Media in the Global Context

Applications and Interventions

Edited by
Emmanuel K. Ngwainmbi

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Media in the Global Context

"Once again, the irrepressible intellectual Emmanuel Ngwainmbi has brought us another one of his outstanding books, Global Media Representation and International Community Perception, with a steady hand on organization, choice of chapter writers and a sharp focus on the worldwide nature of media representation as the international community sees it. Ngwainmbi is clearly one of the leaders in communication and this book, edited by him, shows his mastery."

—Prof. Molefi Kete Asante, *author of* Revolutionary Pedagogy

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"This book strikes at the core of media representation in a global context. Through bold and insightful articles from scholars from different part of the world, it examines critical historical and contemporary issues in media representation. Clearly, it is a great resource for those interested in the interplay between the media and the global society."

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"This book brings refreshing perspectives on perennial and emerging concerns about media and communication in societies from different parts of the world. The writers contend with these global imperatives from their peculiar local contexts. They shine a light on new opportunities for democratised access to the media, appraise prospects offered to otherwise marginalised demographic groups,

and focus on the pressing issues of reliable reporting as a means of tackling diverse forms of insecurities. Through this volume, Ngwainmbi and the team of writers confront the techno-glorious promises of a more equitable global media scape. The conditions under which these promises are feasible are left for you to find out. An insightful read!"

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University of Winchester

"This book offers a timely contribution to the understanding of the dynamics of global media representation and perception in a new era undermined by the unprecedented connectivity, both symbolically and physically, in human history. Instead of repeating a technical-driven globalization illusion, this book offers a collection of wonderful works to map the diversity of localization in which technological adoption interacts with the changing cultural and social patterns… It is indeed an inspiring work for international communication research and practice across the globe."

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Vice Chair, International Communication Section, IAMCR;
Editor-in-chief, China Media Research,
www.ChinaMediaResearch.cn

"A very welcome addition to the literature on globalization of media and communication. What distinguishes this valuable collection is its focus on the global South."

—Daya Thussu, *author of* International Communication: Continuity and Change
& *Professor of International Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University*

Emmanuel K. Ngwainmbi
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FOREWORD

Various media are the conduits through which we gain access to the world around us. Consider this, without media we would have no idea what is happening with the elections of world leaders. We would be virtually clueless about the full value and expanse of commercial products created in other countries. Our knowledge of cultural nuances throughout the world would be limited to whatever was brought back from individual journeys to other countries. Media are our portals to knowledge and information across the globe. Even still, that information is steeped in the political, socioeconomic, communal, cultural, and communicative complexities of the convergent media that bring us the stories about these other worlds.

Emmanuel Ngwainmbi's book *Media in the Global Context: Applications and Interventions* is an ambitious undertaking that seeks to explore uses of global media globalization for a range of purposes. To appreciate the scope of this volume one merely needs to contemplate the intricacies of media in each respective country. Each nation has thousands of traditional, and exponentially more, contemporary social media channels. These include television, radio, film, and print journalism. They also include digital media channels that prior to the 1990s had not been a factor. Some have restrictions on what can and cannot be publicly said about the government. Those countries with a totalitarian regime constrict how or whether the truth reaches citizens. Even still, there are those who use the tool of the internet as an apparatus to terrify others. Regardless of the teleological ends, media are imbued with certain key

characteristics. It is designed to be an open and neutral system that is used for distributing dedicated and therefore socially, politically, and relationally particular information. There are distinctive features of contemporary global media that make it far more compelling than the media of the 1970s and 1980s.

Specifically there are three distinct aspects of contemporary global media that inhabit the core of the text you hold in your hands. These features of a mediated information society might be best described as functions:

- Global Media as neutral and diffuse
- Global Media as transformative
- Global Media as a global germ

