, *Pac-Man*, *Berzerk*, *Zaxxon* and *Centipede* were released. The 1990s was the period when the concept of violence became more visible and the graphics started to create the perception of reality, dominated by games such as *Street Fighter*, *Mortal Combat* and *Doom*. Especially in games such as *Mortal Combat*, which includes martial arts, blood and fatal wounds have become visible. When we look at this game specifically, we see that it was banned in many countries then. The 2000s was a period in which graphics became more realistic, so the visibility of violence increased. War games such as *Medal of Honor* or *Call of Duty*, and FPS-style games such as *Counter-Strike* and *Halo*, in which the first-person camera is active, have left their mark on the period (Garcia Cernaz, 2018).

In 2001, after the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon, film critic Michael Medved posed the question: "Can computer games win the war on terror?" In the ongoing process that George Bush called the "War on Terror", all kinds of media tools were positioned to serve this situation. This situation created the "virtual soldier-citizen" type in Roger Stahl's terms. The interventions against Afghanistan and Iraq exploded the sales of war themed video games. The famous *Wired* magazine reported that this increase continued until 2003. Games like *Prisoner of War* and *Medal of Honor: Frontline* have kept the legend of World War II fresh in the memory. Games like *Conflict: Desert Storm* and *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* attempted to legitimize wars with new enemies (like Iraq and Somalia). The most important feature of these games was that they acted in line with the concept and rhetoric of the "War on Terror". The Bush Doctrine, known as the "War on Terror", fought against rogue states and was therefore a type of war that, unlike the Cold War, "had no rules and did not seek a basis for agreement". There was no other way to fight such a "savage and corrupt mob". Therefore, there was no harm in increasing the dose of violence in video games. For example, the cover title of *Conflict: Desert Storm*, a simulation of the Iraq War, was "No Diplomats! No Compromise! No Surrender!" (Stahl, 2006). And this point of view was precisely in line with the Bush Doctrine: "You are either with us or against them!". Marshall McLuhan emphasizes the French phrase *guerre de nerfs* (war of nerves), which characterized the Cold War. He states that in the new electronics-based age, "electrical systems have brought about a new type of warfare more active and obsessive than the hot wars of the industrial age", a war of information and images (Mc Luhan, 2004).

Video games with Islamic content have been around since the mid-2000s. Not only games, but also software related to the Holy Quran, for example. A Syrian video game tells the story of the birth of Islam interactively. According to Gary Bunt, such a development - the emergence of Islamic video games - should be seen as a positive phenomenon, as Islam is usually portrayed negatively in the gaming market

(Bunt, 2009). In his research on Islam-centered games played by Muslim youth, Vit Sisler (2012) found that these games convey cultural, social and religious messages. The first game he examined, Abu Isa's Quest for Knowledge, aims to explain Islam's view of science, Islamic culture and civilization to Muslim and non-Muslim youth. In this game, questions are asked about prayers, fasting, etc., and the levels are advanced as the answers are given correctly. This game, which sets a constructive example, is essential to identity formation. Another game he analyzed, Under Siege, tells the story of a Palestinian young man named Ahmed's struggle against the Israelis, but this time weapons and violence come into play and the enemy is identified one way or another. The last game, Quraish, tells the story of the spread of Islam, depicting the wars and treaties that were made. The common feature of all three games is that, albeit in the virtual world, Islamic beliefs, culture and values are presented to young people, especially in the diaspora, and they are helped to construct an identity. The method used in video games has been used in different media and in different ways in the radicalization process.

Video games are an important leisure activity for young people in the Middle East, just like in the rest of the world. In fact, according to Helal Said Almarri, director general of the Dubai World Trade Center, digital games and gaming have an important place in the Middle Eastern market. Internet cafes are trendy all over the Middle East and the Gulf States. Especially in Egypt, there are a lot of cafes for gaming only, both in the elite neighborhoods and poorer areas, as well as in rural areas. Therefore, such a market demands video games with Islamic content (Sisler, 2009).

Terrorist organizations and extremist formations use video games for their own purposes. Hasan Kıyıcı, who has conducted important research on this subject, refers to the concept of "gamification of terrorism". According to Kıyıcı, terrorist organizations use video games on three different levels. The first is to take advantage of the vast space of known games and the active involvement of radical elements in this medium. Another aspect is that radical groups release games they have designed themselves. Kıyıcı gives the following games as examples: Special Force I and Special Force II, designed by Hezbollah in its own media center. Ethnic Cleansing and White Law are two video games with racist themes released by neo-Nazi groups. And ZOG's Nightmare I and ZOG's Nightmare II are anti-Semitic games by European far-right groups. The third level of terrorist organizations' contact with video games is to modify existing games with vanilla software and make the game suitable for the organization (Kıyıcı, 2002).

