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Post-9/11 Media Coverage of Terrorism

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Abstract

Media coverage of terrorist attacks plays an important role in shaping the public understanding of terrorism. While there have been several studies analyzing coverage of terrorist incidents prior to 9/11, there has been little research examining post-9/11 coverage. This study fills this gap by examining the media's coverage of terrorism in the United States between the dates of September 12, 2001 and December 31, 2015. The analysis is based on a list of terrorist-related incidents and *New York Times* articles written on each incident. This study documents the amount of coverage received by these incidents and identifies the variables influencing whether an incident is covered and how much space it receives. It also provides a qualitative analysis of coverage of the top 15 most news producing incidents. The results follow a similar pattern to pre-9/11 findings, where most terrorist incidents receive no coverage and a select few are sensationalized. Incidents with casualties or injuries, Jihadi perpetrators, governmental targets, or firearms are significantly more likely to be covered and receive more news space. Additionally, qualitative analysis indicates that coverage of Jihadi incidents tends to present them as international even when the perpetrators are domestic.

POST-9/11 MEDIA COVERAGE OF TERRORISM

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In contrast to other forms of crime, a terrorist attack that goes unnoticed by the media is often an abject failure. Although such acts cause great harm to their primary victims in and of themselves, the intent is usually to convey a message to a larger group, with the primary victims merely serving as symbolic representatives. Thus, the media response to a terrorist act plays an integral role by reporting on the attack in more detail than would otherwise be available to anyone without a direct experience of it. Unfortunately, coverage of this sort can have a harmful emotional impact on media consumers (Keinan, Sadeh, & Rosen, 2003; Shoshani & Slone, 2008; Slone, 2000; Wicks, 2006). In light of this, the media's framing of terrorist attacks has been heavily criticized for its role in adding to the fear and confusion that the attacks were designed to spread (Bassiouni, 1981; Schmid, 1989). A further concern is the possibility that media coverage skews the perception of terrorist attacks in a manner that magnifies their impact.

If the news paints an accurate picture of the full spectrum of attacks, then their culpability is limited: while it could be argued that they assist the spread of anxiety by providing unnecessary detail to the general public, the attacks themselves would still be the ultimate source of such feelings. However, if the media's framing of terrorism differs substantially from reality, false perceptions of terrorism could lead to additional stress. For instance, if news coverage focuses primarily on attacks with larger body counts, the public would have an inaccurate perception of the lethality of terrorist incidents, leading to greater perceptions of danger.

The impact of misleading coverage can be far reaching. Mass panic fueled by sensationalist journalism can have a profound impact on public policy. Much of the

criminal justice policy of the 1990s was motivated by a fear of "superpreadators",

supposed juvenile sociopaths described in an alarmist article in the *Weekly Standard*

(Dilulio, 1995). Despite being in the middle of a steep decline in crime rates, politicians

passed increasingly harsh legislation to crack down on a problem that did not exist,

leaving a lasting impact on the prison system (Tonry, 1999). Similarly, while terrorism is

certainly a legitimate threat, it seems likely that counterterrorism policy is based more on

public fears than it is on actual data: resources are focused on the forms of terrorism that

are in the public eye rather than those that are actually common. It is too soon to know

for sure, but it is possible that these polices will have similarly disastrous outcomes.

Given the importance of counterterrorism policy based on accurate data, it is vital

to understand the extent to which the media framing of terrorism within the United States

differs from reality. Unfortunately, the existing analyses are limited. While there are

thorough analyses of the media frames prior to 9/11 (e.g., Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006;

Weimann, 2005), post 9/11 studies have focused on coverage of specific incidents,

organizations, or individuals (e.g., Nagar, 2010; Powell, 2011; Ross & Bantimaroudis,

2006). There is a great need for a study that explores how the media framing of terrorism

in the United States has shifted in the 15 years since 9/11.

The current study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge by exploring a set

of research questions:

1. What factors determine the level of media coverage an incident of terrorism in the

   United States gets?

2. How has media coverage of terrorism changed since 9/11?

3. How does the media framing of terrorism differ from reality?

These questions will be explored with the using data from Global Terrorism Database (GTD) that includes American terrorist incidents since 1970 (LaFree & Dugan, 2007). The database uses open source material to compile detailed information on the incidents, their victims, and when identifiable, their perpetrators. By cross-referencing the GTD with news archives, this study will determine which attacks receive more coverage.

The next chapter will define the concepts and theories at the core of this study. Chapters three and four will then provide an examination of the research on the impact of terrorism coverage and biases within the media's narrative. This will be followed by a presentation of the methodology and findings of this study. This study will then conclude with an analysis of the results and a discussion of their implications on media coverage, terrorism, and public policy.

Chapter 2: Definitions and Theories

Terrorism

There is little consensus on a single definition of terrorism, as the label of has become strongly politicized. The scope of the term is hotly debated in international discourse, as no nation is willing to agree to a definition that includes groups they support or fails to include ones they oppose. Even within the American government, different organizations use varied definitions depending on their objectives and jurisdiction. The FBI definition states that "Terrorism includes the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" (28 C.F.R. § 0.85). On the other hand, the State Department uses a different definition: "the term

'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against

noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents" (22 U.S.C. § 2656f).

Within academia, there is only marginally more consistency. No single definition

is universally supported, although here have been multiple attempts to develop a

consensus based on shared elements across scholarly definitions (Schmid, Jongman, &

Stohl, 1988). Schmid proposed a definition incorporating 16 of these definitional

elements:

> Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by
>
> (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal,
>
> or political reasons, whereby—in contrast to assassination—the direct targets of
>
> violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are
>
> generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative
>
> or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators.
>
> Threat—and violence—based communication processes between terrorist
>
> (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main target (audiences(s)), turning it into
>
> a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on
>
> whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought. (1988, p. 28)

This definition is thorough, but may be almost too comprehensive for some

purposes. By including so many different elements, it becomes inherently inflexible. Real

incidents are more likely to meet a portion of these elements than all of them. There is a

risk that this definition would exclude incidents that would be considered terrorism by

media or the general public. In many circumstances, this would not be a problem, but as

this study is particularly concerned with these groups, a more permissive definition is needed.

