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The Politics and Coverage of Terrorism: From Media Images to Public Consciousness

This article presents a typology that explains the variation in media coverage for different kinds of terrorism. The relation of a terrorist act to power is the focus of the typology. Grievance terrorism is fomented by groups seeking power or redress of grievance. It receives substantial media coverage. Perpetrators of such terrorism are portrayed negatively. Institutional terrorism is employed by powerful entities to maintain or preserve the status quo. Amount and tone of coverage of such terrorism are contingent on the intended targets of such terrorism and on whether the media rely on those institutions as sources. The article addresses the political implications (i.e., public consciousness about terrorism and compliance with government policies) of such differences in coverage.

The mass media, especially television, have come under fire for how they treat coverage of terrorist events. Generally, criticism centers on how the news media "allow" themselves to be exploited by terrorists, how the media "encourage" terrorism, and the "effectiveness" of terrorist tactics publicized by the media. The conventional wisdom reflected in these criticisms, however, does not hold up well when research on media coverage of terrorism is examined.

The critical review of the literature presented here will dissect the conventional wisdom about media coverage of terrorism. This review results in a reconceptualization of media coverage of terrorism through a typology of terrorism that makes basic distinctions in how the media approach the subject of terrorism. The central concept informing the typology is the role of social power. The role of power is important in two aspects of this topic: (1) a terrorist incident's relationship to powerful elements in society and (2) the relationship of media to powerful institutions in society and their role in shaping the way individuals think about their world.

Our first consideration concerns the relationship of a terrorist act to the dominant institutions in society. The fundamental question in this regard is, does the terrorist act serve to challenge or reinforce existing power structures? Grievance terrorism is identified as terrorism that challenges power or seeks redress of grievance. On the other hand, institutional terrorism seeks to maintain power and the status quo.

Beyond the expression of power as part of the terrorist act, a second consideration necessary to understand the media's coverage of such acts is the media's own role as a powerful institution in shaping how people think about the world. Included also is the media's relationship to other powerful institutions in American society—especially the political and economic institutions that are powerful determinants in structuring the lives of individuals on a mass scale. This triangu-

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lar relationship (media, political, and economic institutions) has been discussed in recent work by Bagdikian (1987), DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989), and Herman and Chomsky (1988).

While the two types of terrorism differ as to whether the perpetrators of terrorism desire media coverage (in general, grievance terrorists, yes, institutional terrorists, no; see Picard, 1989), it is argued that the net effects of such coverage are contingent on whether those acts challenge or reinforce the institutional bases of power to which the media are related and rely on as primary sources of news and information. In the case of grievance terrorism, the government sources that dominate the news set an agenda hostile to groups that challenge U.S. or "Western" interests. With respect to institutional terrorism, it is the lack of coverage (especially compared with grievance terrorism) that conceals the degree of U.S. government complicity in this type of activity through support of repressive governments. Thus, the net effect of such coverage of both forms of terrorism is a public consciousness about terrorism that will by and large reflect the U.S. government's perspective and policies.

Derivation of Typology

Before proceeding with a review of literature from which the typology presented here is derived, it should be noted that the two key concepts of the typology have parallels and similarities to concepts used by others to describe the differences between the two forms of terrorism (see, for example, Bonanate, 1979; Herman, 1982; Herman & O'Sullivan, 1989; Schmid & de Graaf, 1982). Thus, institutional terrorism includes state terrorism, terrorism "from above," and "wholesale" terrorism. Grievance terrorism includes "insurgent" terrorism, terrorism "from below" and "retail" terrorism. Grievance and institutional terrorism are used here to be more inclusive than some of the other concepts that have been employed and to reflect the importance of power as a differentiating factor. For example, the illegal drug industry in Colombia can be identified as an agent of institutional terrorism because of its ability to operate an independent police or paramilitary force to protect its interests whether those interests are threatened by government or individuals. Similarly, private security personnel (though sometimes in concert with police and military) working for large landowners in countries such as Brazil and the Philippines have been used to eliminate squatters, harass workers, and thwart political organizing (Amnesty International, 1988a).

