TERRORISM TECHNOLOGICAL ASYMMETRY

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This article contributes to our understanding of how technologies redefine our experience of terrorism, articulating the collective technological imagination from an anthropological perspective. It also introduces the concept of technological asymmetry as defined by the fusion of real and digital sensibilities, combined through images and narratives into physical, technical, and symbolic dimensions, and whose relevance is to give cohesion to contemporary terrorist groupings.

TECHNOLOGICAL IMAGINATION AND TERRORISM

The increasing use of information and communication technologies in everyday life creates new bodily and spatial arrangements existing between offline and online borderlands. This configuration is inseparable from socioeconomic and political asymmetries that make these technological industries possible across the globe. Indeed, it can be said that if there is anything characteristic of modern technology, it is that its immense capacity to transform the world has non-technological foundations and implications. Technology not only makes it possible to solve practical issues and automate a variety of vital processes to reduce human intervention but also produces shifts in the horizon of what is thinkable, possible, desirable, and feared in the world.

Technological transformations are seen as defining modernity since it is the technology itself that reflects a rational understanding of the modern world, problems, and aspirations. In other words, technology embodies a way of observing, justifying, and organizing social life according to a technological imagination. Even more, communication technologies brought new forms to produce and convey safety and danger within civilian populations redefining, among other things, how terrorism is coped with, imagined, and countered.

The word [terror] refers to the feeling of dread and bodily apprehension at the possibility of something frightening happening and is usually followed by horror, shock, and

repulsion of seeing the frightening thing come to be realized. As an instinctual behavior, terror is socialized at an amazingly fast rate by means of its biological-mimetic dispositions. The common behavioral answer to terror is to flee and run away from fear. By this token, the viral speed in which terror spreads among human populations is the key factor that makes terror such a semantic prodigy, fueling much of the press and media content generation nowadays and, simultaneously, making terrorism the standard method for asymmetrical warfare. Terrorism, as a notion almost exclusively defined by counter-terrorism agencies, is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.

Globalized by mass media outlets, the general perception of terrorism was informed by the local confrontations of jihadist wars. As a social fact, terrorism is not a univocal phenomenon but must be understood in light of the context in which terrorist activities appear. Looking closer at the region's history, state terrorism is the systematic use of terror tactics on the civilian population by a government or a regime to fight a political threat.

The goals of terrorism include causing catastrophic and deadly damage to civilians and spreading terror to achieve political or ideological goals alongside attacking the principles of law and order, and human rights, and undermining peaceful solutions to conflicts that the civilized world aspired to achieve, whether it was secular terrorism, or religiously motivated terrorism, state-driven terrorism, or revolutionary terrorism.

SURVEILLANCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL ASYMMETRY

Throughout the 20-year global WAR ON TERROR, experts have identified political and socioeconomic asymmetries as root causes of terrorism. But from homemade bombs to DDOS cyber-attacks, from firewalls to encryptions tactics these asymmetries are express and fully realized in technological terms which are at the center of this dispute not only countering terrorism but also reproducing and propagating the social conditions of its emergence.

After the 9/11 Attacks, the U.S. government declared that the law had not caught up with technology, so the terrorist surveillance program was created, initially to intercept communications linked to Al-Qaeda. The FBI used immigration records to identify Arab and Muslim foreign nationals naturalized in the United States. In this way, 80,000 people were registered, another 8,000 were interviewed by the FBI, and more than 5,000 ended

up in jail on bail. No terrorists were found, in the so-called ethnic profiling campaign, which was the mostaggressive ethnic profiling campaign since World War II.

This is a milestone in how asymmetries in the use of technologies and the media, which can give an enormous advantage in shaping certain perceptions in public opinion, are one of the main conditions of possibility for terrorism to spread. The documents leaked by Snowden in 2013 made evident how it had become a routine for government agencies to collect and store the personal information of citizens.

