

# The Function of the Media in Representing the Strategy of Jihadist Groups in the Middleeast Region

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**Abstract:** Jihadi groups in the Middle East region are known as the most important non-governmental players in the region and the world due to the widespread terrorizing power they have gained all over the world. The scope of terrorizing jihadist groups in the Middle East region has increased in the past decade due to the spread of terrorism in the region, and many victims have been killed. This has prompted the authors of this article to scientifically investigate and analyze the function of the media in representing the strategy of jihadi groups in the Middle East region. How the media works in representing the strategy of jihadist groups in the Middle East region will be discussed. The findings of this research show that the jihadist groups in the Middle East have become more and more media-oriented in the last two decades and are trying to increase their effectiveness by using the facilities and opportunities provided by the media, and in this way to achieve their goals. Achieve themselves In this process, the media have become an important part of the activities of jihadi groups because they give the opportunity to cover important events. Because by covering the events, the media can convey the terrifying messages of the jihadi groups to the enemies of these groups and at the same time increase the level of support for these jihadi groups among their supporters. In this framework, jihadi groups try to choose symbolic targets for their attacks, which create more media coverage, in order to expand the level of media exposure of their terrorizing actions. At the same time, in order for a higher level of attack targets to be available to jihadist groups, they try to use all available tools and opportunities to relocate their terrorists. These cases show that jihadist groups have become more fluid, mobile and media.

**Key words:** Jihadi groups, media, Middle East, intimidation, terrorism

## I. Introduction

Jihadi terrorist groups that are active in the Middle East region or use this region to send troops to other countries of the world and carry out terrorist attacks have always been at the top of the list of security studies. These terrorist groups have always been considered as one of the main sources of security threats due to the influence they have and also their ability to spread fear in different societies and countries. The scope of these security and terrorist threats is so wide that it has prompted both security institutions and academic institutions to continuously study terrorist groups and assess the developments that take place in this area (Schwartz, 1998). These developments may take place in various fields such as culture, economy, politics, security, and geography, and this has caused the analysis and evaluation of the strategies used by terrorist groups to be of great importance. Because any development in these areas can imply the creation of new opportunities for the activities of terrorist groups or limiting the conditions for their actions (Mohammad, 2005: 125). Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that terrorism has a fluid and evolving nature, and this characteristic has not only made it more difficult to control jihadist groups, but also the processes of fighting terrorism with various challenges. Has made This transformation and fluidity can be recognized in both the fields of practical action and

propaganda in the field of terrorism. Because not only this shows the media representation of terrorism, it also shows that terrorism is widely related to the issue of geopolitical representation (AhmadiPour and Rashidi, 2018). Because an important part of the action of jihadist groups is to announce their presence, create fear and at the same time gain support among extremist groups who identify with the extremist interpretations of jihadist groups and their actions. This issue makes it important to find geographical spaces where jihadist groups have a more colorful presence. The geopolitical region of the Middle East is one of these geographical regions where the activities of jihadist groups have caused the concern of both security policymakers and academic researchers. Today, all the countries of the Middle East are considered as the center of the formation of jihadist groups, and at the same time, European countries, North America and even East Asian countries express their major concerns about the spread of jihadist terrorism in the Middle East to their territories. This shows that terrorism is a global danger that must be fought seriously and efforts should be made to prevent its spread as much as possible. One of the tools that is very important and functional for fighting terrorism and, consequently, understanding the nature and operation of jihadist groups in the Middle East, is paying attention to the issue of how to show the presence of jihadist groups in the Middle East. Because these jihadist groups are aware of the various efforts and policies that are being made to fight terrorism, and they try not only to update themselves to carry out their destructive and terrifying activities in the countries, regions, areas and targets they want. Rather, by using the facilities provided by communication tools and the media, they impose their presence, power and scope of influence on public opinion (Dolliver and Kearns, 2022: 2). In other words, it should be said that jihadi terrorist groups are continuously seeking to gain an upper hand over the governments by relying on the function of the media while evolving in the ways of propaganda, recruiting, organizing, moving and carrying out terrorist operations. In this way, it can be said that there is a conflict and a mutual cognitive operation between the jihadist terrorist groups and the governments, which continuously influences their actions and reactions. For this reason, this matter is of special importance and has led us, as the authors of this article, to examine the function of the media in representing the strategy of jihadist groups in the Middle East in a scientific manner and from the perspective of political science.