Grievance terrorism, though it may be organized, is a far less systematic and enduring form of terrorism that is not protecting interests but trying to promote a cause or achieve power. The primary distinction between the two is the relation to power—organizations that represent powerful interests seeking to maintain their power through the use of terrorism engage in institutional terrorism; organizations that seek power or seek to alter the power relationship through the use of terrorism engage in grievance terrorism.

As with any set of ideal types, there are advantages and drawbacks to using this typology as an analytical framework. First, by making power a central concern in the typology and critically considering the power of the media as

agents of political socialization, the typology makes a contribution to understanding the effects of the way the media cover both forms of terrorism. However, it is clear that there are gray areas in the typology—some acts of terrorism may be hard to classify because they possess characteristics of each type.

The incidents surrounding the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, reflect elements of both forms of terrorism. The official death sentence emanating from Iran involves an assertion of power and thus can be seen as institutional terrorism. The bombings of and threats to book publishers and distributors reflect more of a reaction to Western book publishing practices and, therefore, a grievance terrorist approach. More generally, acts of war (armed struggle) and acts of terrorism in many recent conflicts (Afghanistan, Israel/Palestine, El Salvador) frequently become difficult to distinguish. The adage, "One person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter," evokes the ambiguities associated with many acts of political violence.

Secondly, the typology demands a consideration of contextual factors involved in any type of terrorism. Therefore, in anticipating how the media may cover an act of terrorism, a government's foreign policy, the media's relationship to the government, and the goals of the perpetrators must be taken into account. More generic theoretical approaches to the study of terrorism tend to reify the world of terrorism and the political forces involved. This typology is grounded in given political realities, and those contextual realities must necessarily be considered in applying the typology.

Finally, while this essay's focus and examples concern the U.S. media system, the typology is generic enough to describe the media's coverage of terrorism in most societies. As a superpower, the United States' role in the world is a particularly central one, and therefore it finds itself at the center of much political violence. Thus, while specific hypotheses emerge from the typology when the United States is considered, hypotheses can also be drawn for other societies depending on their situation in the world political arena.

The essential elements of the differences between grievance and institutional terrorism are presented in Table 1. The four primary areas of concern are the characteristics of each type of terrorism, the extent of coverage of each type, the tone and flavor of coverage, and the political implications of how each is covered. The table provides an outline and highlights of the literature review that follows. As much of the existing literature deals with grievance terrorism, some of the elements involving coverage of institutional terrorism are more speculative in nature. Thus, the table, while highlighting the literature, also provides the basis for testable hypotheses and future research.

What Actions Constitute Terrorism?

There are many different reasons why some individuals terrorize others. Here we will be concerned primarily with terrorism as a form of political communication often resorted to when other avenues of expression are "blocked" (Bonanate, 1979). Since political activities fundamentally address the goals of attaining, sharing, or maintaining power, the direction and target (see Table 1) of political

Table 1
Differences Between
Institutional and Grievance
Terrorism

Institutional	Grievance
A. Characteristics	
<i>Purpose</i> Maintain power or status quo Eliminate or intimidate dissident groups	<i>Purpose</i> Challenge or attain power Expose cause or grievance
<i>Targets</i> Individuals Opposition leaders Dissident groups	<i>Targets</i> Governments Perceived or real symbols of power Visible/public areas
<i>Tactics</i> Extrajudicial killings Disappearances Kidnappings Destruction of houses or community projects	<i>Tactics</i> Bombings Assassinations Hostage taking Hijacking
B. Extent of coverage	
<i>Coverage not desired</i> Effective by not attracting attention or links to institutional power Clandestine nature makes coverage sporadic; lacks singular dramatic event to trigger coverage	<i>Coverage desired</i> A primary goal is to attract attention to cause/group Singular, dramatic event triggers coverage; protracted "crisis" extends coverage
C. Tone of coverage	
Primary sources for both types are institutional authorities who set agenda for coverage. Sources deemphasize institutional terrorism U.S. involvement rarely addressed Nonofficial sources seeking coverage are not seen as "credible" Terrorism cast as legitimate response to threat against friendly government	Perpetrators cast as evil and inhuman Terrorists as sources receive unsympathetic coverage Focus on victims or families Threat generalized to all Americans Lack of social/historical context
D. Political implications of coverage	
Linkage to superpower interests not made Reinforces notion that U.S. foreign policy aims are democratic	Generalized fear among population News consumers accede to "national security" concerns

terrorism are primary concerns when defining terrorism. The existing literature reveals a wide discrepancy in the kinds of acts that are defined as terrorist.