They showed how the NSA can request information about users from companies like Microsoft or Google in addition to its daily collection of information from civilian internet traffic such as email content and contact lists. So, instead of focusing on criminals, governments are progressively turning their attention to everyone deepening the asymmetries perceived in the political field. Despite high hopes, the NSA surveillance program has not stopped any major terrorist attacks. So, what we need is not more random information, but better ways to understand and use the information we already have.

Simultaneously, it has become increasingly common for civil liberties to be curtailed and for media corporations and government agencies alike to spy on citizens to collect and store their data. A new era of surveillance and statistics has dawned from the use of BIG-DATA and artificial intelligence enhanced monitoring transforming the scale and pace of social control and engineering. The use of information technologies for the perpetration of terrorist attacks and its technological countermeasures brings a new paradigm for thinking of terrorism as a systemic phenomenon.

INFRINGEMENT OF PRIVACY

In early 2016, the FBI asked Apple to develop a secret program to disable encryption on a terrorist's iPhone. Apple publicly declined, not only because this tool could be used to weaken the worldwide privacy of law-abiding citizens, but also fearing to open the floodgates to governments requesting access to a technology used by millions of people, a fear shared by security experts and cryptographers.

A few weeks later, the FBI revealed that they had hacked the phone themselves, essentially admitting that they had lied to the public about the need for a plan B. This was one important milestone in shaping technological imagination towards state-terrorism. The fight against terrorism brought curtailing rights, coupled with mass surveillance, and has not led to significant success, so far but it has changed the nature

of how our society thinks of terrorism. The fear for technologically driven state terrorism, especially considering that the NSA, for example, can turn on your phone's microphone or activate your laptop's camera without you noticing is widespread among populations with no history in terrorist activities. Concerns like these are often met with the argument: «If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to worry about." But this reasoning is only conducive to oppression.

Anti-terrorism laws allow authorities to investigate and punish non-terrorist crimes more aggressively. That is why democratic monitoring is so important: even if those technological tools and laws are not used against you today, they may be tomorrow. For example, after the November 2015 attacks in Paris France expanded its already numerous anti-terror laws by giving security forces greater power to raid and put people under house arrest. Just a few weeks later, it became clear that these powers were being used for purposes for which they were not created, such as suppressing climate change protests. The governments of Spain, Hungary, and Poland have introduced more restrictive laws in the area of freedom of assembly and expression. if we are not careful, we may be moving slowly toward a surveillance state.

What the technological imagination brings into play are a series of social conditions that end up shaping from an early age the belonging to ideological patterns that make it easier to opt for the violent way, in which sometimes the idea of persecution of the same enemy is the unique cohesion factor in the definition of the group. The environment then comes to play an important role in the decision of a given individual to opt for terrorism. Some psychological aspects that must also be considered to analyze the decision of an individual to join a terrorist organization: on the one hand, there is the conviction of his right to fight against an external order, secondly, the messianic one of saving society from an order that endangers society to achieve a better world.

FINAL REMARKS

Terrorism, as an expression of an asymmetry, must therefore be seen as a collective act, even if it is the act of a small group, immersed in the framework of the relations of a social system and not outside it. Contrary to the idea that terrorist acts respond to the behavior of deranged and antisocial individuals. Terrorism is the expression of a repudiation of an asymmetric system in which the executors of the system are not questioned through angry protests, but the system itself through isolated acts of violence by groups that do not have sufficient strength to organize a broad guerrilla campaign.

Therefore, if terrorist actions are not the result of individual behaviors but of collectives that organize themselves to make violent actions as the main mechanism to inform about their disagreement with a certain political, social or economic order, and if at the same time this type of terrorist actions, rather than a deliberate intention, respond to the structural technological weakness of the adversary who is forced to resort to such forms in the face of the superiority of his enemy. In short, the monopolization of advanced technologies by states and corporations renders every other political aspiration weak and, as the old Russian anarchist Kropotkin once warned, «terrorism is the weapon of the week". Therefore, the democratization and regulation of information technologies and their uses by government and corporations must be understood as a necessary step in the fight against terrorism.