## **II. Literature review**

Adami and Nekooi (2017) in an article entitled the role and position of the media in the strategies of Salafi-jihadi groups and its impact on the Middle East based on the combination of the theoretical foundations of Louis Althusser regarding the defamation of the subject and the approach of Stuart Hall regarding the reproduction of messages in the media. The recruitment of jihadi groups from the media has been investigated and to investigate the impact of the use of media by jihadi groups, especially al-Qaeda and Da'esh, in the future of the Middle East, the findings of the research will be analyzed with the theoretical foundations presented. It is a rich article its own type, but as mentioned, they have used an approach other than Agenda setting, and there is no mention of the theory of Agenda setting. The removal of this theory of communication sciences, which is widely used in other sciences, including political science, motivated the authors of this article. To advance the theoretical framework of their article with this important theory of communication sciences that can justify the use of media by jihadi groups to represent and reflect actions and strategies. In another article under the title of examining the role of modern media in the spread of terrorism in the international arena, Jafari et al (2018). The questionnaire tool was written by a researcher at the level of experts and experts across the country, relying on the opinions of great people such as Joseph Nye and the use of hard and soft power and intelligent power. The emergence of jihadi groups as new non-state players has an impact on the international arena and the main reasons for its use by jihadi groups have been listed: low cost of entry, anonymity, lack of clarity on the threatening geographical territory, tremendous impact and lack of public transparency in the space. Cyber. The function of technology and media in the strategy of terrorist groups present in the Middle East is the title of another article written by Fatemeh Pakzad and Zahra Pakzad (2017). In this article, an attempt has been made to examine the theoretical foundations of the media's function in the information age, link It should be explained and investigated with the politics and the phenomenon of terrorism and the use of various media methods to advance their goals in the Middle East region. In this article, it is mentioned that jihadi groups try to create fear

in the hearts of people by spreading their barbaric crimes. And they scare, and they also pursue another goal. At the same time, they try to present a favorable image of themselves so that the audience will simultaneously fear them for their crimes and love them. In fact, they are trying to use media and psychology to show their unreal attractiveness and thereby attract forces. All the mentioned articles deal with jihadi groups including ISIS, al-Nusra, al-Qaeda and other jihadi groups and their actions and works in the media in the form of provide the findings of the research. The possibilities of the media and the type of exploitation of jihadi groups are different from those presented in these articles. But none of them have addressed the Agenda setting that jihadi groups have used in the media and This became a reason for the authors of this research to address it. Agenda setting that jihadi groups use to represent their strategy and actions.

### **III. Theoretical framework**

#### **3.1. Agenda setting theory**

Today, the issue of terrorism and jihadist groups all over the world, and especially in the Middle East, which is the source and exporter of terrorists, is a very complex and multifaceted issue. In addition to governments, statesmen and international organizations, academics and universities all over the world investigate and deal with this very important and up-to-date topic. When talking about jihadi groups in articles, most of the authors refer to theories such as neoliberalism, liberalism, neo-realism, realism and its sub-branches such as national security, the security puzzle and Or even beyond that, they use regional convergence and the Copenhagen school and such theories that depend on security issues. The application of Agenda setting theory has become much wider than in the past. For a long time, the main assumptions of Agenda setting theory were set around newspapers and radio and television networks as inclusive mass media. With the expansion of communication technologies and the emergence of the network Terrorists and Jihadi groups try to achieve their goals by using the ability of individuals and groups to advance their interests and achieve their goals by influencing other members of the society. Models and theories There are many such as the magic bullet theory, the planting theory, and the audience dependency theory, which show the influence of the media on public behavior. One of the most important theories in this regard is the Agenda setting theory, whose main emphasis is on the knowledge and attitude of people in society. Which is done by Agenda setting and enlarging some special events and setting intellectual priorities for people (Partheymuller, 2017). This process is known as media Agenda setting. The more people engage with a topic, the more they learn about it. A change in the amount of media attention can lead to a change in society's priorities. Media coverage can affect the priorities of legislators', decision makers' and policy makers' programs. The category of the effect of communication tools is placed, and in the division of theories in the category of the effect of communication tools Agenda setting is placed in the category of media-oriented schools, along with the theory of injection message and audience dependence. The media-oriented school gives authenticity to the media and makes the media the source of transformation. He knows and believes that the message in the media creates change. The one who used the term Agenda setting for the first time was Walter Lippman. This American journalist stated that the media is able to inspire ideas and concepts to the public. (Lippman, 1922) The main essence of this theory is what Bernard Cohen says: "Newspapers most of the time cannot tell people how to think, but they succeed to a large extent in telling their readers what to think about (Cohen, 1963)". Today, it is said that the media cannot tell people how to think, but they can tell them what to think about which the experts have announced their opinion. "Mass media directs the attention of the audience towards certain topics. They always present topics and inspire people to think, know, and feel about it." (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). "Most of the time, the press may not succeed in telling people how to think, but it can tell them what to think by the tremendous influence they have on them" (Lazar, 1971).