In 2014, ISIS produced a propaganda video based on the GTA V game, inviting young people to join the fight against the West. However, under former US President Barack Obama, ISIS released two video games after his declaration that he would weaken and end the influence of ISIS. One was a game called Shoot Obama, and another was a game for children called Captain IS, which featured a character fighting against Captain America. As a result of the interrogations conducted by counterterrorism experts, it is seen that games such as Call of Duty, Battlefield and Counter-Strike are used by terrorists, as well as parts of violent Hollywood movies such as Saw, Hunger Games and Sniper, especially in propaganda videos. A comment made by a French jihadist in an online chat room illustrates the link between video games and terrorism: "This is our call to duty (Call of Duty) and we will be resurrected in Paradise" (Estevez Carmona, 2019). In fact, mainstream Western states that release such violent video games are also responsible for the creation of stereotypes. For example, the famous Ubisoft, a French video game manufacturer, called Bolivia a narco-state in its game 'Tom Clancy's: Ghost Recon Windlands'. This caused a diplomatic crisis between the two countries. The relationship between video games and terrorism has become so important that organizations like the CIA and the National Security Agency have been infiltrating games like World of Warcraft and Second Life since 2008. And they have been trying to reveal the in-game communication activities of terrorist organizations. Apart from the US, Israel is another state that has taken important steps in this regard. The State of Israel, which has created an organization called "Project Hasbara", uses public diplomacy (Moreno Cantano, 2022).

Especially for Muslims living outside the borders of the states dominated by Islam, i.e., the internet has been an important medium in the diaspora. Not only in games, but new media or digital media are also used as a reference source for the rules and regulations governing the daily lives of Muslims. However, Islam's relationship between the internet and religion is not unique. In IRC, newsgroups and forums, different religious beliefs also began their internet adventure. Later, e-magazines containing religious information, known as "e-zines", began to take off. The first examples are the following sites: First Church of Cyberspace, Beliefnet and BuddhaNet. In Christianity, for example, there are structures known as e-Churches. And these organizations bring "real-world rituals and roles into the virtual world" (Dawson, 2005). Although religious rituals have a different spirit and authenticity in the real world, in terms of communicating with their congregations, the internet and the virtual world have become a useful tool for religious beliefs such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam.

The internet is also a place where opinions and advice that shape a Muslim's lifestyle, known in the Islamic world as "ijtihad" and "fatwa", can be found and debated. The people issuing fatwas here may not have any "academic" background and may even ignore what traditional fatwa authorities such as Al-Azhar say. The concepts of ijtihad and fatwa have moved away from the traditional structure and have become global in cyberspace with the development of internet technology. This structure, known as E-ijtihad or E-fatwas, may differ from one website to another. Some are compilations based on the writings of "mujtahids", while others may be anonymous. Some websites are designed in question-and-answer format, and there are structures where answers can be received via e-mail. Not only computers but also cell phones come into play here. And even how the mass media is used can be a matter of debate. For example, a court in Dubai has ruled that a man can divorce his wife through an SMS message. Therefore, online fatwas are updated in some databases and websites (Bunt, 2003).

Some websites that stand out in Gary Bunt's research on this topic are Ask-Imam.com, Troid.org, Pakistan Link, The Fiqh Council of North America and As-Sunna Foundation of America. These sites, which often feature opinions and views on everyday life, are followed by Muslim youth. In addition, journalists and writers in many Islamic countries frequently write about the pros and cons of Islamic content on the internet. For example, the Pakistani writer Razi Azmi has said that the internet, like dynamite and nuclear power, can be used both constructively and destructively. And he argued that while the internet is a tremendous source of power that contains accurate information, it is also a source of ignorance, distortion, superstition and half-truths [about Islam] that must not be forgotten (Bunt, 2003).

At this point, however, we should also emphasize the concept of the ummah. As is well known, the ummah can be defined as the unity of believers across the globe, independent of time and space. However, when we talk about the "virtual ummah", we need to underline that there are a number of limitations. First, a large part of the Islamic society is still far from the internet connection. Olivier Roy makes the following points when describing the "virtual ummah": "The virtual ummah on the internet is an immense space where individuals can express themselves in terms of being a member of a community. In this space, individuals do not feel themselves as "passive members". On the contrary, they see themselves as "participants"". We can say that this is the difference between the Ummah and the virtual Ummah. Whether used for positive or negative purposes, Internet technology emerges as a "limited" space that brings a sense of participation. The United States of America is the creator and dominant producer of Internet technology. Therefore, many regions, especially the Middle East, are users of this technology. However, the internet and information technologies are inherently a structure that ultimately allows for content creation (Bunt, 2003).