Most of the perspectives dealing with media coverage of terrorism distinguish between politically oriented terrorism versus more criminally based terrorism, drawing a distinction between "crusaders" and "crazies" (Dowling, 1986). However, there also has been a tendency not to acknowledge the possibility of state terrorism in the definition of terrorism, focusing instead on terrorism directed against the state or symbols of the state (Alexander, 1977; Laqueur, 1977; Sterling, 1981). Martin (1985) notes the neglect of most definitions in this respect along with a tendency to see grievance terrorism as irrational. On the other hand, Stohl (1984) explicitly adds the idea of the "purposeful" nature of acts of political terrorism in his definition, including acts of terrorism by states. Schlesinger (1981) notes that even when state terrorism is addressed, it is still sometimes exclusionary—the dimension of state terrorism focuses on Soviet bloc countries but not Western or U.S. allied states (see Sterling, 1981).

Official definitions of terrorism also vary in their inclusiveness or exclusiveness as to what counts as terrorism. Within the U.S. government, virtually every agency dealing with terrorism has produced its own definition (Erickson, 1987), yet there exists no "official" U.S. government definition. Two of the three government definitions delineated by Erickson are fairly inclusive in the sense that they allow for the fact that states can engage in acts of terrorism. The defense department definition seems to exclude state terrorism in asserting that terrorism has "the intention of coercing or intimidating governments or societies" (cited in Erickson, 1987, p. 11).

Stohl (1984) also makes a strong case that superpowers have a greater capacity than smaller states to facilitate terrorism through supporting or condoning other states that use terrorism against their citizens. The espionage infrastructure of the superpowers enables them to create more havoc in the world, which ultimately contributes more to the proliferation of terrorist events than smaller states or nonstate terrorist groups.

Stohl (1984, 1988) and Lopez (1984) are explicit in their definitions of state terrorism. Lopez identifies four primary components or tactics states can use to terrorize citizens: information control (surveillance, press censorship, "thought reform"); law enforcement (expulsions, off-duty vigilante groups, direct and arbitrary arrest); economic coercion (discrimination, repression of union activities); and life threatening (beatings, bombings, disappearances, torture, confessions under duress).

Stohl (1984) adds that states can employ terrorism beyond their borders—through covert behaviors and the use of surrogates (another state or organization) to commit acts of terrorism internationally (see also Terrell & Ross, 1988). While governments are sometimes contradictory on the issue of including state agents as perpetrators of terrorism, the media seem to be more uniformly exclusionary and more likely to refer to state terrorism euphemistically as human rights abuses. Schmid and de Graaf's (1982) "nonscientific" survey of newspaper editors from around the world found that over 75% did not include violence perpetrated by states against their own citizens as terrorism. Further, almost all the definitions provided by these editors implicitly assume terrorism was directed at governments and was usually equated with "left-wing extremism." It is important to note that most news organizations have specific policies on the application of loaded terms like "terrorist" and "guerrilla" (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982). The net effect of news organizations' conscious use of language in this manner, casting terror as something outside the government, may tend to produce a public consciousness that does not perceive the possibility of governments as terrorist in their treatment of citizens.

The recent study of "Nightline" guests (Hoynes & Croteau, 1989) provides particular insight into the media's narrow conception of terrorism. Recall that "Nightline" is a show born of terrorism—originally called "America Held Hostage." Hoynes and Croteau demonstrate that the legacy of the hostage crisis still influences the program's perspective on terrorism: Terrorist acts are those that are committed against "us" (U.S./Western interests). State terrorism, even under the gloss of "human rights abuses," receives little attention on "Nightline," espe-

cially if the United States is a sponsor or supporter of a government engaging in state terrorism.