"The meaning of Agenda setting in the media is that the media, especially in news and news reports and documentary programs, have the power to direct the public's attention to a set of specific and limited issues and issues and from the issues and other issues are ignored. The result is that some specific issues are discussed by many people in the public sphere and outside the realm of the media Is discussed, while other issues and issues are not paid attention to (Sullivan & others, 1994). But the issue that is important here is the issue of setting the

ground for Agenda setting. The media is used to influence the audience and Changes in his evaluation criteria are "contextualized", because contextualization is "a process in which the media change the evaluation criteria from the audience's point of view by paying attention to some issues and ignoring others" (Severin & Tankard), 2001). Although Lipman was the first to use the term Agenda setting, Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs are considered the authors of the Agenda setting theory. In the article on the function of Agenda setting in the press, they write: the media in the form of news reports, their own line They significantly determine the importance of important issues. This effect of mass communication tools in their ability to influence the change of knowledge and perception of the audience and build their thinking is called the Agenda setting function of mass communication tools. They are thought engineering. The public has been explained by the media. The most important effect of mass communication in applying this function is to create intellectual order for the audience and order the world around us. "The media may not be successful in telling us how to think, but they are very successful in telling us what to think about" (Shaw & McCombs, 1972). These two Americans investigated the impact of the media on people by examining the 1968, 1972, and 1976 US elections with the help of two elements of awareness and information. Agenda setting does not happen to all people in the same way and in the same way; Because people differ in their need for guidance and this difference determines the occurrence or non-occurrence of Agenda setting. McCombs and Weaver consider the need for guidance based on two factors: the relevance of information to a person's work and life and his lack of knowledge about the subject and event. The greater the need for guidance, the more a person accepts the effects of mass media Agenda setting (McCombs & Weaver, 1973). Harold Zucker considers the "familiarity" of the topic and event to be an important factor in the occurrence or non-occurrence of Agenda setting. He argues that the less the public has direct experience with a specific issue and event, the more they rely on news media information (Severin & Tankard, 2001)). Zucker's study shows that salience may occur for unfamiliar subjects, but not for familiar subjects.

### **3.2. Agenda setting process**

Different media have different Agenda setting potentials. Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang divide the Agenda setting process into 6 stages: 1. Importance of events: the press makes some Issues appear important and obvious 2. Different coverage: different issues need Different coverage to attract attention 3. Formatted issues: that is, issues with a framework, i.e., a field of meaning should be given to them so that they can be understood 4. Language: the language used by the media affects the understanding of the importance of the issue 5. Secondary symbols: the events of Public attention should be attached to secondary symbols whose position in the political perspective can be well recognized. 6. Person's statements: When famous and authoritative people talk about a topic, the process of Agenda setting accelerates (Lang & Lang, 1981). Regarding the process of Agenda setting it is stated in another place: "The media, by choosing some topics and placing them in a specific framework, provide the basis for evaluating the "good" or "bad" of an issue, as well as the "credibility" or "discredit" of individuals. Audiences also evaluate the importance of a person or issue according to the recently emphasized issues through news and messages they have heard from the media" (Windahl & Others, 1992). Also Dearing and Rogers about the process of Agenda setting have commented that the media "gatekeepers" and "processors" focus their attention on choosing or "selection" of some news topics and events, then they "process" the news events according to a specific semantic "framework". . "Framing" is the imperceptible selection of specific aspects of an issue by the media, which is done in order to emphasize these aspects and therefore emphasize the specific cause of the phenomena. (Dearing & Rogers, 1996).

### **3.3. Priority in Agenda setting**

The Agenda setting process is formed from the three priorities of the media, the public's priority and the political priority and the relationship between these three. Sorin and Tankard enumerate the dimensions of each of these priorities as follows: the dimensions of media preference: visibility (the extent and effect of coverage of an issue), prominent issue from the audience's point of view (fitness of news content with the needs of the audience) and value (positive coverage or the negative of a subject). The dimensions of public preference are:

familiarity (amount of public awareness of a certain topic), salient topic from the person's point of view (perceived interest or relevance to the person), and desirability (positive or negative judgment about the topic). The dimensions of political preference are: support (more or less favorable action towards a given issue), probability of action (probability that a government agency will react on the issue) and freedom of action (range of possible government actions) (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