To address these concerns, this study uses the criteria for inclusion in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (LaFree, Dugan, & Miller, 2015) as the basis for its definition. The GTD's criteria include many of the same elements as those found in previous definitions. An incident is an act of terrorism if it is an intentional act incorporating violence or the threat of violence perpetrated by sub-national entities. Beyond this core definition, the GTD uses a set of three supplemental criteria; an incident must meet at least two to be considered an act of terrorism: (1) the act serves a social, political, religious, or economic goal, not including the acquisition of profit; (2) is intended to convey a message to an audience beyond the intended victims; and/or (3) is outside the bounds of the rules of war, particularly the rules barring the targeting of civilians and other noncombatants.

This definition includes the elements of previous definitions, while allowing for incidents that only meet a portion of these elements. For example, it would include the suicide bombing of an active US military base by an insurgent group, even though the target could not be considered noncombatant, if the attack was politically motivated and intended to send a message to the American public.

Although this study focuses primarily on incidents that occurred on US soil, the distinction between international terrorism and domestic terrorism remains important. Incidents of domestic terrorism are those which occur within the territory of the United States, while international terrorism either occurs outside the US, or transcend national boarders in terms of the methods, targets, or base of operations. (18 U.S.C. § 2331). An

attack within the United States can therefore be considered international terrorism if it is carried out by foreign entities or the means by which it was accomplished extend beyond our borders. For the purposes of this study, the primary concern in distinguishing between domestic and international incidents is that international incidents involve foreign entities crossing US boarders as part of the attack, while domestic incidents are carried out by individuals or groups based within the US.

Media

The label of "media" is used to refer to a broad variety of concepts, often with the assumption that the meaning of the term is understood. The term can be used to refer to any form of communication, regardless of sender, audience, message, or channel, but what is generally meant is some concept of mass communication. In an attempt to clarify the concept of mass media, Potter (2013) took definitional elements from existing studies, weeded out elements that were too specific, general, or otherwise lacking, and synthesized the remainder into the following criteria:

> The sender is a complex organization that uses standardized practices to disseminate messages while actively promoting itself in order to attract as many audience members as possible, then conditioning those audience members for habitual repeated exposures. Audiences members are widely dispersed geographically, are aware of the public character of what they are seeing or hearing, and encounter messages in a variety of exposure states but most often in a state of automaticity. Channels of message dissemination are technological devices that can make messages public, extend the availability of messages in time and space, and can reach audiences within a relatively short time. (p. 1)

The message communicated by mass media outlets can take a variety of forms, but this study is chiefly concerned with the media's role as a news provider. Much of the media's content consists of either news reports or commentary. In this respect, mass media plays a dual role for many audiences: providing both informative content detailing current events and editorial content analyzing the events.

The mass media makes use of a variety of channels, such as Internet, television, radio, or newspapers. These channels are not independent of each other, as a single news outlet may utilize multiple platforms. In particular, it is increasingly common for an outlet to have an Internet presence in addition to a television network or newspaper (Lu & Holcomb, 2016). In these cases, the digital source generally provides much of the same content as the network or paper. While this study focuses primarily on print media, the impact of television sources are important as well. In fact, much of the existing research on the impact of terrorism coverage explores reactions to televised news (Keinan et al., 2003; Shoshani & Slone, 2008; Slone, 2000; Slone, Shoshani, & Baumgarten-Katz, 2008).

Another key distinction between media outlets is their scope: while many outlets cover national or even international news, others operate on smaller scale. Existing research on news media has focused primarily on national outlets. It could be argued that local newspapers cannot even be considered mass media, by the definition previously stated: their audiences are generally geographically confined to the region they cover. In addition, many local papers obtain a significant amount of content from a wire service, such as Reuters, printing it with minimal edits. This further limits the individual impact of such outlets, as many smaller papers will be running essentially the same articles.

National news outlets, on the other hand, are more influential, reaching a wide audience and potentially framing the issues for both other outlets and the general public.

Media Effects Theory: Agenda Setting and Media Framing

The underlying theoretical framework of this study is that the message the media presents has an effect on its audience. There are two theoretical models detailing this process: agenda setting and media framing (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Agenda setting refers to a correlation between the media's emphasis of an issue and the importance placed on it by the public. Media focus on a topic increases the salience of the topic in the public eye, increasing it's role in political attitudes and judgments.

Media framing theory goes a step further. Not only does the media guide public awareness of issues, it shapes the frame of reference surrounding the issues (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Any given issue can be viewed from multiple perspectives and framed in terms of a variety of different values: mass shootings can be a gun control concern or a mental health concern; police brutality can be a racial problem or a matter of public order. Everyday decisions are made by the staff on which stories to run, which facts and values to emphasize, and what stance to take in editorial content to shape the media frame, the narrative the news provides to link events together and highlight issues (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

The media frame in turn shapes individual frames, the network of ideas we use to interpret information (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Scheufele, 1999). Individual frames are not generally direct copies of the media frames: there are a number of factors that moderate the process, including strength of prior opinions and knowledge (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Often, individual frames mix elements of multiple media frames (Edy & Meirick, 2007). Nonetheless, media frames have a clear influence on individual

frames. For example, tolerance for the KKK is higher when the news frames their rallies in terms of free speech and lower when the frame emphasizes public order instead (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). This does not necessarily mean that the media deliberately manipulates audiences with a misleading story. Rather, framing is a tool by which complex issues and events can be fit into existing narratives in order to make them accessible to the general public.

Through these processes, the media can both focus the public on the issue of terrorism and shape its understanding of the topic. In many cases, the media may only be reinforcing existing frames in individuals, but the impact on the public as a whole must be understood.

Chapter 3: The Impact of Terrorism Coverage

Individual Response to Coverage

While some people have been unfortunate enough to experience a terrorist attack firsthand, the rest of the world has only an indirect experience. Although the aftermath of the most severe incidents can be widespread, the general public only experiences the attack itself through media coverage. As a result, reactions to an act of terrorism are often simultaneously reactions to the coverage of the act. It can be difficult to differentiate the impact of media coverage of terrorism from the impact of the attacks themselves, but at minimum, the media serves to spread the impact of the attacks.

For instance, there is a strong consensus that exposure to coverage of terrorist incidents results in anxiety (Keinan et al., 2003; Shoshani & Slone, 2008; Slone, 2000; Slone et al., 2008). Given that terrorist attacks themselves are inherently stressful, it is not surprising that indirect exposure would cause some level of anxiety. Detailed coverage is

perhaps too effective at transmitting the anxiety of the incidents: the responses to such

coverage have been likened to symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Keinan et

al., 2003). Such symptoms may be a result of existing trauma, as they are heightened in

individuals with personal experience of political violence, but those without such trauma

still show some level of anxiety (Slone et al., 2008). Other factors affect the response as

well: gender (Keinan et al., 2003; Slone, 2000), religiosity, dogmatism (Slone, 2000), and

preference for seeking out or avoiding threatening information (Keinan et al., 2003).