It is clear that for purposes of delineating the typology proposed here, a definition of terrorism that appropriately entails the realities of the modern world must be inclusive enough to allow for states or other powerful entities to engage in terrorist acts. The definition below is sufficiently inclusive so that media reports of human rights abuses can be cast as examples of institutional terrorism: Terrorism is "the purposeful act or threat of violence to create fear and/or compliant behavior in a victim and/or audience of the act or threat (Stohl, 1984, p. 43).

Extent of Coverage

Since many terrorist acts are of an international nature, it should be no surprise that the amount of coverage the different forms of terrorism receive is not very different from coverage of other international events and affairs. Larson's (1982) study of the networks' international news coverage found two basic trends: a tendency to look at the Third World almost exclusively during times of crisis, upheaval, and natural disasters and a continual emphasis on the interests of the U.S. government. For example, in 61% of all nondomestic news stories studied, the United States was one of the countries specifically mentioned. Western Europe was the most heavily covered region.

Another feature of the way the media cover world news events is the small amount of time given to bringing historical and cultural context to an event. The lack of historical context in terrorism stories (see Table 1) has been termed "blanked out history" (Wurth-Hough, 1983). Dahlgren (1982) sees this as a result of the focus on the timely and dramatic—revolutions, coups, and earthquakes. Such a focus usually means that less time can be given to the "why" of an event. Thus, the Third World is cast as teeming with violence, but the violence is often the active subject in a sentence or story (i.e. "violence erupted in South Africa today"). This reification of violence as a natural part of the landscape decontextualizes the political and social factors that contribute to its initiation. Dahlgren writes that violence is usually defined in the news as something committed against the status quo, and the United States or West in general are the ones who redeem the situation or contribute to its peaceful resolution (p. 53).

Larson's (1986) study of the Iran hostage crisis also illustrates what kinds of events trigger news media coverage and what kinds of priorities guide the coverage of those events (see Table 1). The dramatic, visual appeal in the initial days of the story certainly met the technological priorities of television. However, in looking at periods before, during, and after the crisis, it is clear that the news media gave spotty coverage of the social and historical realities leading to the overthrow of the Shah. A visit by the Shah to the United States and the demonstrations surrounding that visit drew the media's attention to the internal Iranian political situation. Even so, there was little coverage in the period between the Shah's ouster in February 1979 and the taking of the hostages in November 1979. Larson notes that such spotty coverage contributes to the fragmented

picture of the situation and the lack of historical and social context necessary fully to appreciate and interpret such events.

There also tends to be a wide discrepancy between the amount of time given to grievance and to institutional terrorism. The role of the media in deemphasizing state terrorism is particularly ironic because most assessments of the extent of terrorism find that state-sponsored terrorism is responsible for far more death and misery than grievance terrorism (Herman & O'Sullivan, 1989). But differences in coverage of institutional terrorism are contingent on where the terrorism occurs. State-sponsored terrorism of adversary governments will be covered in detail while U.S. state-sponsored terrorism will receive less coverage and is less likely to be portrayed as terrorism (Cooper, 1988; Herman, 1982; Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Stohl (1984) identifies the origin of a great deal of the state terrorism in Latin America in the training of military and police in Latin America by U.S. government agencies. Death squads composed of "off-duty" police and military forces are a fact of life in ten Latin American countries that are allied with the United States. Many thousands of such forces have received training at the International Police Academy in the United States. As part of the training, some were shown the film *Battle of Algiers*, which portrays a group of "off-duty" policemen loyal to the French regrouping at night to seek vengeance against Algerian nationalists (Langguth, 1978). Those more sympathetic to U.S. foreign policy have said such counterinsurgency training has "unlooked for" results that lead to those skills being used "for a variety of bewildering ends" (Anderson, 1980, p. 275). Amnesty International (1988b) reports that death squad activity in El Salvador emanates from two special army units that have received counterinsurgency training in the United States.