According to Rogers and Deering, the study of Agenda setting is the study of social "changes" and "stability". They see prioritization as a list of related issues, in a hierarchy of importance, over a period of time. Obviously, priorities are the result of mutual and dynamic influence. As various issues increase or decrease in importance over time, priorities provide a general picture of this instability (Deering & Rogers, 1996). A subject, they focus on the "Importance" of a subject. Importance is the degree to which the priority issue is considered relatively important. The peak of importance in the Agenda setting process is when the importance of an issue changes from media priority to public priority and policy priority (Deering & Rogers, 1996). Therefore, news media always follow special frameworks and principles in gathering and organizing news in preparing and publishing news; However, the form and manner of Agenda setting is different from one media such as radio, television, etc. to another media (Razavi Zadeh, 2002). In radio, giving priority to news is based on the order of reading news and audio; But in TV, in addition to the order of reading the news, photos, slides, videos, sound and color are also used. In the press, Agenda setting of news is done using paging techniques. The size of the headline, the use of photos, role, design, position of the news on the page, tram frame and negative printing are effective for Agenda setting press news (Ghandi, 1995). "Danilian" and "Riz" (1989) consider the content of other media, especially the elite media, as one of the important effects on media preference, which they call inter-media Agenda setting. Such as the impact of media content such as the New York Times on Preference of other media (Severin & Tankard, 2001). But today, social media sometimes determine the agenda of traditional media and influence their news coverage. An example of the effect of Agenda setting media on people's subjective priorities is Donald Kinder and Shantwinger's research in 1980 in America during the campaigns. It is the presidential election and the competition between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, during which the press was able to choose and Agenda setting the issue of American hostages in Iran a few days before the election, making it the mental priority of the American people and an example of inadequacy and weakness. Change Carter's administration and cause his defeat and Reagan's victory in the elections. The study areas of Agenda setting are: psychology, sociology, social sciences, political sciences, etc. The applied areas of Agenda setting are: debates, election campaigns and advertisements, commercial-economic impact and influence, audience control and Public opinion and...in fact, Agenda setting is creating public awareness and drawing public attention to the desired topics of the media. Agenda setting theory is a very suitable theory for understanding the pervasive and pervasive role of the media, but the impact of media Agenda setting cannot be considered 100%. In the end, the two basic hypotheses of this theory and the basis of many researches on Agenda setting should be described as follows: First that the press and the media do not reflect the reality. They pass the reality through their filters and shape it, and secondly, the media's focus on a few issues and subjects makes the public opinion consider these issues much more important than Therefore, it can be concluded that certain factors and elements affect the content of the media. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) have proposed five main categories of effects on the content of the media in order:

1. Effects caused by individual media workers;
2. Effects related to media practices,
3. Organizational influences on the content;
4. The effect and influence of non-media organizations on the content;
5. The effect of ideology (Severin & Tankard, 2001)

#### **IV. Research methodology**

In this research, according to the topic and scope of the research, it has been tried to use the descriptive-analytical research method. The use of this research method allows the researchers and authors of this article to

provide analyzes of the nature of the function of the media in representing the strategy of jihadi groups in the Middle East, which is of particular importance. Based on this, an attempt has been made here to examine and analyze the role and function of the media and their representations in the activities of these groups, relying on the analytical-descriptive research method.

## **V. Research findings**

### **5.1. Terrorism and the use of representative action in destabilization and vice versa**

Terrorism is also referred to as "propaganda with death" in scientific circles. Terrorists, through their acts of terror and inflicting death on their victims, seek to convey their message in a terrifying manner to both their enemies and allies. In this process, jihadist groups, while seeking to terrorize their enemies in the shadow of their actions, hope that these panic actions will arouse sympathy with Islamic extremists and even gain allies and attract new forces for them. In other words, while one side of the coin of terrorism is creating terror among the enemies, the other side is gaining sympathy and companionship among those who believe that the jihadi groups can play a role as a social base and supply force for them. Kim and Sandler, 2022: 425). Here, terrorism plays a role as a representative action (AhmadiPour and Rashidi, 2020).

Representative action here means a set of actions in which as much emphasis is placed on the performance of the action itself as on its effects and consequences at the level of society. In other words, terrorist groups in general, and jihadi groups in particular, seek to organize their terrorizing actions in such a way that, while causing loss of life and money to their targets, they also create a media show at the same time. Execute This media show here relies extensively on the use of media facilities and conveying the message to the society and audience (AhmadiPour and Rashidi. 2020). This message is twofold: On the one hand, a group of the audience of this message, who are classified as enemies from the point of view of terrorist groups, face the issue of panic, anxiety, fear and insecurity when they observe terrorist acts, and in this way, terrorists show their destructive actions in the media. A part of their secondary goals are achieved. On the other hand, those groups of people who are known as the social base or supporters of terrorists from the point of view of terrorists find a greater sense of companionship and identification by observing the effects of terrorist actions on the security and health of the enemies (Sidaway, 1994: 358). ). This has caused terrorism to be referred to as a media act that tries to transmit its messages to a wider environment than the place where the terrorist acts took place due to the exposure of the acts in the media. AhmadiPour and Rashidi. 2020). Some researchers in the field of terrorism believe that jihadist groups continuously try to coordinate their actions with economic, political, demographic, geopolitical and social events and trends by monitoring the conditions and trends that are going on around them. Because this type of approach to the surrounding environment allows the jihadi terrorist groups to plan their violent and terrifying actions in the shadow of the events at the world level and at the same time with the media representation of the destructive actions they do on the level and through mass and social media. The intensity of the impact of activities to increase their terrorist and jihadist views on public opinion, policies, citizens' attitudes and even the processes governing international security and politics (Morriset al, 2021: 154). In this process, jihadi terrorist groups, as much as they are destabilizing, can be considered as actors who benefit from the creation and expansion of destabilizing conditions. In other words, in order for terrorist groups to be able to effectively carry out continuous activities in a geography, they need to first destabilize that geography or convey this message to the society that in an unstable situation they are busy with their lives and they usually do this through the media. In this way, they get the opportunity to continue expanding their destructive and terrifying activities in the shadow of this instability. In unstable conditions, most of the governments' efforts will be focused on trying to create stability, these efforts are usually expensive and the process of creating stability is always time-consuming for countries. Between the emergence of instability and the reestablishment of stability in a country, in most cases, the performance of economic, political, social, etc. institutions declines, and this decline in performance ultimately provides the basis for weakening governance (Hotez, 2022: 174). In this situation, economic, political, social, cultural and security crises will not be far from expected. At the same time, generally, the level of dissatisfaction in societies gradually increases, and citizens who are disappointed in the response to their needs lose their trust in government structures and governance institutions. This is the