GLOBAL MEDIA AS NEUTRAL AND DIFFUSE

It seems odd in a book like this one to even form one's lips to say that global media is neutral given the sociopolitical and economic tensions at work in media development, policy, and distribution. The debates on global media endlessly situate government, corporation, and personal interests in an impossible triangle of consumerism and politics. This reminds me of the old debate about firearms that starts something like this: "Guns don't kill people. People kill people." Even as a gun owner it is hard to say this with a straight face, knowing that the absence of guns owned by citizens may not end violence but it will significantly stem everyday senseless violence among citizens. The mere presence of global media permits the spreading of information at rates that are fast and often out of the control of otherwise hegemonic fascist states. On the one hand, to say that global media is neutral is to say that information or truth is also neutral. On the other hand, it can be argued that the global media's tug of war with truth and propaganda is because of the government-corporation-personal interest triangle rather than something that is endemic within media as a conduit for sharing the truths of lived experiences. In other words, we just use media that way. No matter what perspective aligns with your own it is clear that the real issue is, what people do with media rather than what media does to them. Media is an institution whose agenda is set by the ongoing priorities and politics. As you read this book and are introduced to the discussions about terrorism and media, it is striking that media are used as conduits for multiple

discourses that seek to convey meanings to specified audiences, sometimes for nefarious purposes intended to dominate others. The convergence of media via different media channels such as radio, internet, and television can intensify the rhetoric in a way that regularizes privilege and dominance. Global media are only as neutral as the people who regulate it, and yet media are always widely distributed once information hits the internet.

GLOBAL MEDIA AS TRANSFORMATIVE

Media is not always used for dispatching misbehavior, violence, or terror. It may also be used to inspire, uplift, or bring hope. Although this book examines global media and fake news, community disintegration, terror, and contested space, there is also a countervailing set of messages here about the yearning for an ethical space that normalizes and embraces humanity and equity. There is a transformative quality to global media, perhaps more so than any other kind of media. The global media offer a portal for seeing the rest of the world. It awakens curiosity about how other individuals and families live, how regimes operate, how global business functions, and how other cultures sustain their identities. To the individual, no matter where one lives in the world, digital media is the synecdoche for the great expanse of opportunity and technological abundance, often implying the question, "If I could share a message with the whole world what would I say." The transformative capacity of the global media is awe-inspiring, especially when used to improve life.

GLOBAL MEDIA AS A GERM

When the media does not improve life, it is like a germ. A germ is a seedling. It is something that is innocuous until placed within conditions that help it to spread. In the same way that germs are invasive and often invisible, the stealth qualities of global media can often leave us wondering whose intrusive agenda is being proposed. A prime example of this is the way in which US President Donald Trump has used media to signal his hyperactive conservative, misogynist, and racially xenophobic values. Even as US citizens seek, refuge from the vile nature of President Trump's discourse the global media constantly reminds us that the more egregious politics of Trump's regime seem to have been heavily influenced by Trump's relationship with Russian president Vladimir Putin.

It is through the global media's setting of its agenda that any chance of focusing on any of Trump's redeeming qualities is intercepted by the barrage of press coverage and political standpoints concerning Trump's private meetings with Putin. Without repeated coverage of this relationship, the average citizen would have either forgotten or moved on from further curiosities about this clandestine meeting. Now, with the stoking of this fire, Americans are stirred up about Trump's alleged disloyalties, or at least his suspicious dealings with one of the United States' known enemies. Of course, President Trump would like US citizens to believe there is no Russian interference of the US presidential election and that any relationship with Putin is non-consequential and miscellaneous. Naturally, the socioeconomic implications of a Russian alliance leave citizens less than satisfied with Trump's casual dismissal of the meetings. Nonetheless, the influence of global media makes it virtually impossible for Trump to escape scrutiny over this decision. We are reminded once again that the information society that is principally responsible for the success of global media has shifted power to citizens to directly and forcefully interrogate the state apparatus. That is a powerful tool in a democratic society, but not so much in an autocratic one where citizens are disallowed from questioning authority. The differing geopolitical contexts must not be lost on the reader. What *Media in the Global Context: Applications and Interventions* shows us is how the changing conditions from one global media habitat to another shapes the discourse and outcomes for citizens.

CONCLUSION

When operating at its optimum global media are useful for intercepting and/or troubling institutional processes that undermine or debilitate communities.

The most powerful aspect of the internet is its ability to be used as a multifaceted instrument. The Global media have been an economic growth engine stimulated by a world economy constantly in search of consumers. It is also often a space unfettered by localized restraints. Consequently, it can be used for any and every kind of personal, political, social, and economic interest. The three functions of global media listed here are clearly not an exhaustive set. A citizenry that is able to use global media to retrieve custody over meanings, to take agency in deciding its future, and to interrogate dominance is a privileged one.

This book shows us that not all citizens are this fortunate. Some are terrorized and some live within the bounds of contested spaces on a daily basis. Some do their best to manage the impacts on their families, communities, and identities via media. Unfortunately, the sober reality is that there are technological deficits as there are deficits in our lived experience that continue to limit the embrace of our humanity.