So, the amount of coverage given to both institutional and grievance terrorism reveals much about the media's relationship to domestic governments. The emphasis on enemy terrorism to the exclusion of state-sponsored institutional terrorism is structured by many factors, but a primary factor is the role of sources used by the media in contributing to the tone and flavor of coverage.

Tone of Coverage

Some of those who see the media as aiding terrorists have called for control of media coverage of terrorist incidents (Laqueur, 1977). Schlazheck (1988), in reviewing arguments for and against control of media coverage, notes that such control could have negative effects and enable terrorists to claim a victory of sorts (forcing governments to censor would be seen as an indicator of the effectiveness of terrorism). Picard (1986) responds to such calls by asserting that it is not publicity per se that may increase or reduce the incidence of terrorism, it is the way such information is presented. When looking at the available research in this area, it becomes clear that the primary influence on how the media cover terrorism outside the media's own role is the role of institutional sources, especially government officials (see Table 1). Thus, media reports tend to rally around the position taken by the state (e.g., Tan, 1988; Terrell & Ross, 1988).

As Schlesinger (1981) puts it,

it is advantageous for the state to set in train an information policy which integrates the media into a national-security design while, at the same time, preserving the necessary appearance of separation. (p. 82)

Picard (1986) concurs,

media are not likely to convey much information conflicting with the views of the government in the nation in which they operate or that is likely to create a conflict between the media and the government. (p. 397)

Herman and Chomsky (1988) point out that sources act as important filters of the news because they process and manage the conveying of information via mass media. That is, it is usually an official source that draws the media's attention to the fact that something (usually hostile to U.S. interests) has happened. In general, then, the choice by a media outlet to convey some piece of international news is usually triggered by the United States being involved or by an official pronouncement by the U.S. government regarding some international issue.

The effect of this tendency is evident in Picard and Adams's (1987) study of labels attached to terrorist groups and events. They found that characterizations by witnesses tended to be neutral in tone while those of government sources were far more evaluative in nature.

Hoynes and Croteau (1989) found that in part of their sample 48 of the 52 "Nightline" programs that dealt with terrorism focused on the Middle East. Forty-five percent of the guests were government officials, and 91% of all guests represented elite opinions and perspectives. There was a notable exclusion of guests who were more critical of U.S. government terrorist policies. Hoynes and Croteau note that alternative views on terrorism were usually presented by foreign governments, most of them hostile to U.S. policies, rather than domestic critics. Of the nine guests who appeared more than three times on programs concerning terrorism, three were spokespeople for the Arab perspective and the other six were current or former U.S. government officials. This reinforces the "we're the victims and they're the terrorists" dichotomy present in coverage of terrorism.

The net effect of the media's reliance on government sources for definitions of what constitutes terrorism is twofold. First, it means that the media will give less attention to institutional terrorism that is in some way linked to U.S. government policies and practices. Second, when the media covers either form of terrorism, it is likely to receive a spin or slant that favors the U.S. government perspective. Even though grievance terrorists often seek to instill a generalized fear (and sometimes succeed), the government can appropriate that fear to enhance its image and role in combating terrorism or to curtail civil liberties in the name of security (Gerbner, 1988).

Another assumption that pervades some of the literature on media and terrorism is that terrorists benefit from the way the media cover terrorist incidents. This position maintains that, regardless of the positive or negative tone of media

coverage, terrorists gain status, set the agenda for debate, and, by virtue of the publicity of terrorist acts, create a contagion effect that encourages more terrorism (Weimann, 1987b). Further, the goals of terrorist activities are often rhetorical in nature—terrorists lack the power to “win” in a conventional sense, so getting headlines and creating fear is seen as a form of power in itself (Dowling, 1986).