moment that provides the best situation for the activity and media propaganda of terrorist and jihadi groups. Jihadi groups use citizens' frustration with the government to offer ideological alternatives to citizens and try to expand their propaganda activities by creating a utopia and attract new forces to their side (Esholdt, 2022: 67). In addition, in these unstable conditions, a high level of government's governance power is usually depleted, and with the increase in the level of dissatisfaction and protests, the government is forced to distribute its capacity in different departments to control the situation. These are the points where a security vacuum is formed in a country and provides a suitable environment for the activities of terrorists belonging to jihadi groups. With the provision of conditions for the expansion of propaganda and terror-inducing activities of jihadi groups, both the level of terrorist attacks and actions and the media presence of jihadi groups will increase simultaneously, thus increasing the level of instability in the country. Here, the importance of media and representative actions of terrorist groups is that they can increase the level of fear in the society by showing their presence in the media (Dalacoura, 2006: 509). The outcome of this issue is a cycle of destabilizing measures that provide the basis for the spread of terrorism and insecurity in the society in the form of a cycle. In this way, jihadi groups to the formation of Instability helps more and this instability becomes a cycle that facilitates the activities of jihadi groups. This issue has caused the opinion to emphasize the point that jihadi groups get the best opportunity to expand both their preaching and terrorizing activities in unstable conditions, and at the same time, any instability is likely to increase the growth of jihadi groups in the countries Muslim will intensify.

## **5.2. Selection of geography and demographic homogeneity with great maneuvering power in the media**

Terrorist processes in countries where there is no demographic homogeneity between the majority of citizens and jihadist groups can be completely different. Because an important part of the facilitating conditions for expanding the activities of jihadi groups depends on the existence of a population that has the capacity to provide support or identify with jihadi groups. In such societies where the majority of the population is non-Muslim (such as European and North American countries), the destabilizing opportunities that are in front of jihadi groups will be far less than in Muslim countries. Functionally, this causes changes in the strategy of jihadist groups (Kern, 2022: 3). But this does not mean that Jihadi groups cannot feed off the existing situation in non-Muslim societies. Here too, terrorism is a terrifying movement that is pursued with the aim of propaganda, terrorizing and advancing the political and social programs of jihadist terrorists. As mentioned before, terrorism is propaganda with death (Khosrokhavar, 2022) and this propaganda is pursued with the same goal and in different ways in non-Muslim countries. In Western countries, the main difference is in the selection of the target. While in the Muslim countries of the Middle East, jihadist groups often choose their targets from among Muslims in order to show their distinction between their supporters and victims, in non-Muslim countries, terrorists distinguish themselves from groups by targeting non-Muslim citizens. They boast a non-Muslim population. Here, a change in the strategy of jihadist groups shows itself: the value and function of the goal is different depending on the geography where the terrorists set their goals (Fregonese and Laketa, 2022). This shows that Jihadi groups can perform different actions in different geographies and at the same time, they can also create different media presentations in the media and social networks. In this process, jihadi groups in western countries are trying to target innocent citizens who live and work in non-Islamic spaces, and target the lifestyle of western citizens at the same time as civilian lives, and by forcing mass media to show These panics and violent scenes show that this geography and the people who live in these places deserve death and destruction (Fregonese and Laketa, 2022). This means that the jihadist groups with their selective action in different geographical spaces represent different levels and quality of their terrorist acts and with the knowledge that these acts of violence are always covered by the media, they succeed in making the media serve them to be the messengers of their terrorizing actions to public opinion (Rashidi, 2020). However, in order to gain like-minded people and supporters in this category of countries, they need to be more careful in choosing their victims. Because if Muslim citizens are targeted by jihadist groups in European countries, there is a possibility that the propagandistic function of their terrorizing actions will not achieve one of the two goals mentioned: here terrorizing jihadist groups will lead to terror, but It may not bring the sympathy of supporters. This has caused jihadist groups in Western countries to choose their victims from among non-Muslims in most cases. These

cases show that with the expansion of the media, jihadi groups are simultaneously aware of the different effects of media coverage of their actions and seek to use it in their activities and their forced display in the media in such a way that the final reflection of it is creating fear. Among the opponents of Jihadi groups and creating empathy among the supporters of these groups. In other words, it should be emphasized here that from a theoretical point of view, it seems that the jihadi groups in creating spaces of fear through the geopolitical representation of their actions have moved towards adopting strategies that involve their achievement of creating fear among those who are opposed to the activity and presence of terrorist groups, and at the same time, it will also arouse a level of companionship among a segment of the Muslim population who are interested in the terrorizing actions of jihadi terrorists. The same issue prompts us to address more precisely the issue of representational and media strategy among jihadist groups.