Clearly, the anxiety resulting from exposure to terrorism coverage is as much a result of

personal factors as it is the coverage itself, but it is still clear that the coverage spreads the

stress of the attack beyond the incident itself.

　　　　Terrorism coverage tends to inspire a mix of other emotions and attitudes as well,

regarding both the acts themselves and the media's framing of them. In general, the

coverage tends to inspire feelings of anger (Shoshani & Slone, 2008; Wicks, 2006),

although the target of such feelings can vary. More often than not, hostile emotions are

directed at the perpetrators. These feelings seem to be intrinsic to the coverage. 9/11

coverage, for instance, inspired a rage in national viewers not found in New Yorkers with

a more direct experience of the attack (Strozier, 2011). These feelings seem to affect the

way the perpetrators are viewed. In Israel, coverage of terrorist attack promotes not only

anger in many Israelis, but also negative stereotypes of Palestinians and increased

perceptions of the enemy's hostility (Shoshani & Slone, 2008).

　　　　Some, however, find the media's coverage itself to be objectionable, as they feel

that it provides an unnecessary amount of detail and images (Keinan et al., 2003). Others

take issue with the media framing, particularly of Islamic terrorism: Muslim audiences

tend to take issue with a media narrative that portrays their religion as barbaric and patriarchal, while others recognize that the media is sensationalizing the stories to boost ratings (Wicks, 2006). Regardless of the reaction to such coverage, though, a large number of people continue to express a desire for it, even if they are not quite prepared for the most horrifying of details (Keinan et al., 2003).

To some extent, the reaction to televised media may be more extreme than the reaction to print media. Not only was televised coverage of 9/11 itself more emotional, it provoked a stronger emotional response in its audience (Cho et al., 2003). There are a number of possible explanations for this disparity. Televised coverage updates in real time, often covering stories as they happen, accompanied by footage of the incident. Newspapers, on the other hand, report on stories after the fact, providing, at most, still images. The result of these factors is that television is a "hotter" medium than print: it engages more of the senses, requiring less imagination on the part of the audience (Strozier, 2011). This should not be taken to mean that only televised coverage of terrorism has an impact. While the immediate impact of print media may not be as extreme as that of television, both can have a significant long-term impact.

Long-Term Impact

The impact of coverage extends beyond individual reactions. Media coverage influences the public understanding of terrorism overall. A key part of this process is the idea of a moral panic. Society periodically focuses on a group or phenomenon as a grave threat: the media presents a narrative that enhances stereotypes through sensationalism, authority figures demonize the deviant behavior, policy makers propose heavy handed solutions, and eventually the problem either resolves on its own or society becomes

accustomed to its presence (Cohen, 2002). The role of the media in creating a moral panic

is well documented: media coverage promotes fear of a deviant behavior, inspiring an

outcry for an official response that may or may not be justified (Altheide, 2006; Cohen,

2002). Many of the harshest anti-crime regulations of the 1990s, such as three-strikes

laws or mandatory minimum sentencing, can be linked to a moral panic: the media and

the political right continued to fuel public fears of crime even as crime rates fell (Tonry,

1999).

   Moral panic may play a part in the public's understanding of terrorism. This is not

to suggest that terrorism is not a serious problem in need of a response. However, the

sensationalism of terrorism coverage does at times seem to be designed to inspire fear

(Altheide, 2006, 2009). The coverage in the months following 9/11 is a perfect example,

as the news explored detailed scenarios of anthrax attacks and other forms of biological

and chemical warfare, sparking a panic far beyond what the actual likelihood of such

attacks justified (Nacos, 2003). The most cynical view would be that it is a political tool,

ensuring that oppressive policies that would otherwise have been opposed are supported

in the name of national security, although it may simply be a simply a ploy for ratings

and money (Altheide, 2006, 2007).

   Intentional or not, such coverage has a lasting impact. The feelings of rage fueled

by coverage of 9/11 made it easy for politicians to gather support for military

intervention in the Middle East (Strozier, 2011). The media generally presented two

frames for the attacks: the attacks were most commonly presented in the context of an act

of war, but were also presented as a crime (Edy & Meirick, 2007). Rather than picking

one or the other, many viewers adopted a mixed frame: the victims of the attack were

murder victims, not war casualties, but the perpetrators should be killed in battle. This "vengeance" frame categorized the victims as individuals, but the perpetrators as a group, and was associated with even stronger support for a military response than a frame that viewed the attack purely in the context of war (Edy & Meirick, 2007).

Furthermore, sensationalist coverage of the kind found in the months following 9/11 can make media outlets unwitting accomplices to the terrorists' cause. Terrorism is somewhat theatrical in nature, in that it is intended to reach an audience and many details of an attack are carefully scripted to maximize impact (Weimann, 2005). Many terrorist organizations use a variety of tactics to manipulate media response to facilitate the spread of their message (Galily, Yarchi, Tamir, & Samuel-Azran, 2016). High profile targets such as the Boston Marathon attract a large amount of media attention on their own, magnifying the impact of incidents targeting them to the point where the fear of an attack hangs over future events (Galily et al., 2016). After the incident, terrorists can continue to fuel the coverage by interacting with the media themselves, using press releases, films, and interviews to hold the media's attention (Surette et al., 2009; Weimann, 2005).

However, the media has also shown some restraint. Due to a longstanding policy of not showing anyone at the moment of death, the US network ABC made the decision not to air any footage of people jumping or falling to their death during the 9/11 attacks, and encouraged other networks to do the same (Strozier, 2011). The media seems to have held to this standard, not airing ISIS propaganda depicting public executions. Yet it is unclear if this restraint has any effect. Victims falling or jumping to their deaths has become a key element of the 9/11 narrative despite the media's diligence. More broadly, it is not necessary for the media to show such footage for it to have an impact. The impact

of a terrorist attack often comes not from the gruesome reality of the attack itself, but from the fear and uncertainty of its aftermath. Newspapers speculating about anthrax attacks (Nacos, 2003) or the safety of sporting events (Galily et al., 2016) spread the terrorist's message of fear without even a still image of a body.