Especially with the end of the Cold War, the internet and the culture of virtuality began to dominate the world and rapidly became widespread along with traditional mass media. However, one of the most

important issues at this point is that especially since the 1990s, America has identified the Middle East as the new enemy. The "battlefields" where traditional mass media had previously been used more intensively were rapidly being replaced by "virtual battlefields". Video and PC games produced in this context portrayed an "imagined Middle East". The main feature of these plays was the reflection of the classical orientalist perspective. According to many academics, this period and process, described as "Neo-Orientalism," was the adaptation of the famous "military-industrial / entertainment network" to a new technology. Per the nature of orientalism, the Arab or Muslim characters depicted in these plays appeared as follows: "uncivilized, archaic, totalitarian and savage" personalities who oppose or at least are incompatible with the "civilized, modern, democratic and peaceful West" and its universal values (Saber & Webber, 2017). However, these games differ from other mass media in that (1) violence can be experienced more visibly and intensely, (2) the act of violence (even if virtual) is entirely at the user's fingertips, and (3) such an act of violence is usually directed by children or young people. Therefore, it has been possible to participate in the spiral of violence/marginalization through video games not only as a spectator, as in traditional mass media, but also by having a user experience. Jean Baudrillard (2001) describes the situation in video games, which he calls "the murder of reality", in the following words:

"By moving into a virtual world, we go beyond alienation, into the land of the Other's deprivation. We move into a world where everything ceases to be utopia, thought, fantasy and imagination, because it has already become reality and action. No dream, idea or concept remains there. There is no time even for imagining. Events, real events, don't even have time to exist. Everything is prioritized by virtual reality. Here one tries to create a perfect, completely positive world, free of all delusions, evil and negativity, and even death itself. This is what I call the perfect crime."

At this point, if we go back to the connection between terrorist organizations and the internet, we need to look at al-Qaeda's structure and power on the internet. In mid-2008, the renowned Economist magazine described the al-Qaeda organization as a terrorist organization, a militia, and a "subculture of insurgency". He describes it as a "virtual caliphate in cyberspace" despite the absence of armed physical forces in Pakistan, Somalia and elsewhere. According to an article in the Economist, the Internet network allows different jihadist groups to connect in a kind of cloud system, while simultaneously spreading the idea that Islam is under attack uniformly. However, the internet has always been a space where militant attacks are praised and various documents that can be described as a terrorist's handbook are shared" (Seib & Janbek, 2010). Terrorist groups use the Internet effectively as a communication medium. This area, known as the "Dark Web" in many sources, is also the domain of terrorist groups. In 1997, there were as many as ten websites, while this number reached 4,350 in 2005, 4,800 in 2006 and 6,000 in 2008. Today, it is estimated that all terrorist groups have websites on the Internet.

5. CONCLUSION

As stated in the study, the media is the oxygen of terrorism. The main reason for this is that terrorism itself is a method of communication and aims to be heard. Therefore, even though the mass media are seen as useful ideological devices under the guidance of states in the 'war on terror', terrorist organizations use these tools to spread their messages with the same professionalism. In fact, international terrorist organizations, which are quite adept at this, have created their own mass communication networks. And through both traditional mass media and internet technology, they have made rapid progress in recruiting militants, instilling fear in societies and promoting their ideological goals, and have kept pace with the times. In particular, international terrorist organizations (especially al-Qaeda), which have the power to influence today's societies, which Manuel Castells defines as 'network society or information society', use internet technology with a professionalism that cannot be expected from them. And just like the Western countries, the real producers of this technology, they

reach young audiences through computer games, websites and YouTube videos. Today, the war on terrorism represents a war between the 'elites of the network' and the 'outsiders'. And both sides use the same weapons with reckless abandon. There is no doubt that the loser of such a war, which continues in the virtual world, will undoubtedly be ordinary citizens, who will be more endangered as a result of more strict control of the channels that cannot be controlled or whose control by nature can be seen as contrary to democratic values, or on the contrary, this control becomes impossible.

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Yazar Katkı Oranı Beyanı: Yazarın katkı oranı %100'dür.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı: Yazar herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmektedir.

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