THE MEDIA AND TERRORISM: THE CASE OF GREECE

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1. *INTRODUCTION*

The mass media use the power of communication to influence the public opinion in order to affect political and social affairs. The terrorist use the attacks to attract the public attention. The correlating element between these two actors is the attraction of the public attention. Albeit the absolute distance of strategy and goals a certain degree of interdependence is directly developed between the two; should certain conditions be fulfilled we can talk either about a kind of mutual interdependence or even symbiotic relation. The media decide how they will cover the terrorist attacks (raises or downplays) and the terrorists choose magnitude attacks to gain the media's attention. The evolution of Information Technology (IT) hugely strengthened the capability of media, opening the road for their transformation to the mass media and for the creation of internet and social media. The vital news, incident and terrorists attacks rapidly disseminate to the million populations in the world.

The definition of the term of media and terrorism is of great importance for the understanding of their symbiotic relationship. The terrorism *"is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far- reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or object of the terrorist attack. Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence, and*

power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either the local or an international scale" (Hoffman: 2006). The media "*is a generic term meaning all the methods or channels of information and entertainment. The mass media are taken to encompass newspapers, radio and television, but other important forms of communications include books, films, music, theatre and the visual arts* (Wilkinson: 2007).

The environment of the Greek mass media is characterised by a strong competition and is defined by the rules of the market and the relations of the media owners with the governmental establishment. The Greek terrorism has been shaped by the political and social culture and it has its root to the leftist and ultra leftist ideologies, such as, hatred against the USA, imperialism and catapilism.

The paper interprets the relationship between the Greek media and the terrorism analysing: (a) the media and terrorism converged paths as well as the tools employed to gain the attention of the public opinion, (b) the hypothesis of possible symbiotic relation between the two (c) the evolution and the culture of Greek terrorism, explaining how the political and social conditions created revolutionary leftist terrorism organisations, such as the notorious 17 November and (d) the environment of the Greek media, the level of their credibility on the coverage of terrorism and the interests of mass media owners.

2. *THE COVERGING RELATIONSHIP OF MEDIA AND TERRORISM*

The age of globalization and the evolution of Information Technology have transformed dramatically the landscape of media leading to the rapid dissemination of the news. The evolution of the mass media has totally changed the model of communication and information making the news accessible to more people on the world. The mass media encompass newspaper, broadcast media (electronic media), print media (newspapers, magazines). Moreover the internet and the social media are used as a vast marketplace of fast flow of information. These models of information have become an independent public space that is characterised by complexity, diversity, anonymity, rapidity and they are ephemeral (Safe Comms: 2011).

The media coverage's agenda is defined by the following four parameters: personalities, circumstances, proximity and impact of image (Safe Comms: 2011). The media exert influence using the power of the damage that is caused by the terrorist attacks.. In turn, the terrorist exploit this particular mechanism of coverage to propagate their messages.

The media respond to the terrorist attacks with different ways that depend on the moment when the attack take place and the level of experience of the state in the terms of terrorism. According to the Terrorism Crisis Communication Manual for Public Authorities *"there is a very fine line between information and sensation (which is more saleable). In recent years high competition pressure in the media market has resulted in the "brutalization" of journalist methods and many media recourses. The media are not only tellers of tales-recounting events with greater or lesser ideological content; they also use a large part of their space to illustrate the events with images and videos. Visual display of the scenario of a terrorist attack to the public is probably the media's most important instrument in causing impact"* (Safe Comms:2011)

The observation of the coverage of terrorist attacks from the media could offer useful information to state security authorities through four ways (Walsh: 2010): (a) the ability or not of terrorists to attract media attentions could give significant insights for their political goals and operational capacity, (b) an comprehensive study of the motivation of terrorists and the constraints of the media could explain the design of media relations and the public diplomacy strategy of counterterrorist agencies. The full coverage of the terrorist attacks can also distract from public understanding of the difficulty of preventing terrorist attack and the strategy of authorities to achieve this objective, (c) the competition among the media influence and the way that approach a terrorist act. More attention from the news outlets could negatively affect the relations between media and the state security agencies giving the public opinion a distorted view for the terrorist threat and reducing the ability of state security authorities to make clear their plan and strategy and (d) the tone of the media's coverage can influence the attitudes and behaviours of public audience increasing their fear and anxiety. As result these emotional changes could alter the positive opinion of some member of the audience for the counterterrorism strategies that use force.