Ultimately, it is clear that the media's framing of terrorism contributes to the fear the attacks cause, influencing policy and furthering the terrorists' cause. For this reason, it is vital to understand the specifics of the media frame.

Chapter 4: Biases in Media Frames

The media does not have the resources to report on every single crime. News space is limited, and while muggings may be violent crimes, they are non-fatal and relatively common; they do not draw an audience in the same way that a rarer crime such as homicide does. Unfortunately, this tendency to focus on the rarer crimes leads to a media frame that diverges from reality: the frame overemphasizes homicides with white female victims and overlooks minority victims (Johnstone, Hawkins, & Michener, 1994; Paulsen, 2003; Sorenson, Manz, & Berk, 1998; Weiss & Chermak, 1998), despite actual crime statistics skewing in the opposite direction (Sorenson et al., 1998). This media frame shapes audience frame that views the rarest crimes as the most common; the public develops a false understanding of risk factors surrounding homicides, and a fear of crime that does not reflect actual crime rates.

The media's framing of terrorism is equally misleading. The majority of terrorist incidents receive little to no coverage: between 1980 and September 10, 2001, 15 incidents accounted for 71% of all *New York Times* articles on specific terrorist incidents, while 85% of incidents were mentioned in less than five articles (Chermak &

Gruenewald, 2006). The primary factors guiding media attention were the severity of the attack, the target and tactics used (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991), and the perpetrator's identity (Weimann & Brosius, 1991). The fact that these factors remained prominent over multiple decades suggests some consistency in the media's priorities, leading to this study's first hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1: Severity of attack, tactics used, target, and perpetrator identity remain key factors in determining the level of media coverage an incident gets.*

Although these factors are consistent, the specific preferences within the media vary over time. In the decades prior to 9/11, the media shifted from emphasizing attacks that resulted in injuries (Weimann & Brosius, 1991) to those resulting in fatalities (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). Stories focused on hostage-taking (Weimann & Brosius, 1991) and hijackings (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006), with attacks targeting airlines receiving high amounts of coverage as well (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991). A particular focus was placed on domestic terrorists, as attacks on US soil received more coverage if they originated within our borders (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). As was the case with homicides, the media was actually focusing on the more unusual cases: 93 percent of attacks had no fatalities, airlines only comprised 8.3 percent of targets, and 63.6 percent of attacks were bombings, far beyond either hijacking or hostage situations (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). This discrepancy suggests a second hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2: The more common an attack characteristic is in reality, the less media attention it receives, and vice versa.*

Following 9/11, the media frame appears to have shifted again. In 2002, the frame was in a state of flux: while the government stance painted the Middle East as a hotbed of terrorism, media portrayals of Middle Eastern leaders were inconsistent even within a single paper (Ross & Bantimaroudis, 2006). However, limited analysis suggests that the frame has solidified since then: a study of specific incidents suggests that the media was quick to label perpetrators as Muslim and suggest a potential link to Al-Qaeda (Powell, 2011).Interestingly, the study suggested that the media tended to treat domestic attacks as isolated incidents carried out by troubled individuals, while international terrorism was a part of a war on America carried out by Islamic extremists, in contrast to the focus on domestic terrorism prior to 9/11. These shifts in the specifics of the media's framing of terrorism lead to the study's third and fourth hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: The specific tactics, targets and perpetrators that receive the most coverage have changed since 9/11.

Hypothesis 4: Incidents receive more coverage if their perpetrators can be tied to international organizations, particularly Jihadi extremists.

To test these hypotheses, this study will conduct a content analysis of New York Times coverage of terrorist attacks on US soil since 9/11. The New York Times was selected due to its substantial readership, with a total average circulation of 655,343 as of 2015 ("The Times Sees Circulation Remain Steady in Fourth Quarter of 2015," 2016), its prominence in previous analyses (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006), and its influence on both its readers and on other papers (Weiss & Chermak, 1998). Together, these hypotheses describe how the media's framing of terrorism has shifted since 9/11, and how it fails to present an accurate picture of the reality of terrorism.

Chapter 5: Methods

The purpose of this content analysis is to examine the factors that influence the level of coverage a post-9/11 terrorist attack gets in the New York Times. The study's chief concerns are whether an incident received any coverage in the New York Times at all and, if it was covered, the number of articles covering the attack. This study will use a mix of regression techniques to determine what factors are associated with the level of coverage.

Sample

This study was designed using terrorist incidents taken from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and articles from the New York Times' digital archive. The GTD's inclusion criteria are as previously stated, with the addition that incidents require independent verification from at least two sources for inclusion in the database.

Incidents were obtained from the GTD using a criterion sampling method: all incidents that occurred within US borders between September 12, 2001 and December 31st, 2015 were included in the study. At the time of analysis, incidents from 2016 had not yet been added to the database. This sampling method initially produced 280 incidents. However, linked attacks were merged into a single incident. Incidents were considered to be linked if they were closely related enough that coverage of them could not be separated. 221 incidents were left after merging.

These incidents were coded along seven different categorical independent variables. The categories of each variable are listed in Table 1 along with the number of incidents in each category. For each variable, the largest category was used as a reference category. Outcome of incident was treated as a binary variable: an attack was considered

successful if its immediate goals were met, regardless of its lasting effects. For instance a

bombing was successful as long as the bomb was set off, regardless of whether anyone

was caught in the blast. The region of the incidents was coded based on census

designations. Seriousness of an incident was measured by victim fatalities and injuries,

both of which were treated as binary variables. Origin of incident was coded as a binary

variable, where incidents in which perpetrators crossed US boarders to commit the

incident were as international and incidents carried out by individuals radicalized within

the US were considered to be domestic. Incidents with unknown perpetrators were

considered to be domestic, due to the unlikelihood of groups or individuals crossing US

boarders to commit an attack without either getting caught or deliberately calling

attention to themselves.   As many incidents were carried out by unaffiliated individuals,

perpetrator identity was measured by the ideological motive of the attack. In addition to

explicit statements of intent, classification of motive took into account implicit indicators

of intent including target of attack and signifiers of ideology, such as swastikas, left

behind at scene. Target and Weapon were coded based on GTD classifications. Tactical

classification were defined as follows. Facility/infrastructure attacks include attacks

primarily intended to cause damage to non-human targets; bombings attempt to harm

people directly with the use of explosives; armed assaults target people with use firearms,

incendiary devices, or sharp implements, and unarmed assaults include incidents intended

to harm people with any other weapon, including chemical, biological, or radiological

weapons.