Cincinati, USA   Ronald L. Jackson II

Dr. Ronald L. Jackson II is an immediate past President of the National Communication Association, Professor of communication, former Dean of the McMicken College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Cincinnati (UC), and an internationally renowned identity scholar and sought after speaker. He is an award-winning author of more than 75 publications related to the study of masculinity, identity negotiation, race, and culture. He has published 15 books including his most recent books *Interpreting Tyler Perry* (with Jamel Bell) and the 2014 International Comic-con Will Eisner award-winning book *Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation* (with Sheena Howard). His book with Kimberly Moffitt and Simone Puff about the award-winning TV show Scandal—*Gladiators in Suits: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Representation in Scandal*—is forthcoming with Syracuse University Press in Summer 2019. Ron earned all degrees in communication (with a specialty in organizational and cultural communication). He received a B.A. and M.A. from University of Cincinnati, In addition, a Ph.D. from Howard University. He has held faculty appointments at Penn State University and University of Illinois prior to joining the faculty at University of Cincinnati.

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Terrorism as Media Propaganda: A Theoretical Approach

Charles Okigbo and Blessing E. Okafor

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism, derived from the Latin term terrere, *to frighten*, refers to the strategic use of intentionally perpetrated violence through lethal instruments of warfare with the ostensible goal of creating fear and panic to achieve predetermined political, religious, and ethnically oriented goals. Its typical method is the unleashing of violence against vulnerable or soft targets, although military posts have not been spared, as was the case with the Beirut 1983 bombing that claimed the lives of 241 US and 58 French soldiers who were peacekeepers. The primary goal of terrorism is to attract public attention by the violent acts as well as media pronouncements that precede or come after the attacks. Terrorism is primarily a communication of an unusual nature because there is always a sender or messenger, a message, a target audience, and some feedback. Schmid and de Graaf (1982) are convinced that terrorism is not only an act of

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communication but that for the terrorist, what matters the most is the message, not the victims.

Because terrorists care more about the message they transmit through their attacks, and how the public or groups interpret this message, they pay considerable attention to the dramatic and visual impacts of their attacks. Many terrorist attacks are staged to achieve a high visual effect and command full attention from the public. Alex Schmid (2005) averred that terrorism is fundamentally a communicative act whereby the victims of the violence serve as a channel for the message. Terrorist communicators perceive that the louder and more impactful the news, the more successful the attack. Victims are usually people, as such within the context of communication they can be considered as message or messenger (channel). According to Argomaniz and Lynch (2018, p. 491), the victims of terrorism are the messengers for the violent act even if they are rarely the focus of our investigative efforts. When Boko Haram terrorists attacked a Nigerian high school and kidnapped 220 female students, these victims were messengers, also a message from the terrorists who were preaching that Western education is "haram" (evil) with life and death consequences for young people going to school.

Whether victims of terrorist attacks are messengers or messages, the goals are usually fear, intimidation, anxiety, and insecurity. There is always a clear strategy on how to maximize the impact of the message through the messenger for Crenshaw (1998) has explained that terrorists do not communicate nonsensically. Terrorists are strategic and careful in their plans and actions, even when the end may be suicidal. Communication has an intrinsic value for terrorists whose aim, according to Bocksette (2008, p. 8) "is to exploit the media to achieve maximum attainable publicity as an amplifying force multiplier to influence the targeted audiences." The mission of terrorists is to influence target audiences through their attacks on the victims. Addressing their mission through communication qualifies terrorists as strategic communicators. If we accept strategic communication as the "purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its missions" (Hallahan et al. 2007), it is easy to agree with Rothenberger (2015, p. 487) that strategic communication can be applied to terrorism discourse. Terrorist attacks portend significant communication messages not only in the terrorist act itself but also in "the continued communication about it, (and) the interpretations and explanations (that) are important issues for terrorist

groups." In attaching meaning to terrorist acts, these acts become symbols laden with powerful messages for specific members of the target audience. The discourse of terrorism as strategic communication touches on many aspects of the phenomenon, and not surprisingly, it continues to attract interdisciplinary attention worldwide.