In general the mass media use the terrorist attacks as a topic that attracts public attention in order to boost ratings and circulation. Moreover the transformation of mass media to the commercial companies has inevitably affected the coverage of the terrorist attacks. Ignacio Ramonet point outs that mass media *"growing in parallel with increasingly fierce competition and commercial pressures and complicated by the fact that "many top media executives today come from the corporate world, and no longer from the ranks of ordinary journalists has been the burgeoning dominance of the visual"* (Biernatzki: 2002).

Drastic changes in the landscape of the media and the use of social media have given an opportunity to the terrorists to utilize the media with greater convenience (Bilgen: 2012). The terrorist exploit the advanced technologies of the news' outlets to publish views, send messages in order to acquire a broader audience and recruit new members. The internet, as parallel and virtual world, encompasses all the advantages of the real world;

moreover it allows users to maintain their anonymity. It is considered an ideal place for the activity of the terrorists for the following reasons (Weiman: 2005): easy access, little or no regulation, censorship, potential huge audience, anonymity, fast flow information, inexpensive development and maintenance of web presence, a multimedia environment, the ability to shape coverage in the mass media by using the internet as a sources for news. According to Joint Publication Counterterrorism for USA Army "*The Internet provides terrorists and extremists the means to spread their radical ideology, an ad hoc means of operational connectivity and a link to the full-media spectrum for public relations. The Internet facilitates their recruiting, training, logistic support, planning, fund- raising, etc*" (Counterterrorism: 2009). The terrorists can use the sources of internet to learn more details and information for the targets such as transportation facilities, public installation and infrastructures, and even for counterterrorism measures (Weiman: 2009)

The terrorist have realised the power of the mass media, internet and social media to influence larger audiences. Therefore the terrorists are based on these news' outlets to dramatize their reason, to draw attention to it, to legitimize it and to convince the state authorities to meet their demands (Morgan: unpublished article).

We can assume that the media and terrorism has developed an interdependent relation. The terrorists, on the one hand, need the media in order to gain publicity. The media, on the other hand, exploit the terrorist attacks with a sensational way with the purpose of attracting large audience. The terrorist attacks have many emotional coverage as they include drama, danger, blood, human tragedy, miracle stories, heroes, shocking footage and action (Bilgen:2012). The relations between mass media and the terrorism became symbiotic only when the terrorism action is under way. If it not symbiotic it is skewed in favour of the one; depending on the power of the mass medium. In particular one must merit the following conditions first if the medium is well established and mature enough to cope with potential propaganda, second if the political and social contexts are democratic enough and third if they are subjected to external control (e.g. independent press vis a vis controlled). Wilkinson argues that the symbiotic relationship between media and terrorism based on the facts: terrorist feed on publicity and media freedom in an open society enables their manipulation and exploitation (Peresin: 2007). However this relationship does not mean that the mass media are controlled by terrorism. The terrorists use the violence attacks and armed propaganda in order to mislead and trap the mass media. The terrorists have only one aim, to attract huge publicity and to acquire a communicative status as powerful force (Wilkison: 1997).

3. THE DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE OF GREEK TERRORISM

The media and terrorism in Greece, also, have developed a converging relation. However the attitude of Greek media is defined by the structure of Greek society that does not trust the state authorities due to the trauma for the dictatorship period between 1967- 1973. [1] In general the Greek terrorism has its roots on the ultra-left ideologies that are based on their perception that the USA intervene to the domestic political scene provoking authoritarian attitudes against the population.

The social political environment has defined to a large extent the revolutionary behaviour of the Greek terrorism. According to Kassimeris "*Greek terrorism resulted from a complex series of historical conditions and social influences that drew politically-active individuals towards the Utopian world of revolutionary violence*" (Kassimeris (2): 1995). The history of modern Greece is characterized by political violence as during the Second World War Greece suffered by Nazi occupation. In the coming years the civil war (1946-1949) divided the Greek society causing permanent traumas. The dictatorship (1967- 1973) bolstered the aforementioned traumas and created the psychological and social conditions for the rise of the Greek Revolutionary Organization 17 November (17N).

The ideology of terrorist has been influenced by the Marxist-Leninist ideas that strengthen during the period of dictatorship because of the prohibition of the freedom of speech and the arrest of many communists and leftists. The evolution of the Greek terrorism could be divided in the following three periods: The first period 1974–1989 was characterized by the rise of ultra – leftist terrorism the failure of the political elites to recognize the roots, the level, and the significance of the terrorist threat. The second period 1989–1999 contains the politicization of terrorism. The third period 1999 onwards was defined by the role of intelligent and security services and its contribution to the arrest and the trial of the 17N (Nomikos: 2009).