Table 1. Characteristics of Terrorist Incidents in Sample (N=222)

Variable (Coding)	N	Percent of all incidents
Outcome		
Successful (0)[1]	184	83.3
Unsuccessful (1)	37	16.7
Region		
West (0)[1]	102	46.2
South (1)	52	23.5
Midwest (2)	38	17.2
Northeast (3)	26	11.8
Multiple (4)	3	1.4
Seriousness – Deaths		
No Deaths (0)[1]	194	87.8
Deaths (1)	27	12.2
Seriousness – Injuries		
No Injuries (0)[1]	190	86
Injuries (1)	31	14
Origin		
Domestic (0)[1]	213	96.4
International (1)	8	3.6
Apparent Motive		
Far Left (0)[1]	86	38.9
Far Right (1)	82	37.1
Jihadi (2)	21	9.5
Other (3)	5	2.3
Unknown (4)	27	12.2
Target		
Business (0)[1]	53	24
Private Citizens & Property (1)	40	18
Religious Figures/Institutions (2)	29	13.1
Government (3)	24	10.9
Abortion Related (4)	22	10
Educational Institution (5)	16	7.2
Military (6)	7	3.2
Police (7)	7	3.2
Multiple/Other (8)	22	10
Unknown (9)[2]	1	0.5
Tactic		
Facility/Infrastructure Attack (0)[1]	118	53.4
Bombing/Explosion (1)	49	22.2
Armed Assault (2)	39	17.6
Unarmed Assault (3)	12	5.4
Other (4)	3	1.4
Weapon		
Incendiary (0)[1]	120	54.3
Explosive (1)	41	18.6
Firearms (2)	35	15.8
Other (3)	25	11.3

1 Reference category
2 Not included in analysis

Procedure

For each incident, a search was conducted of the New York Times' digital archive, accessed via an existing subscription. The search process was conducted according to procedures outlined by Chermak & Gruenwald (2006): it began by searching for articles within seven days of the incident using a relevant keyword such as "bomb" or "shooting." Using the resulting articles as a starting point, the entire archive was then searched using the names of individuals, groups, and targets involved in the attack. Additional search criteria was gleaned from articles as necessary.

Using this search process, a measure of the total number of articles on each incident and their total word count was obtained. These measures served as the dependent variables for this study and included all articles that were focused on relaying specific details of the incident through all stages of the justice process. It did not include articles on other topics, such as policy or legislation, that referenced the incident.

Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using both R and the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as appropriate. Following an initial descriptive analysis of the distribution of coverage, regression models were employed to determine which independent variables are predictors of both presence of coverage and amount of coverage. In addition, a qualitative analysis was conducted of the media frame surrounding the 10 most covered articles. This analysis focused on the specific elements that were prioritized in the coverage of the incidents and how the perpetrators and victims were presented.

Chapter 6: Findings

Distribution of Coverage

The *New York Times* included over 906 articles and more than 842,498 words on terrorist incidents. However, these articles only cover 63 (28.4%) of the incidents, a considerably smaller proportion than the 55.3% of incidents covered in the decades prior to 9/11 (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). 85% of incidents received less than 5 articles, and less than 1,500 words were written about 80% of incidents. Table 2 shows the 15 most news producing incidents by word count in the sample. These cases accounted for 79.5% of articles and 85% of words written on all incidents.

Table 3 shows distribution of news coverage by incident characteristics. Many of these results are consistent with pre-9/11 research (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991) as well as the hypotheses of this study. Despite being in the minority, attacks that result in deaths or injuries were not only more likely to be covered, but also received increased attention when they were covered. This trend holds true for other variables as well: far left attacks, facility/infrastructure attacks, and attacks

Table 2. Fifteen most news producing terrorist incidents

Incident (Perpetrator)	Year	Articles	Words
Anthrax Letters (Bruce Ivins)	2001	197	205,296
Boston Marathon Bombing (Dzokhar & Tamarlan Tsarnaev)	2013	169	151,173
Fort Hood Shooting (Nidal Hasan)	2009	94	85,079
Charleston Church Shooting (Dylann Roof)	2015	47	52,664
San Bernardino Shooting (Syed Farook & Tashfeen Malik)	2015	48	52,099
Underwear Bombing (Umar Abdulmutallab)	2009	42	38,809
NYC Police Shooting (Ismaaiyl Brinsley)	2014	17	20,255
Chattanooga Shootings (Muhammad Abdulazeez)	2015	16	19,338
Shooting of George Tiller (Scott Roeder)	2009	24	19,315
Planned Parenthood Shooting (Robert Dear)	2015	11	15,238
Sikh Temple Shooting (Wade Page)	2012	9	11,387
Riverside Police Shooting (Christopher Dorner)	2013	14	11,136
Curtis Cullwell Center Shooting (Elton Simpson & Nadir Soofi)	2015	11	11,045
Texas Fertilizer Plant Fire (Unknown)	2013	10	10,709
Chapel Hill Shooting (Craig Hicks)	2015	10	9,400

Table 3. Mean number of articles and words by incident characteristic.

Variable	Percent of incidents covered	Mean no. of articles	Mean no. of words
Outcome			
Successful[1]	30.1	4.53	4,262.04
Unsuccessful	21.6	2.03	1,542.92
Region			
West[1]	14.9	1.13	1,054.91
South	51.9	5.25	4,625.21
Midwest	18.4	2.47	2,295.68
Northeast	42.3	8.42	7,473.88
Multiple	100	67.67	69,476
Seriousness – Deaths			
No Deaths[1]	19	0.88	634.9
Deaths	96.3	27.19	26,463.19
Seriousness – Injuries			
No Injuries[1]	20.6	1.14	934.37
Injuries	77.4	22.23	21,304.74
Origin			
Domestic[1]	27.8	1.31	3,688.12
International	50	8.25	6,895
Apparent Motive			
Far Left[1]	5.8	0.49	449.05
Far Right	40.7	2.53	2,257.89
Jihadi	66.7	20.29	18,335.14
Other	20	1.4	925.8
Unknown	37	8.29	8,421.03
Target			
Business[1]	13.2	0.71	550
Private Citizens & Property	22.5	5.33	4,667.53
Religious Figures/Institutions	34.4	2.66	2,777.93
Government	58.3	4	3,527.83
Abortion Related	22.7	1.77	1,626.5
Educational Institution	0	0	0
Military	42.9	17	15,655.71
Police	71.4	6.71	6,162.43
Multiple/Other	45.5	12.5	12,156.95
Tactic			
Facility/Infrastructure Attack[1]	10.2	0.34	249.39
Bombing/Explosion	22.5	5.76	5,244.24
Armed Assault	82.1	9.12	8,403.89
Unarmed Assault	0.5	18.17	18,121
Other	66.7	2.67	1,814
Weapon			
Incendiary[1]	10	0.26	204.79
Explosive	26.8	6.78	6,241.24
Firearms	73.5	10.31	9,376.57
Other	41.7	9.75	9,516.5

[1] Reference category

 variables. When looking at which incidents receive the most attention, however, a shift

from pre-9/11 priorities can be seen. Incidents with governmental targets are likely to

receive at least some coverage, but receive less articles on average than other incidents.