Research by Weimann (1983) suggests that while observers' judgments of terrorists remained negative, there was some shift to a more positive image of terrorists, some status conferred, as a result of media coverage. In general, Weimann says, “press attention appears to be sufficient to enhance the status of the people, problem or cause behind a terrorist event” (p. 44). Weimann and Brosius's (1988) analysis of terrorist incidents holds that there is a contagion effect and that the theater of terror's attraction for media contributes to a pattern of terrorist incidents by which media coverage of terrorism leads to more terrorist incidents.

Cooper (1977) goes further and writes that the media's attraction to terrorist events means they inherently side with such groups. The act of interviewing terrorists is a clear indication of media “sympathy.”

Schlesinger (1981) presents a contrasting view on this issue:

public recognition of a group's existence does not indicate that its goals are publicly favored. Nor, indeed, does recognition mean that the public necessarily understands the political aims of the group in question in terms that it itself would wish. (p. 88)

Martin (1985) agrees that while terrorists get a great deal of publicity for their acts, the media tend to reduce those acts to crime or sabotage, defusing them of their cause or grievance.

While terrorist actions may occasionally expose a cause that results in the terrorists being conferred a certain status, it is the act and not the cause that is the focus of coverage. Thus, the coverage of terrorism does not seem to contribute to a resolution of the basic conflict or grievances on which the acts are predicated. Presumably, this sets the stage for further acts of terrorism. Again, the media's use of sources ultimately results in an institutional “spin” on the story (see Table 1).

Weimann (1985) found that media labeling of terrorist events depends on the ideological distance of the perpetrators of terrorism from the country in which the medium is located. That is, the politically or ideologically closer the perpetrators are, the more likely the media will label the act positively. From the other side, the more politically distant the target of terrorism is, the greater the chance the media will label the act positively. When media do address the state terrorism of a government friendly to the United States, both the U.S. government and the media are likely to employ dismissive rationale and portray the government terrorism as a response to left-wing terrorism (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Paletz, Ayanian, and Fozzard's (1982) data also refute the notion that any publicity is favorable to terrorists. They found that 69% of all stories included direct interviews, quotes, or reports of the official side (government sources

were found in 37% of all stories), while 21% of stories included some form of adversarial perspective. The kinds of issues covered flowed from this emphasis on official sources. They found the tactics (specific actions taken) and objectives (short-term gains sought) of terrorism were most frequently discussed in news stories. On the other hand, the precipitating social conditions and the long-range causes of terrorism were addressed in 16% of stories. A corresponding emphasis on the violence and the victims (and their families) of terrorism (Table 1) is found in numerous studies of news coverage (Larson, 1986; Paletz, Ayanian & Fozzard, 1982; Weimann, 1987a).

Atwater's (1987, 1989) studies of the 1985 TWA hijacking and hostage taking also found that the media give a great deal of attention to victims and families of victims; 53% of all sources consulted came from those categories. U.S. government officials constituted another 16% of all sources. Correspondingly, hostage status and U.S. government reaction were the predominant topics of stories during the crisis and contextual factors were given little attention.

With respect to the flavor and tone of coverage, it is clear that perpetrators of anti-U.S. grievance terrorism receive little, if any, positive coverage. Thus, the tone of media coverage of terrorism can be identified with governmental policies and goals. The media's role in mobilizing public opinion on the Iranian hostage crisis (Larson, 1986) exemplifies its role as a catalyst in grooming public consciousness. The manner in which the media frame these events means that the public is likely to continue to acquiesce to government policies, whether they are in support of institutional terrorism or in response to grievance terrorism directed at U.S. or Western interests. Giving prominence to victims and families enables viewers to identify with them. While humanizing the story, it also contributes to a general fear of terrorist violence and possibly makes the general public more willing to accept security measures that curtail basic civil liberties.

Discussion

Several observations emerge from the literature reviewed above. Inevitably, these observations return to the media's role in political socialization and their role in a democratic society:

1. Existing research on media coverage of terrorism by and large contradicts much of the conventional wisdom about the media's role in terrorism.
2. When the notion of terrorism is extended to include institutional terrorism, comparing and contrasting coverage of institutional and grievance terrorism reveals differences in how and why the media approach each of them. In considering the media's powerful position in society and their relationship to other powerful institutions, it is not at all surprising to see that the media rely on official sources and frame events in a manner generally favorable to these interests.
3. The political implications of the coverage that the two forms of terrorism receive invite critical analysis of the media's role in terrorism and political violence per se.