The increasing growth of the activities of terrorist groups and the level of violence of terrorist groups within the countries of the European Union, as well as in Syria, which borders the European Union, has led many of the member countries of this union to the conclusion that they, like the countries of the geopolitical region of the Middle East, are increasingly exposed to the dangers caused by The activities of jihadi groups are expanding. In this process, two things have connected the activities of jihadist groups in the Middle East region and Western countries: the transfer of information and representation through the media and the transfer of people through migration. This shows that the jihadist groups have a high level of awareness of the nature and impact of their terrorist actions in the Middle East and the world and they try to use all the available tools to spread terror in the region and the world.

Examining the actions and behaviors of jihadist groups in the Middle East region shows that these terrorist groups have gained proper awareness of the media nature of their actions and in the last decade have directed their terrorizing actions in a direction that has the ability to attract coverage. Have media (Nickerson, 2019: 547).

### **5.3. September 11, the beginning of the media's function in representing terrorism**

The starting point of this attempt to gain media exposure should be found in the terrorist incident of September 11, 2001, in which the Al-Qaeda terrorist group tried to choose its target in a way that would have the most coverage in the world's media. Therefore, the Al-Qaeda terrorist group tried to attract the attention of the world by simultaneously attacking the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the building of the United States Department of Defense in Washington. After the first plane hit the South Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City, many of the world's television networks interrupted their programs to cover the event live, and this paved the way for the plane to crash in front of the eyes of millions of viewers of the world's news networks. Second, kidnapped by jihadist terrorists of Al-Qaeda group, by hitting the North Tower, perform a full-scale show of terror in front of the world's media. In the same way, the attack on the US Department of Defense building also attracted a wider range of audiences to this media show of terrorist terror. Therefore, many researchers in the field of security and terrorism believe that the terrorists of the al-Qaeda group deliberately chose the most symbolic buildings of the United States of America in the world and intended to send their message of terror by targeting them in front of the eyes of viewers and media. Communicate to the people of the world in the clearest way possible (Mitnik et al, 2020: 162). This media approach to carrying out terrorist acts by jihadist groups in the Middle East was also widely noticed later. In the following years, the jihadist groups of the Middle East tried to make the most of the wide media coverage of their actions with terrorist attacks on the cities of Madrid (2004), London (2005) and Madrid (2015) to affect both groups of enemies and their companions. . This media approach should be considered as the most important action and evolution in the strategy of jihadist groups in the Middle East. From the first years of the third millennium, with the expansion of global access to information and the spread of the global Internet network, the media monopoly was removed from the hands of national actors, state media, and news agencies. Simultaneously with the introduction and expansion of social media, citizens got more and freer access to information. This expansion of global media online provided the opportunity for jihadist groups to provide a new dimension for their terrorizing actions in the media. In this process, the representative terrorist actions of the jihadi groups had a



much greater scope of influence and expansion and provided the opportunity for these terrorist groups to transmit their terrifying messages to the world in a wider and faster manner. In this way, while the terrorist groups continued to rely on the social shock and awe caused by their acts of terror by forcing the mainstream media to cover the news of their terrorism, they found the opportunity to gain access to the media. On their own line, at the same time, they cover these terrifying actions from the point of view of the media (Borelli, 2023). This shows that jihadi groups are more aware of the importance and function of showing their actions in the media and in this process they are trying to influence public opinion and citizens by showing their actions in this field as well. The point that is very important here is that the jihadist groups of the Middle East do not necessarily seek to convert all the people observing their actions into their supporters, because they themselves know very well that due to the alienation of the ethnic groups, religions, social groups and different territories have done, not only governments and national actors, but also civilian citizens have become opponents of jihadist groups in the Middle East. In addition, among these same jihadi groups, there are strong positions against each other, and they themselves are enemies with each other and are engaged in war with each other (Corner and Gill, 2020). Therefore, jihadi groups use the media coverage of their actions in the first place to create and spread terror and show their power, so that they can force them to retreat from jihadi groups by creating public fear and fear among people. This was the same approach that was continuously used by terrorist and jihadist groups in the Middle East during the civil war in Syria and Iraq (Hameleers et al, 2020).