The most prominent Greek terrorism organization was the leftist Revolutionary Organization 17 November (17N) who emerged in the mid of '70s when the Western Europe was suffered by a terrorist wave. According to Kassimeris "*in theory, 17N's main aim was to change the pattern of Greek society and move it toward a revolutionary situation. Like the Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany, Action Directe (AD) in France, and the*

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[1] The Greek military junta of 1967–1974 (alternatively "The Regime of the Colonels'') was a series of right-wing military governments that ruled Greece following a coup d'état led by a group of colonels on 21 April 1967. Military rule ended in July 1974. On 21 April 1967, just weeks before the scheduled elections, a group of right-wing army officers led by Brigadier General Stylianos Pattakos and Colonels George Papadopoulos and Nikolaos Makarezos seized power in a coup d'etat.

Red Brigades (BR) in Italy, 17N also used the argument that "if violence constitutes the most efficient and essential instrument without which the revolution cannot succeed, then it is desired, rational and justified." However, the group's trajectory and organizational evolution had been considerably different from those other revolutionary groups" (Kassimeris (1):2007).

The 17N ended its bloody history in September 2002 when all its members jailed by the Greek security authorities. The terrorist group has been active for twenty years, it has carried out 94 attacks and it has assassinated twenty one people. The first victim of 17N was the USA Central Intelligence Agency's station chief in Athens Richard Welsh who was assassinated on 23 December 1975. The death of the Welsh gave an international dimension in 17N actions. According to Cuenca and De la Calle "if the nationality of the perpetrator differs from the nationality of the victim, the attacks counts as international" (Cuenca and De la Calle: 2009).

The same period also appeared the Revolutionary Popular Struggle (ELA) who conducted approximately 250 attacks against a wide range of targets. The leading terrorist groups 17N and ELA and several more obscure radical leftist organizations terrorized Greek, US, and Western government and commercial interests until the early 2000s through targeted bombings and assassinations (US NCTC: 2012). The last operation of ELA had been in 1994 and it was considered the umbrella organization for all Greek terrorists with the exception of 17N. ELA members maybe were incorporated to other active Greek terrorist organizations, such as Revolutionary People's Solidarity, 1 May, Anti-State Struggle, Popular Struggle, Red Initiative, Autonomous Cells, and Revolutionary Nuclei.

The continuation of 17N could be considered the creation of the Revolutionary Struggle (EA) a rebel group that operated from 2003 until 2010 and it conducted terrorism attacks against governmental buildings and the embassies in Athens. The EA seemed to have adopted the tactics and the ideology of notorious 17N because rebuffed democracy and criticised the capitalism and American influence in Greek domestic political affairs. EA avoided lethal attacks during the first year of its actions and it preferred to place warning calls before detonating explosive devices (Burton –West: 2009). However in 12 January 2007 the EA fired an anti-tank rocket at USA Embassy in Athens provoking only external damage to the outside wall. Finally the Greek security and intelligence authorities managed to dissolve the EA network in 2010 when arrested six EA members and confiscated a large quantity of weapons and explosive devices. However, most of EA members released from the prison due to the handicaps of Greek system of justice.

The terrorism flourished after the Olympic Game of Athens 2004 exploiting the political and social unstable environment, the impact of financial crisis and the intervention of International Monetary Fund (IMF) . The assassination of a teenager from a policeman in December 2008 that provoked mass violent demonstrations in the centre of Athens induced the anarchists and left oriented terrorist groups to increase their actions.

On these context new terrorists groups emerged adopting the leftish revolutionary ideology of the aforementioned terrorist organizations. The Sect of Revolutionaries (SE) and Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei (SPF) added in the Greek list of terrorists organisations. The SPF was characterised as a radical anarchist organization and it conducted its first operation on January 21 2008, a wave of firebombing against luxury car dealerships and banks in Athens and Thessaloniki. In March and December 2011, the SPF sent parcel bombs to the destinations in and outside of Greece. The target of the parcels was a military barrack and a tax collection company in Italy, a prison in Greece, the headquarters of bank in Germany, the Greek embassy in France and the offices of Nuclear Industry Federation in Switzerland. The parcel bombs in Germany and Greece neutralised before they exploded but in the other instance three persons were injured. In 2010 the Greek security authorities arrested eleven suspected members of SPF and in 2011 the Greek police made additional arrests and confiscated large quantities of weapons.