Context

Terrorism is so widely perceived by different groups that it defies consensual definitions. It is perpetrated by actors without any ideologies, suicide groups without clear directions, well-organized global networks of highly trained professionals, and occasionally by sovereign states that want to teach their enemies lessons of life and death. A common effect of many terrorist attacks is the crisis that ensues from attacks and resulting discussions and interpretations by the media and influencers. Terrorists rely on violent attacks to communicate fear, intimidation, and insecurity. As the cumulative evidence from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) has shown, terrorist violence remains extraordinarily high compared to historical trends. Ending or curtailing terrorism will require more communication than military intervention, hence the need to understand terrorism as strategic communication.

Terrorism is a complex phenomenon to unravel, and its discourse deserves more attention than researchers, governments and the media have accorded so far. It is an age-old problem which continues to evolve even in disciplines such as political science, security studies, and communication. The wide-ranging definitions, explanations, and exemplars of terrorism are commonly encountered in many subjects.

The complexity of the concept of terrorism underlines some of the current discussions of "the complex relationship between radicalization, narratives of victimhood, and political violence" (Argomaniz and Lynch 2018, p. 491). Terrorism is not a monopoly of non-state actors, and thus we need to pay closer attention to "state targeting of combatants – for states can act as terrorists just as non-state actors can" (Taylor 2018, p. 591). As a complex phenomenon, terrorism takes on different features, and it continues to evolve depending on the driving motives of perpetrators, some of who are local individuals, lone attackers, or members of international networks. Although ever-growing and changing, it

still has some robust features. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START 2018) reported three consecutive years (2015–2017) of declining numbers of attacks and deaths worldwide since terrorist violence reached its peak of nearly 17,000 attacks and 45,000 total deaths in 2014. The scenario of incidents was complicated by the deadliest terrorist incident in 2017 that took place in Mogadishu, Somalia and claimed more than 580 lives and wounded 300 people. Since 1970, more than 180,000 terrorist attacks have been recorded since 9/11 (START 2018). Despite concerted efforts by some countries and global coalitions to prevent and counteract terrorism through military and public diplomacy operations, the results are not inspiring. Overall, terrorist attacks remain extraordinarily high when compared to historical trends dating back to the decade before the 9/11 attack in the United States.

An essential justification for examining terrorism as strategic communication is the reality that terrorist attacks have become part of our contemporary political, sociocultural, and communication landscape. We cannot undermine terror-based violence because it represents the assailant's "aspirations" even if these are warped. Barlow (2016) has shown that even when there seems to be a military victory over terrorist groups, it is often temporary, as they usually regroup, rebrand, take on new names, transform themselves, and become even more dangerous. Understanding terrorism as strategic communication prepares us to employ more communication strategies as counteractive measures and think beyond military tactics. To this end, Barlow (2016, p. 20) recommends that successful counter-terrorist strategies must include methods and means which are "political and economical in nature, as you cannot kill an aspiration" with mere physical force.

Overview of Recent Global Terrorist Acts

There is an undeniable religious favor as well as a geographical dimension to recent terrorist attacks. The data from the Global Terrorism Database (START 2018) show that there are about two dozen terrorist groups worldwide and of these, 11 are the most active; six of these most active accounted for more than 3800 attacks that killed about 16,000 people in 2017. The Middle East (with North Africa) and South Asia accounted for more than 7200 of the 10,900 terrorist attacks of 2017.

The Global Terrorism Data Base (START 2018) further shows that more than half of the recent attacks took place in four countries: Iraq (23%), Afghanistan (13%), India (9%), and Pakistan (7%). More than half of all deaths from terrorist attacks occurred in three countries: Iraq (24%), Afghanistan (23%), and Syria (8%). There were 17 lethal terrorist attacks in the United States in 2017, with the deadliest being the Las Vegas incident involving an extremist individual who shot and killed 58 people and wounded 850 others at a country music festival. Lethal terrorist attacks have taken place in these US states California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Maryland, Louisiana, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, and Virginia. These incidents and their variability underline the value of seeing terrorism as strategic communication because terrorist acts are local, national, regional, and global phenomena, commanding interdisciplinary and worldwide interests leading to new conceptualizations and reimagining.