#### **5.4. The emergence of a new type of media use in terrorism after the events of September 11**

During the Syrian civil war, almost all the jihadist and terrorist groups that were present in this war were producing and broadcasting media content in an organized manner. These media contents included a variety of written, audio and visual productions, which sometimes included advertisements and announcements, and sometimes showed the terrifying actions of these jihadi groups in Iraq and Syria, Lebanon and other parts of the world. In this way, as soon as these jihadist groups entered the battlefield in Syria and Lebanon, they used the media tools they had at their disposal to document their terrorizing actions and tried to Showing their brutality in killing and oppressing their opponents, convey this message to the opponents of jihadi groups that any resistance against repressive actions and criminally, these groups will be punished. As a result of these acts of terror and terror during the civil war of Iraq and Syria, which were simultaneously documented and broadcasted by jihadi groups, a global feeling of horror and disgust was created among the opponents and enemies of jihadi groups. (Kozman et al., 2021). Although at the first stage, it may seem that the jihadist groups of the Middle East created a global coalition and alliance against jihadism in the Middle East by showing their unbridled actions on social media, but it should not be forgotten that in It was under this propaganda that powerful jihadi groups such as ISIS and Nusra gained the opportunity and position to attract thousands of fighters from all over the world. This shows that social media have played a significant role in the evolution of the jihadist groups' strategy in the Middle East, and these groups got the opportunity to use their representational actions on the global Internet. They used to recruit soldiers and terrorists and by encouraging them to travel to the Middle East, they increased the capacity of their operational forces to carry out terrorist activities in this region (Christensen and Khalil, 2023). In other words, while on one side of the coin, the representative actions of the terrorist groups were based on creating terror among the enemies of the jihadi groups, on the other side, these jihadi groups use the display of their actions as a media portrayal. Did not only to expand the sympathy and companionship of their supporters, but also to provide the ground to attract new forces for themselves. In this way, it can be said that under the influence of the terrorist event of September 11, 2001, we are witnessing the emergence of a new type of terrorism in the Middle East, in which, unlike the past, more and more emphasis is placed on representative measures. In this new type of terrorism, not only the intensity of violence has increased, but by emphasizing the display of this violence, efforts have been made to expand the scope of the impact of terrorism in all dimensions (Barzegar, 2005). On the one hand, efforts are being made to increase the scope of terrorism's influence through the media representation of terrorist acts, on the other hand, there is a lot of emphasis on a strategy by the terrorists to show violent actions in the media. For a longer period of time, the society will be involved in the effects and psychological damage caused by the occurrence of terrorist acts. This shows that the terrorists in the Middle East region, they have moved towards the use of media more than in the

past, and this can also indicate a fundamental change in the media activities of terrorists. In other words, in the new strategy of terrorists, as much as inflicting casualties and financial losses, it is also focused on the media effects of terror-inducing actions.

### **5.5.Choosing places, goals and symbolic persons in order to benefit twice fromAgenda setting in the media**

After September 11, terrorists go to select places that have significant symbolic value in society, politics or economy to choose their targets. Because by attacking these targets, the jihadist terrorists are sure that their terrifying actions will inevitably be covered by the official media, and for this reason, the society is forced to watch the show in this way. To pay for a death that was launched by terrorists. The terrorist attacks of the ISIS jihadist group on June 17, 2016 against the Islamic Council and the shrine of Imam Khomeini, may God have mercy on him, are of great importance in terms of representative value for terrorist and jihadist groups. During this terrorist attack, 5 ISIS terrorists killed 17 people and injured 50 people in their attack on the shrine of Imam Khomeini and the Islamic Council (cnn.com, 2017). If they wanted, the terrorists could attack other places with a lower security level and kill more victims, but the ISIS terrorist group tried to do this by choosing two symbolic places in the capital of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Order to widely increase the scope of impact and media coverage of his terror-inducing attack. This shows that due to the expansion of the media and people's attention to news and information, the importance and function of terror-inducing attacks on symbolic places in various cities has increased among the jihadist groups in the Middle East and allows them to In this way, by attracting the attention of the audience and media coverage, they remain at the top of the news for a much longer time (Ian Ross, 2007: 216). This shows that the terrorist and jihadist groups in the Middle East region are constantly experiencing a greater need for media coverage of their actions in the region and are trying to make the process of their destructive actions Do something to attract more attention to themselves. As in the years 1401 and 1402, the ISIS terrorist group tried to show the importance of these places to represent their terrorist actions in the media with a double attack on the shrine of Shah Cheragh in the city of Shiraz, which is included in the list of symbolic places of Shiites in Iran. And at the same time attract more attention inside the Islamic Republic of Iran. These attacks and similar terrorist actions by jihadist groups in the Middle East region show that terrorists affiliated with these jihadist groups have continuously paid attention to the symbolic nature of terrorist attacks (Dingley). And Kirk-Smith, 2002: 103.In addition to selecting important targets for terrorist acts, jihadi groups in the selection of humanitarian targets are also moving towards choosing victims that will further terrorize the society in the last two decades. One of the first cases of choosing these human targets, which caused the spread of terror in the Middle East society, is related to the terrorist attack of the Tawheed and Jihad group on a hotel in the city of Amman, during which the attack on a wedding ceremony, Mustafa Akkad, a prominent Arab director and producer Two important films, Resalat and Omar Mukhtar, were killed by a suicide bomber along with the girl and several other guests (nytimes.com, 2005). In this way, with the assassination of Mustafa Akkad and the explosion of the wedding party hotel, the jihadi groups targeted not a symbolic place, but a symbolic figure in the Islamic world in order to show how much they They can expand the scope of their actions, and no person, regardless of the type of activity and political and social orientation, deserves to die if he is in conflict with the thought and interpretation of Islam by jihadi groups. This shows that in the strategy of jihadist groups in the Middle East, the representative value of the targets and victims of terrorist acts is very important.