The media's reliance on the official perspective with respect to either form of terrorism has political effects in the way that citizens think about the world in which they live. The ability to construct and project certain realities in the news media is a powerful tool for gaining compliance in a nominally democratic system. According to Mumby and Spitzack (1983), the news media construct metaphors that create particular understandings of the world. These metaphors are integral to the understanding of current events that news consumers attain. To the degree that institutional sources create and shape certain metaphors, they can keep people from focusing on other aspects and events that are inconsistent with these dominant metaphors or themes.

At least three themes emerge from media coverage of terrorism in this review: "We are victims, they are terrorists"; the United States strives to "do good" in the world; and terrorism is the product of irrational minds, not objective conditions. The structuring of consciousness that results from these themes can lead to what Mumby and Spitzack (1983) call metaphoric entrapment-- "[t]he way in which a concept is understood becomes so tied up with a particular metaphoric structure that alternative ways of viewing that concept are obscured, or else appear to make less sense" (p. 166).

Taking the three themes identified above, we can see that the net political effect of the way media cover terrorism is to reinforce the position and role of the U.S. government in the world and allow the U.S. government to operate in a business-as-usual fashion. The media do not encourage terrorism by grievance terrorists. The attention achieved through terrorist actions has not been seen to contribute to resolving their grievances or achieving their long-range goals. Rather, the world view projected by the media creates a greater tendency to rally around U.S. government policies and ultimately provides reassurance to citizens that the government has a "handle on the terrorist problem" (Bonanate, 1979; Paletz, Ayanian & Fozzard, 1982; Schlesinger, 1981; Schmid & de Graaf, 1982; Weimann, 1987a).

Thus, though grievance terrorists may seek to instill fear as an end in itself, the U.S. government can appropriate that generalized fear among the population to extend its power both in foreign and domestic policies. Occasionally, terrorism experts use these themes as a means of introducing the possibility of sacrificing personal freedom for security ("Terrorism here," 1989).

On the other side, the lack of coverage of institutional terrorism creates a situation in which U.S. foreign policy aims remain unchecked. The lack of historical perspective given in the news when covering such countries and regions as Central America, the Philippines, Israel, South Korea, and others, allows the government to continue the illusion that U.S. foreign-policy aims are geared toward justice and dignity for people.

To sum, one of the overarching uses of the typology here introduced is that it provides a broader context for analyzing how the media approach the subject of terrorism. By bringing a comparative context to the coverage of politically oriented violence, the typology provides for a differently oriented research program in contrast to much of the research that has been conducted in the last 15 years.

By looking at the message system of the media as an arena of political contest

in which terrorists and institutional authorities/experts compete to define the situation, it is clear that there are many influences on how the news is processed and produced. Sources used by the media can and should be a particular research focus. The battle for spin control indeed involves the perpetrators of terrorism, but the institutional links of elite sources means their perspective will be more prominent and positively portrayed by the media.

It is also important to keep in mind that this typology addresses events that occur but are deemphasized or receive no coverage in mass media. Content analysis research on terrorism should develop a means of taking into account what can or could be covered but is not.

Finally, in terms of the degree of correspondence between the media's messages and public consciousness, survey methodologies can help determine how people interpret the way the world is conveyed to them. It can be said that the same message will be interpreted in many ways. The metaphoric entrapment discussed above would not necessarily manifest itself among all those who rely on mass media for information. Inevitably, there would be measurable differences among those who rely on television news versus more in-depth or alternative sources of information.

In any case, the way the media cover and portray terror has significant implications for citizens' participation in political decision making, the resultant latitude with which policy makers can operate in the world arena, and ultimately whether the world made smaller by instantaneous, electronic mass communication will become more harmonious or more divisive as a result. Further research on media coverage of terrorism could contribute to a media role that facilitates greater understanding and less hostility.

Author

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