

Terrorists and their  
acts should not be  
given media publicity  
assignment



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Terrorists and their acts should not be given media publicity. Terrorism is the act of targeting civilians with acts of violence intended to spread fear and coerce national populations and governments into fulfilling the terrorists' political, religious or ideological goals. Often when these acts are carried out the mass media would be the first to report about these events. Often terrorism depends on media coverage to help spread its intended fear and spread awareness about its message and motives behind the attack. The relationship between terrorism and the media is still a relevant topic of today as terrorism is an ongoing threat that spares no country, and the media coverage it receives might be the reason it's still alive and strong today. My stance would be that terrorists and their acts should not be given media coverage to a certain extent and I'll explore the reasons why. Terrorists should not be given much publicity as it gives terrorist groups false legitimacy.

Terrorists are trying to become a legitimate representative of their own cause by having regular appearances in the media. By getting personal airtime through interviews and recorded videos and if the media frames their leader much like a "regular" leader would be framed, the audience might just believe they are as important as leaders. One example would be Al-Qaeda's Bin Laden and Amman al-Chair whom greatly used this tactic, by frequently sending videos to the media portraying themselves as leaders of the Muslim world.

Many European media sources played these messages, and gave airtime for analyzing them. Some might argue that both sides in a war should be given equal airtime. But by proposing that the terrorist had equal arguments in a

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concussion, Indirectly gave them equal footing with other legitimate leaders too. With legitimacy, it gives these leaders the strength to recruit more members who might have been slightly apprehensive about their capabilities before.

Hence, terrorists and their acts shouldn't be given publicity as it gives terrorist groups the opportunity to gain sympathizers, respect and recruit more people, Agenda setting comes into play as if the media frames the organization's message in a certain way, it may achieve getting even more respect and sympathy than if it fails to do so. Though majority of people would be appalled by the terrorist acts due to the brutality of the civilian deaths, there is potentially a small percentage of people that may agree with the ideas behind the attack and be impressed by its results.

They might then decide to do the same or support these terrorists. After the 9/11 attacks, where the world trade centre was hit by a hijacked airplane, the newly legitimated Osama bin Laden influenced a large number of young Muslim men, especially in the Muslim Diaspora in Western Europe, for recruitment into his cause without ever meeting them.<sup>3</sup> This showed that media coverage indirectly caused the rise of terrorist threat in Europe. There are also detrimental social and economical effects that arise from media publicity of terrorist attacks.

After 9/11 attacks, there were constant news reports about the attack through out the world and in America. The number of flights to New York were affected due to the plummet of tourism and resulted in 280,000 lost in jobs and \$25 billion in revenue.<sup>4</sup> People drew links between terrorists and

political and ethnic groups related to them. Claustrophobia and the number of assault cases on ethnic minorities went up. The media multiplied the effects of fear of terrorism among the American and global people and this was detrimental to the social and economical fabric of America and other nations.

Though it was not intended, this could have been prevented if the media had placed less emphasis and frequency of reports on the attacks. Media coverage on terrorist acts can hinder rescue efforts as well. During the Beslan school hostage crisis in 2004, Chechen and Chechen Islamic militants took more than 1,100 hostages and ended up killing over 380 people. During the crisis the Russian government downplayed the numbers in the media, repeatedly stating there were only 354 hostages.

This angered the hostage-takers who further mistreated and killed more of their captives. Although it was partly the government's fault, if the terrorists weren't interested in how they were portrayed in the media, a significant number of hostages would have still be alive today. If the media could have been kept out of the situation from the beginning such incidents could have been prevented. One counter argument would be that through objective Journalism, this would reduce the fear effect created by covering terrorist attacks.

Instead of news reports that had sensationalistic headlines and constantly highlighted the severity and damage of the terrorist attacks, there could be reports that don't frame terrorist as an evil threat and are firm and confident that the threat has passed and calmly describes the situation. One example

would be how the BBC news covered the suicide bombings that hit the Moscow Metro. There were quotes from Prime Minister Vladimir Putin saying, " I am confident that law enforcement bodies will spare no effort to track down and punish the criminals. <sup>7</sup> This kind of quote would reassure people and helped lessen the fear. Also, they gave possible reasons behind the attacks, so the terrorists weren't framed as mindless and evil. Hence terrorist acts can still be given media coverage without escalating the spread of fear. However, it is difficult for a Journalist to truly be objective and neutral. Furthermore media broadcasters sometimes aim to have a competitive edge over other broadcasters and want to boost their ratings, so they would usually sensationalist their headlines and news.

This morally wrong act of using terrorism and its bloodshed just to boost their ratings has been deeply embedded due to their drive for profiting. The more ratings they get the more they can charge for advertisement slots. <sup>8</sup> This is the reality of the media industry where the moral responsibility it should have in terms of not spreading the fear by airing terrorist acts is sadly undermined. In 2002, conservative commentator and Journalist Fred Barnes described that there is a " normal lust of the media - particularly TV - for breaking events of international impact, and for high drama and a human dimension to the news.

One example of this was that even years after the 9/11 attacks, Fox News had continued to constantly air the notice " Terror alert" or " High alert" and would give significant coverage reminding people what happened during 9/11 and often frame the terrorist as an eminent threat that and BBC did not air so many reports like these. This showed that there wasn't actually a need or <https://assignbuster.com/terrorists-and-their-acts-should-not-be-given-media-publicity-assignment/>

urgency for Fox News to air such reports. Thus, this is as an example where a giant media network played out the terror card with very little objectivity just so they could get the ratings they needed.

In conclusion, by giving terrorism significantly less or no media coverage, it prevents terrorists from achieving their aims of spreading fear, their message, gaining sympathizers and recruitment. This would make terrorism as a strategy seem less effective without the media's help, and may possibly make future extremists think of different strategies aside from terrorist attacks. However, if the media does truly need to publicize these acts, then it has to take on a moral responsibility and try to be as objective as possible without misusing these horrifying acts just to boost ratings.