Symbolization of person and place at the same time has been the focus of terrorist and jihadist groups in the Middle East region. In 2006, the Tawheed and Jihad terrorist group tried to achieve one of its symbolic attacks by attacking the shrine of Imam Hassan Asgari in Samarra. This terrorist attack was covered by all the major media of Muslim countries and in this way the fire of differences between Shiites and Sunnis was blown. The importance of this terrorist attack on the shrine of Imam Hassan Askari against Salam in the city of Samarra has been so widespread that many western researchers believe that after the occupation of Iraq by the United States, this event was the most important political event in Iraq until then. And it caused the flame of sectarian and religious differences to be lit in the country of Iraq, and thus a very wide wave of violence was formed in this

crisis-stricken country and the basis for the spread of terrorism not only in the country of Iraq, but throughout the Middle East region. These representative actions could not have a significant impact without expanding the range of jihadi activities in the four corners of the world. This has caused Middle East jihadist groups to coordinate the expansion of their media activities with the expansion of the distribution of their terrorist attacks.

#### **5.6. Forced refugees are a huge source of terrorism threat in western countries**

In the last decade, due to the spread of economic crises, civil wars and the spread of activities of jihadist groups, a large number of the population of the Muslim countries of West Asia and North Africa have been displaced, and in order to find a safe haven, the way to migrate to have taken the western countries. These forced refugees have been exposed to violence and threats in their countries under the influence of the increase in government violence, the emergence of civil wars and armed conflicts between various groups, most of which are listed as terrorist and jihadist organizations. This has prompted them to move towards European countries in order to save their lives and reach a safe place for a better life and try to start a new life by finding a suitable mother in the soil of European countries (Almustafa), 2022). This issue, however, in the shadow of the expansion of jihadi groups' activities, has caused an increase in fear among European countries. Many people and of course the policy makers of EU member states believe that there is a direct relationship between the growth of illegal immigration and the increase of terrorist activities in European countries (Avdan, 2019). European countries believe that the increase in the level of armed conflicts in the Middle East region, which has caused the displacement of several million citizens of the countries of this region, has played a significant role in the growth of illegal immigration to the European Union and has provided an opportunity for jihadist groups. Is to enter the European Union in the shadow of the migration of war refugees and spread their terrorizing actions in these countries (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2022). This is one of the manifestations of the representative actions of jihadi groups, which has caused both the Middle East and Western countries not only to consider themselves not safe from the terrifying actions of these violent groups, but also to look at the issue of forced refugees as a source of threat. . In other words, in this representational strategy that has been taken into consideration by jihadi groups, the level of creating fear has increased so much that even the victims of these jihadi groups are considered as a source of threat to security and stability. Become It should be mentioned here that although immigrants can cause social, political and economic consequences for the host society for various reasons, it is the intimidation of jihadi groups that has caused the crisis of forced refugees in the Middle East region to increase. In summary, it should be said that in the expansion of the activities of jihadist groups in the Middle East region, two elements are the expansion of the geographical space through the movement of terrorists across borders and the dissemination of media content with the aim of intimidating the opponents of jihadists and attracting supporters of the groups. Jihadists have always been with each other. This indicates that jihadist groups have become more opportunistic than ever before and this trend will probably continue in the future.

### **VI. Conclusion**

The findings of this research show that jihadist groups in the Middle East have been continuously changing their activities and strategies in the last two decades. The main goal of these jihadi groups is to transform their jihadi activities by focusing on increasing the ability to expand the power of intimidation as well as attracting allies. In this process, more than any other factor, they have focused on exploiting the facilities of modern media and the communication and representative power that the media provide to cover the terrifying activities of jihadi groups. .In this framework, the jihadi groups managed to perform their biggest media show in the incident of September 11, 2001, and this creation of fear in front of the media cameras and the eyes of the citizens of the world has encouraged them to do more than before. Focus on the function of the media.

Since the terrorist incident of September 11, jihadist groups in the Middle East have managed to exploit social networks in a more creative way with the help of the development of social networks and the facilities provided by the Internet to advertise and show their terrifying actions, while they are trying to attract new supporters by choosing their targets and victims at the same time as creating terror among the enemies of terrorism and jihadi activities. These terrorist and media approaches of Jihadi groups have intensified simultaneously with the

expansion of the range of movement of elements and members of Jihadi groups in the four corners of the world. In this process, the findings of this research show that not only in the present media function, covering the destructive and terrifying actions of jihadi groups has become an integral part of the actions of jihadist groups in the Middle East, but also the possibility of It is also possible that in the coming years, the range of use of media by jihadi groups to show their terrifying power will increase.

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