Terrorism Reimagined in Academia

The burgeoning interest in the field of terrorism scholarship has attracted multidisciplinary approaches that underline the importance that various groups of people, especially researchers, policymakers, non-profit organizational leaders, and journalists, among others, have attributed to this complex subject. It is indeed a complex area where such difficult concepts as counter-radicalization, de-radicalization, resistance, disengagement, perpetrators, radicalization, reborn anew, victims et cetera, reign supreme. Although terrorism is a common term in popular discussions and academic writing these days, it has not become more comfortable to have consensual meanings for it because different users of the term understand it differently depending on their contexts and situations. Three ways of reimagining terrorism today involve the standard approach, the first of which is seeing it in the violent acts of intimidation and instilling fear by perpetrators; secondly, in the borderless reach of the media in making terrorism potentially ubiquitous; and thirdly in the expanded view of using the term as a metaphor for adverse effects as when we say that some financial reporting is terrorism. All these reimagining scenarios are relevant in explaining terrorism as strategic communication.

Terrorism as Violent Behavior

Another key needed to unlock the mystery behind terrorist behavior has been offered by Krueger (2007) who explained it as intentional, politically motivated violence that is carried out by sub-state organizations and individuals to sway an audience other than the immediate victims. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defined terrorism as the illegal utilization of force or brutality against a target audience or property to instill fear and intimidation for some political or social gain (Tiefenbrun 2003).

Victims of terrorist attacks are an important party to the tragedy, and so are all those associated with them, particularly their families, communities, and governments. Thus, understanding the experience of victimhood in this context is vital if we are to comprehend the entirety of the complexity of terrorism (Argomaniz and Lynch 2018, p. 492; Hanle 1989).

Some Sources of Terrorism

The root causes of terrorism are poverty, political extremism, lack of education, economic deprivation, racism, fanaticism, extremism (Krueger 2007). Following the unprecedented terrorist attacks on American soil on September 11, 2001 (known as 9/11) some well-known public figures including President George W. Bush had reported that the root of terrorism is economical and political development, but much of the extant literature shows that there is no significant connection between terrorism and the different income measures (Enders et al. 2014). Remarkably, Krueger (2007) explains that developing countries do not have higher terrorism attacks than rich countries. Wealthy countries such as the United States, Germany, and France have cases of internal or localized terrorism, of which one of the most serious and lethal was the Timothy McVeigh bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, which killed 165 people, including 19 children. However, rich countries seem to be the focal point of transnational terrorist attacks (Abadie 2006) because the greatest danger is from the enemies outside rather than the dissidents within. In this age of global media, the enemies outside a country try to maximize the communicative impact of their actions, hence global and virtual press is a new way to understand terrorism as a form of strategic communication.

Terrorism and Virtual Media

Since the infamous 9/11 attack by Al Qaida, and more recently the tragic exploits of ISIS in Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and the bombing of Charlie Hebdo Magazine in Paris, we have seen terrorists taking advantage of virtual reality to extend their reach to the global audience. Terrorism is now virtual reality, and terrorist groups have become very adept at using virtual media with its promise of instant global reach and making communication borderless and ubiquitous.

The digital dimension makes the new age of terrorism a virtual reality because of the speed at which terrorist attacks can be reported and the fear of further attacks. Not only can terrorist attacks spread to other locations like a virus, we are faced with the possibility of computer viruses shutting down electric grids and financial infrastructures in many countries. Our mechanical apparatus and the complex infrastructure of urban living are now more vulnerable to terrorist attacks than ever before because of the possibility of staging attacks from remote locations. The threats and accompanying fears are more devastating because some of the suspects are not individual terrorists but in some cases are state actors who have turned perpetrators, supposedly in the interests of their government. This new reality is more frightening because of the real danger of attacking from remote and distant locations, the reality of unimaginable global reach, and the high possibility of the involvement of state actors. This new reality has taken terrorism to a new level.

The malicious cyberattacks at Sony's film and television studio in November 2014, which was believed to be related to its planned release of a politically sensitive movie "The Interview" was believed to have been masterminded and carried out by North Korea. The movie was a raunchy comedy about an attempt to assassinate the North Korean leader Kim Jung Un. Another example of high-tech terrorism by a state is the Russian attack on the 2016 US presidential election system, which is the equivalent of an "information warfare."

Terrorism as a Metaphor: The third way of reimagining terrorism is the expanded use of the term to denote unpalatable experiences that do not necessarily imply physical or tangible harm as in the reference by Tracy (2012) to the "financial terrorism" that was perpetrated on Greece by the US media. This was during the financial crisis that arose from Greek Premier George Papandreou's handling of the economy. Angered by the alleged conspiracy by international financial institutions and