With regards to tactics, armed assaults received considerable amounts of attention. This is

not surprising when considering that the majority of the top news producing incidents are

shootings. Unarmed assaults received high amounts of coverage on average, although the

inclusion of the anthrax letters under the this category likely inflates this statistic to some

degree.

Table 4 displays changes in both number of incidents and amount of coverage

from year to year, beginning with 2002, the first full year in the sample. Much like pre-

9/11 coverage (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006), there is considerable variation in the

Table 4. Mean number of articles and words by year

Year	No. of incidents	Percent of incidents covered	No. of articles	No. of words	No of incidents	Percent of incidents covered	No. of articles	No. of words
					Increase (+) or decrease (-) or stay the same (~) from previous year?			
2002	16	25	1.75	1,320.38				
2003	31	9.7	0.38	217.7	+	-	-	-
2004	8	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
2005	20	10	.2	78.1	+	+	+	+
2006	6	33.3	2	848.5	-	+	+	+
2007	9	22.2	0.22	191.11	+	-	-	-
2008	18	11.1	0.28	125.5	+	-	+	-
2009	10	60	17	15,394.4	-	+	+	+
2010	13	30.8	1.31	916.38	+	-	-	-
2011	9	44.4	1.67	1,046.78	-	+	+	+
2012	14	28.6	1.57	1,651.29	+	-	-	+
2013	14	35.7	14.36	12,691.21	~	+	+	+
2014	19	36.8	2.16	2,096.26	+	+	-	-
2015	31	51.6	5.45	5,771.74	+	+	+	+

level of attention incidents receive over time. Terrorism enters the media spotlight suddenly, and leaves just as quickly. For instance, note the changes from 2008 to 2010: percentage of coverage rises from 11% to 60% before falling back to 30%, with similarly drastic changes in amount of coverage. As was the case in pre-9/11 coverage, these shifts do not line up with changes in the number of incidents per year. In fact, number of incidents and levels of coverage move in opposite directions in many years.

Which incidents receive coverage?

To examine which factors influence whether the news media covers a given incident, two logistic regression models were estimated. The logistic coefficient, standard error, significance level, and odds ratios are presented in Table 5. The Outcome, Region, Seriousness, Origin, Target, and Motive variables are included in both models, while Tactic and Motive are presented independently. This is due to concerns of multicolinierity: the Armed Assault (Tactic) and Firearms (Weapon) variables are strongly correlated ($r = .840$, $p > .01$). An examination of chi-square statistics shows that both models are significant ($p < .001$). Model 1 explained 49.4% of the variance in coverage status, while Model 2 explained 48.2%.

Both models produced similar results. As in pre-9/11 analyses (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006; Weimann & Brosius, 1991), incidents were significantly more likely to receive coverage if they resulted in fatalities or injuries. Incidents with governmental targets were significantly more likely to be covered than incidents targeting businesses. Armed assaults were significantly more likely to receive coverage than facility and infrastructure attacks, and incidents using firearms were significantly more likely to receive coverage than incidents using incendiary devices.

Table 5. Logistic regression analysis of coverage of terrorist incidents by characteristic

Variable	Logistic coefficient (B)		Standard error		Odds Ratio	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Outcome						
Successful[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unsuccessful	-1.392	-1.385	0.842	0.789	0.249	0.25
Region						
West[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
South	1.123	1.199	0.654	0.631	3.073	3.317
Midwest	0.733	0.376	0.792	0.774	2.081	1.457
Northeast	1.164	1.206	0.753	0.737	3.204	3.341
Multiple	21.433	21.929	19,533.23	19348.793	2,032,823,553.859	3,340,818,727.127
Seriousness – Deaths						
No Deaths[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deaths	2.913*	2.666*	1.293	1.321	18.717	14.377
Seriousness – Injuries						
No Injuries[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Injuries	2.088*	2.15*	0.893	0.917	8.068	8.583
Origin						
Domestic[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
International	-0.6	-0.541	1.717	1.711	0.549	0.582
Apparent Motive						
Far Left[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Far Right	2.068*	1.63	0.964	.879	7.909	5.106
Jihadi	2.896*	2.437	1.33	1.286	18.104	11.44
Other	0.999	0.529	2.353	2.351	2.715	1.697
Unknown	2.436*	1.738	1.078	0.960	11.426	5.69
Target						
Business[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Private Citizens & Property	-1.197	-1.119	1.338	1.145	0.302	0.326
Religious Figures/Institutions	0.273	0.136	0.984	0.938	1.314	1.145
Government	2.542*	2.34*	1.091	0.95	12.699	10.38
Abortion Related	0.556	0.457	1.027	1.069	1.74	1.579
Educational Institution	-20.118	-19.819	8,165.064	8,335.864	0	0
Military	-2.159	-2.462	2.787	-2.528	0.115	0.085
Police	0.476	0.424	1.472	1.408	1.609	1.529
Other	3.980	0.708	0.993	0.973	2.533	2.031
Tactic						
Facility/Infrastructure Attack[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bombing/Explosion	0.728	-	0.802	-	2.072	-
Armed Assault	1.855*	-	0.826	-	6.394	-
Unarmed Assault	1.658	-	1.133	-	7.695	-
Other	2.867*	-	1.766	-	53.526	-
Weapon						
Incendiary[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Explosive	-	0.941	-	0.788	-	2.563
Firearms	-	1.907*	-	0.857	-	6.732
Other	-	14.195	-	0.866	-	3.303
Constant	-4.895***	-4.312***	1.104	0.949	0.007	0.013

*Note. Model 1: χ^2=149.796***; Cox and Snell .494. Model 2: χ^2=144.736***; Cox and Snell .482.*
[1]*Reference category.*
*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Differences in coverage between levels of the Apparent Motive variable were only found

in model 1. Incidents with far right, Jihadi, or unknown motivations were all more likely

to receive coverage than far left incidents. Between these, Jihadi incidents have the

highest odds ratio.