The SE made its appearance in February 2009 threatening to assassinate Greek police officers at the police-station of the Greek neighbourhood Korydallos (near the city of Piraeus). In June 2009, the SE assassinated an anti-terrorist police officer. After the attacked the SE published a statement warning the journalists. In July 2010 the terrorist organisation materialized its threats assassinating an investigative journalist.

The Report of US State Department for Terrorism 2011 gives an overview for the terrorist attacks in Greece[2] reporting: *Large cities, especially Athens and Thessaloniki, continued to experience regular, generally small-scale anarchist attacks, utilizing mostly unsophisticated incendiary devices against political figures and party offices, businesses, municipal and police buildings, and random vehicles. There was just one reported attack*

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[2] The more significant attempted attacks included: (a) on February 2, the group Illegal Sector Informal Anarchist Federation/Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device (IED) sent via envelope and addressed to the minister of justice. Ministry personnel detected the suspicious device and police defused it, (b) on March 23, an unidentified male called a local media outlet and said a bomb would go off in 25 minutes at a specific Greek tax authority office in Athens. Police found an IED in a bathroom of the building. The device had partially ignited but poor assembly prevented it from fully exploding. The group December 6 later claimed responsibility and (c) on March 31, Italian terrorist group Informal Anarchist Federation claimed responsibility for an IED that was detected during an x-ray scan at the Korydallos Prison in suburban Athens. The package was addressed to the warden. The device was defused.

against Greek interests within the country and none against Greek interests abroad by international/foreign violent extremist groups" (US State Department: 2011). According to Europol the terrorists left – wing and anarchists groups conducted six attacks in 2011 in comparison to 20 attacks in 2010 (TE –SAT 2011).

The Greek security authorities have drastically improved their counterterrorism tactics and operation, arresting terrorists and confiscating large amounts of weapons. Greece is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and in 2011 it passed a new law expanding and strengthening the capabilities of its Financial Intelligence Unit, the National Authority for Anti-Money Laundering, Counterterrorist Financing and Source of Funds Investigation. The important progress of Greek security and law enforcement authorities mentioned by the latest FATF report in October with positive comments An important improvement mentioned in the 2011 report as the greek government materialized the legal change that enacted in 2011 to make the procedure for freezing internationally designated terrorist assets more expedient. In November, the Foreign Ministry established a new Sanctions Monitoring Unit tasked with ensuring that Greece is meeting its commitments to enforce international sanctions, including terrorism-related sanctions, in coordination with other responsible ministries (USA Department of State: 2011).

4. THE GREEK MEDIA AND THE TERRORISM'S COVERAGE

The mass media has been playing an active role on the political and social affairs in Greece. The media commercialization and market expansion, as well as, changed the landscape of the media. The businessmen (millionaires, contractors,) created a network of newspapers, TV and radio stations replacing the traditional editors of the newspapers. Wikileaks revealed that Charles P. Ries's (former United States envoy to Greece) secret dispatch to Washington said Greek media was run by a *"small group of people who have made, or inherited, fortunes in shipping, banking, telecommunications, sports, oil, insurance etc. and who are or have been related by blood, marriage, or adultery, to political and government officials and/or other media and business magnates"* (Fotiadis: 2011).

According to Papathanasopoulos *"Greek journalism has been led by the needs of competition rather than by a solid, or unanimously accepted, professional culture. Due to the increased consolidation of media ownership, Greek journalists believe they are more dependent on their employers (the media owners). In contrast to the past,*

the average journalist has less power, since the market has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few media owners, who are also active players in the Greek economy" (Papathanasopoulos*: 2001).*

The old generation of journalists has been gradually replaced by a new generation and at the same time the trauma of the dictatorship period remained and it has inevitably affected the ways that media choose to cover the terrorist attacks. The mass media seems to be biased on the coverage of incidents and they appeared to serve the interests of competitor political parties. Specific information for secret intelligence operations and the vested interests or real reasons behind violent attacks and their aftermath, are rarely revealed to the public opinion. (Nomikos: 2007).

