Chapter 6
Event Management and Terrorism in a Global Order: A Preliminary Insight

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ABSTRACT

Over the recent years, the public spectacle and media events have become fertile grounds for terrorist attacks. Particularly, media events play a leading role enhancing the social cohesion as well as revitalizing the psychological frustrations that happened during the working days. Paradoxically, terrorism needs to maximize its gains while the costs are minimized. The spectacularisation tourism and events offer a double-edge sword. The same attractiveness that makes global cities a safer place to live are employed by the terrorist cells to cause chaos and uncertainty. The chapter theoretically explores the difficult interrelation between terrorism and event management as well as the conceptual limitations of Western rationality to understand the “undesired Other.”

INTRODUCTION

It is noteworthy that a chapter about terrorism should start with a clear and coherent definition of the term. Here the problem seems to be that there is a great dispersion of the produced knowledge, as well as the lack of a shared epistemology to study terrorism (Stampnitzky, 2013; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014). Each discipline and the different authors worked and developed different definitions on the phenomenon. As Marc Sageman puts it, terrorism research faces a facet of stagnation and

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conceptual fragmentation as never before. In spite of the several volumes, books and updating of the bibliographical literature, today scholars are unable to answer furtherly on the objective conditions that finally lead a good person to become in a terrorist. Part of the problem comes from the interventions of governments and the intelligence community to fund the main borders of the produced research. In other words, Government agencies invested their own financial resources so that the intellectuals reaffirm their own preconceptions about terrorism. Concerned on the necessary good practices to protect us from terrorism than in understanding terrorism as a complex socio-political phenomenon, the advances in the fields ushered the academia to misleading outcomes. In his book Witnessing Terror, Australian sociologist Luke Howie calls the attention on the role performed by the media inviting to “pseudo-scholars” to talk about terrorism. This happens because terrorism is an extremely-centred illegal activity which is considered a serious crime against the state. Those ethnographers, who are narrowly in contact with terrorist cells, are fiercely pressed to reveal their key-informants. Hence it is hard to study terrorism in a society that condemns it. What is clear is that terrorists do not look a lot of people dying they want a lot of people watching. Howie (2012) reminds not only the leading role of the mass-media creating pseudo-events –a term coined by Baudrillard, but also in disseminating fear as a form of cultural entertainment. In so doing terrorists look to create political instability in order for their claims to be unilaterally accepted. The attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were more than social tragedies. Both represented the humiliation of the West and the commoditization of the death in the same media stage. Methodologically speaking, ethnographers should study terrorism by its direct effects in society and day-to-day life. Otherwise, they fall in mere speculations.

As the previous backdrop, no less true seems to be that 9/11 marked a new epoch not only for the geopolitical relationships but also a novel tactic where innocent travellers as tourists and journalists are killed. Terrorists, echoing Enders & Sandler (2011), are far from irrational maniacs who kill for pleasure. They carefully select leisure-hot spots and tourist destinations because the attack has durable effects. Terrorists tactically move to maximize their gains while minimizing the costs. They are not irrational killers or hatred-filled maniacs. Their targets are selected according to a specific semiotic message to transmit. The tourism industry not only is vulnerable to terrorism but also offers the perfect ground to give a lesson to the world: anyone and anytime can be a victim of terrorism. The flexibility of tourist resorts in allowing the passengers traffic, as well as the resistance of tourists to be close of military forces makes of hotels and tourist destination an easy target for terrorism. Besides, the psychological impacts of watching corpses mutilated through spaces designed to pleasure and leisure materializes high-levels of fear and anxiety. Since the tourist destinations are public spaces, lay-people believe that they would
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