How much coverage does an incident receive?

The nature of the dataset poses some problems when it comes to exploring the

factors that impact the number of articles and word count of an incident. While ordinary

least squares regression would normally be an appropriate statistical technique for

handling continuous dependent variables, the results are highly sensitive to outliers

(Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In this regard, there are a number of problematic cases in

this sample. Excluding them from analysis would allow for the use of OLS, but these

cases are critical for understanding how the news covers terrorism. Instead, this study

employed robust regression as an alternative to OLS, due to its ability to account for

outliers by weighting cases based on their residuals (Holland & Welsch, 1977).

Robust regression was conducted for both sets of independent variables (outcome,

region, seriousness, origin, target, tactic; outcome, region, seriousness, origin, motive,

tactic) for each of three independent variables: number of articles, word count, and words

per article. The results of these 6 equations are presented in Table 6.

The results are largely consistent across models and are similar to the findings of

the logistic regression presented previously. In all models, incidents occurring in the

South showed increased of coverage compared to incidents occurring in the West. Both

measures of seriousness were associated with increased media attention in all models,

Table 6. Robust regression analysis of coverage of terrorist incidents by characteristic

	Number of Articles		Word Count		Words/Article	
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Outcome						
Successful[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unsuccessful	-0.032	-0.001	-56.348	-0.54.595	-1.834	-1.566
Region						
West[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
South	0.107***	0.003**	143.911***	136.134***	17.912***	19.041***
Midwest	0.045	0.001	86.749*	59.141	6.194	4.957
Northeast	0.065	0.001	36.341	25.53	4.967	4.459
Multiple	4.069***	5.001***	2,536.882***	2,662.459***	252.333***	274.174***
Seriousness – Deaths						
No Deaths[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deaths	8.699***	7.977***	7,077.233***	7,050.192***	624.497***	617.056***
Seriousness – Injuries						
No Injuries[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Injuries	1.081***	1.024***	499.054***	491.856***	136.586***	136.159***
Origin						
Domestic[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
International	-0.225*	-0.026***	-365.932**	-466.852***	-24.391	-37.93**
Apparent Motive						
Far Left[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Far Right	-0.045	-0.001	-118.221*	-97.750	5.811	5.103
Jihadi	0.248**	0.026***	358.375***	-518.720***	14.903	33.552**
Other	0.098	0.021***	189.413	230.104*	-4.418	4.723
Unknown	0.043	0.001	95.7*	70.579	-7.254	7.849
Target						
Business[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Private Citizens & Property	0.01	0	-16.921	-18.633	-0.031	-1.076
Religious Figures/Institutions	-0.007	0	54.515	36.57	-6.276	-6.617
Abortion Related	0.053	0.001	119.295	94.344	-6.669	-7.442
Government	.717***	0.974***	261.809***	410.937***	245.772***	252.651***
Educational Institution	-0.038	-0.001	-50.12	-30.131	-6.152	-5.819
Military	-0.033	-0.001	-102.676	-86.551	-14.602	-20.765
Police	0.554***	0.973***	131.18	127.165	-15.483	-8.526
Other	0.014	0.001	0.890	38.009	7.692	-7.486
Tactic						
Facility/Infrastructure Attack[1]	-	-		-	-	-
Bombing/Explosion	0.014	-	24.45	-	2.745	-
Armed Assault	0.152**	-	244.9***	-	236.355***	-
Unarmed Assault	1.015***	-	214.77*	-	17.682	-
Other	0.899***	-	691.151***	-	632.825***	-
Weapon						
Incendiary[1]	-	-	-	-	-	-
Explosive	-	0.001	-	1.297	-	0.793
Firearms	-	0.999***	-	256.869**	-	235.514***
Other	-	0	-	15.023	-	1.747
Constant	-0.021	0	-25.867	-11.075	-3.931	-2.356

[1]Reference category.
*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

although deaths had a stronger impact on coverage than injuries. On average, over 7,000 more words and 8 more articles were written on incidents involving at least one death. Incidents of international origin received less attention than domestic incidents in most models (5/6 models). Jihadi incidents showed increased coverage compared to far left incidents in most models (5/6 models). Incidents with governmental targets received increased coverage compared to incidents targeting businesses (all models) as did in incidents targeting police (2/6 models). Both armed assaults (all models) and unarmed assaults (2/3) models received more news space than facility/infrastructure attacks, and incidents involving firearms received more coverage than those involving incendiary devices in all models.

The Framing of the Incidents

Although these analyses tell us which incidents are included in the media frame, they tell us little about how the attacks are presented. To supplement these findings, a qualitative analysis was conducted of coverage of the incidents in Table 2.

Despite being one of the strongest predictors of coverage, slain victims were given minimal attention, with more focus on memorial services (e.g. Nir, 2014; Southall, 2015) than on the victims themselves, although noteworthy victims such as George Tiller received additional focus (Barstow, 2009; Stumpe & Davey, 2009). Survivors received even less attention: unless they testified in court, they were generally out of focus. While there was some articles on the injuries sustained by survivors of the Boston Marathon bombing (Longman & Pilon, 2013; Louis, 2013), such coverage was the exception rather than the norm. Overall, articles on the perpetrators were given far more attention than victims, particularly for the most news producing incidents.

Perpetrator coverage was a major factor in differentiating the presentation of terrorism incidents. In incidents of Jihadi terrorism, coverage focused on the radicalization process, attempting to track the perpetrators exposure to a foreign ideology. Foreign excursions of Tamarlan Tsarnaev and Mohammod Abdulazeez were analyzed to determine if they became radicalized overseas (Fahim, 2015; Schmidt & Barry, 2013), the Curtis Cullwell Center shooters were linked to ISIS via twitter (Callimachi, 2015), and both Nidal Hasan and Umar Abulmutallab were reported as having contact with the radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki (Erlanger, 2010; The New York Times, 2009). Clear origins for radical ideologies were not always found, but : the radicalization San Bernadino shooters was not tied to any specific source, but the Times reported on signs that they had held their extreme ideology for quite some time prior to the attacks (A. N. Masood Salman & Schmidt, 2015; Turkewitz & Mueller, 2015), with particular focus given to Tashfeen Malik's activities prior to entering the US (Hubbard, 2015; S. Masood & Walsh, 2015; Walsh, 2015). Overall, coverage of Jihadi incidents focused on possible external sources of radicalization rather than the personal histories of the perpetrators.