Moreover many editors in chief and analysts of the Greek media maybe have deeply influenced by the struggle of students against the dictator Georgios Papadopoulos in 1973.[3] The called "Polytechnic uprising" could be considered as a belated "Greek May '68" as the students and the youth found the opportunity to start a struggle against capitalism, imperialism and to defend the free expression and the political freedom. The feeling of hatred against the USA, capitalism and imperialism (that had deeply expressed by Polytechnic uprising) created the "generation of Polytechnic". Many of its members became prominent governmental officials, journalists and writers. In the following years the Polytechnic's ideology legalized and institutionalized by the socialistic, communist, leftist political parties, and ultra-leftists groups who retain an influential ideological network in the Greek Universities.

The aforementioned reasons give a clear explanation why a significant part of the Greek mass media see the state counterterrorism policies with a suspicious view. The Greek media has demonstrated a different approach to the terrorism in comparison with the other states. The governmental official and the officers of security authorities of USA and United Kingdom usually arrive first at the press conference in order to explain and to interpret the government position and the findings. In Greece the mass media due to the trauma of the dictatorship (1967-1963) have a sceptical attitude towards the governmental stance that tends to become critical (Nomikos: 2007). In parallel the cover of terrorism is characterised by the absence of objective information as the reporters and journalists avoid or are unable to contact with the only experts, the officers of the intelligence service. Thus the

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[3] The Athens Polytechnic uprising in 1973 was a massive demonstration of popular rejection of the Greek military junta of 1967-1974. The uprising began on November 14, 1973, escalated to an open anti-junta revolt and ended in bloodshed in the early morning of November 17 after a series of events starting with a tank crashing through the gates of the Polytechnic. An official investigation undertaken after the fall of the Junta declared that no students of Athens Polytechnic were killed during the incident. Total recorded casualties amount to 24 civilians killed outside Athens Polytechnic campus.

journalists seek information from the appointed political officials who do not have knowledge and experience on the terrorism. (Nomikos: 2007)

The evolution of mass media has affected the profession of journalism and the way that manipulates the significant news and the terrorist attacks. The interests of owners of the Greek mass media organizations influence heavily the behaviour journalists and this fact defines the basic framework of Greek journalism in nowadays (Papathanasopoulos: 2001).

5. CONCLUSION

The media and terrorism have a converging relationship. The terrorists have understood the power of communication and the significant role of the media on the manipulation of the public opinion. The political and social history of the countries defines the roots of the terrorism and its ideology that characterizes actions and the selection of the targets.

The coverage of terrorist attacks relate to the media's interests in the commercialized and competitive environment. In most cases the media seek to raise the terrorist attacks in order to increasing the ratings in the audience, ignoring the effects of the coverage in public opinion. Moreover the internet and social media rapidly disseminate information that cannot be controlled for its credibility and its sources. In this context the risk is to that media may either be manipulated to disseminate controlled information or may themselves behave as provocative agents in the war scenario.

In the case of Greece, the media and terrorism have developed a relationship based on the traumatic experience by civil war (1946- 1947 between communist and national army) and the dictatorship period (1967-1973). The struggle against the right- wing governments and especially the coup of the military strengthened the leftists and ultra-leftist ideologies provoking the creation of terrorism organisations after 1973 when the democracy restored. The hearted for the USA intervention to the Greek internal and external policies, capitalism and imperialism were considered the basic reason for the development of the leftist and ultra- leftist and anarchist ideologies. The appearance of the notorious Revolutionary Organization 17 November (17N) opened the cycle of terrorism and peperptuated by the emergence of other terrorist organisations such as, Revolutionary Struggle (EA), The Sect of Revolutionaries (SE) and Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei (SPF).

The coverage of terrorism from the Greek mass media is characterised by a sceptical attitude towards governmental explanations and interpretations due to the traumas of the political history. Moreover the absence of traditional publishers/ editors and the concentration of the mass media in the hands of millionaires, contractors, defines the coverage of terrorists attacks according to their political and economic affiliations. The terrorism in Greece flourished after the 2004 exploiting the political and social unstable environment, the impact of financial crisis and the intervention of International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Greek security, law enforcement and intelligence authorities have made significant progress as they managed to end the action of 17N and to arrest the members of Revolutionary Struggle (EA) and Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei (SPF).

The mass media, internet and social media have dramatically changed the rules of communication and the dissemination of the news. In this context, a plausible and balanced coverage of the terrorists' attacks is considered the only way to decisively encounter the threat of terrorism. On the contrary an emotional reaction of the mass media maybe serves the interests of terrorists as they seek to attract the public attention.

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