While some attention was given to the personal troubles of Islamic terrorists, they were presented as the motivation to explore Jihadi propaganda, not as the cause of the attack itself. Mohammod Abdulazeez in particular was reported as being mentally ill, but his trip to Jordan still factored prominently into the narrative, with stark changes noted in his behavior after his return (Schmitt & Pérez-peña, 2015).

In contrast, coverage of other perpetrators focused primarily on personal factors, with few attempt to tie ideological motivations to an external source. Although Dylann Roof was presented as a white supremacist (Horowitz & Dewan, 2015), his beliefs were

not explained by linking him to a larger movement. Instead, he was a troubled boy from a

broken home (Robles & Stewart, 2015) who produced a "rambling" (Sack & Blinder,

2017) manifesto. Similarly, Robert Lewis Dear was "an angry and occasionally violent

man who seemed deeply disturbed" (Fausset, 2015), and Craig Hicks was "the angry man

on Summerwalk Circle... irritated about noise, irascible about parking, hostile to

religion" (Katz & Paulson, 2015). Even when these perpetrators do have extremist ties,

coverage focuses on their personal histories. Scott Roeder's involvement with anti-

abortion groups and militias are presented not as the explanation for his actions but as

part of a personal history that includes divorce, possible mental illness, and prior criminal

convictions (Saulny & Davey, 2009). Wade Page was heavily involved in the white

supremacist subculture (Dao & Kovaleski, 2012), but the shooting itself was presented as

the culmination of a downward spiral after his girlfriend broke up with him two weeks

before and he stopped showing up for work (Saulny & Davey, 2009).

Notably, coverage of the anthrax letters does not fit the same pattern as coverage

of other incidents, as its presented as a public health issue as much as it is an act of

terrorism. The Times tracked the spread of anthrax as it might track an infectious disease,

reporting on closures of post offices and other facilities for testing and decontamination

(e.g. Canedy & Firestone, 2001; Hanley, 2002). As the pool of victims expanded to

include civilians, their private lives were analyzed to determine where they might have

been exposed to the spores (Revkin, 2001; Zielbauer, 2001). The widespread

contamination of the postal system created a level of fear and uncertainty unlike other

incidents in the sample, and the extreme amounts of coverage the anthrax attacks

received may be a result of factors unique to the incident.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This study set out to explore the post-9/11 media framing of terrorism, contrasted with both pre-9/11 coverage and with actual attacks. Four hypotheses were proposed: that the overall factors shaping post 9/11 coverage are the same as those shaping pre-9-11 coverage; that within factors, the media prioritizes rarer types of incidents over more common ones; that the specific media priorities within factors have shifted since 9/11; and that the media prioritizes incidents with ties to international, Jihadi extremists.

The findings of this study support these hypotheses. Seriousness, target, tactic, and perpetrator identity, the primary factors shaping pre-9/11 coverage, were found to be just as influential in shaping post-9/11 coverage. Like pre-9/11 coverage, many factors follow a pattern in which less frequent types of incidents receive increased media attention. Attacks with deaths or injuries receive increased coverage despite being in the minority. Facility/infrastructure attacks and bombings receive less coverage than armed and unarmed assaults despite being more common. Far left and far right attacks receive less coverage than Jihadi attacks, and are less likely to be covered than even incidents with unknown motives.

Beyond these findings, there have been notable shifts from pre-9/11 coverage. Some types of attacks that received attention previously still receive attention: armed assaults with firearms and domestic attacks remain prominent. However, the changing nature of terrorism has necessitated shifts in coverage. Due to changes in airport security, the threat of hijackings and other attacks targeting airports have been greatly reduced, and attention has shifted to more vulnerable government targets. Additionally, the Times no

longer shows a bias towards incidents in the Northeast. It is possible that an increased

online presence has encouraged the Times to cater to a broader audience.

     More striking than any differences within factors is changes in the overall pattern

of coverage. Compared to Chermak's (2006) analysis, the top 15 incidents account for an

increased percentage of coverage, while a far greater portion of incidents receive no

coverage at all. As a result, the most sensationalized incidents have an even greater

impact on the media frame than they did prior to 9/11.

     As hypothesized, Jihadi incidents are disproportionately represented in the media

frame. Although this does not translate to increased coverage of international incidents,

qualitative analysis of the top 15 incidents suggests that there is an attempt to treat Jihadi

extremists as international regardless of their actual origin, as suggested by prior

analyses(Powell, 2011). While coverage of other forms of terrorism focuses on personal

causes, assuming it discusses motive at all, coverage of Jihadi incidents focuses

extensively on external sources of radicalization. Not only does this link the perpetrators

to foreign extremists, it arguably shifts the blame away from the perpetrator to the

ideology, to some extent.

     Overall, the post-9/11 media framing of terrorism is not a dramatic shift from the

pre-9/11 media frame. Rather, it is a stronger presentation of the same frame. It gives the

most prominence to incidents that do not reflect the reality of terrorism, while ignoring

typical cases of terrorism entirely. It presents a form of terrorism that is bloody, personal,

and Islamic. It creates an idea of terrorism that includes mass shootings in broad daylight,

but not arson in the middle of the night. It ties homegrown extremists to foreign sources

of radicalization, creating the impression that the threat is external. Such coverage

inspires public fears that are not grounded in reality, and policy designed to quell these fears will inevitably fail to address the real problems of terrorism.

The findings of this study are important contributions to the body of research on the presentation of terrorism in the news, but there are a number of significant questions that still need to be addressed. In particular, these findings should be supplemented with analyses more conservative outlets, such as the Washington Post, and with analyses of televised news sources. In addition, there are a number of questions that can be explored on the impact of specific choices the media makes in its coverage of terrorism. What is the impact of perpetrator-centric coverage compared to victim-centric coverage? How does an emphasis on external sources of radicalization shape perception of the perpetrator? Studies addressing these questions will provide further understanding of both the content and impact of the media's framing of terrorism.

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